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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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16 November 1992

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES VOLUME 214

EIGHTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1992-93

House of Commons

Monday 16 November 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

School Governors

2. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what further steps he will take to inform school governors of their rights and obligations under local management of schools.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): Before I reply to the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), I hope that you, Madam Speaker, will allow me to welcome the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) to the Opposition Front Bench as this is his first Question Time as Opposition spokesman on Welsh affairs.

We will shortly be distributing to all governors updated versions of "School Governors—A Guide to the Law". This contains a great deal of useful information for governors including advice on managing a school's budget and staffing.

Mr. Jones: The Minister of State was slightly remiss in not congratulating Llanelli on their win over the Wallabies when he congratulated my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), our new shadow spokesman on Welsh affairs.

Does the Minister acknowledge that there has been a problem with the governors of locally managed schools and grant-maintained status schools which was only recently acknowledged by the Secretary of State for Education with the new Education Bill? Does the Minister agree that being a school governor at the moment is quite a hazardous occupation in respect of liability for health and safety and the Food Safety Act 1990?

Sir Wyn Roberts: Certainly, governors do valuable work. There are 20,000 school governors in Wales and between 12,000 and 13,000 of them were due to be reappointed or to be appointed anew this term. They have a great deal of responsible work, but, according to the reaction that I have received, they are taking their work very seriously and are doing extremely well.

Mr. Richards: Does my right hon. Friend agree that local management of schools has been an outstanding success and that grant-maintained schools will be an even greater success? What measures does my right hon. Friend intend to take to stop local education authorities under the control of Opposition parties from mounting scurrilous campaigns against those schools, and their governors and parents, that are considering applying for grant-maintained status?

Sir Wyn Roberts: Certainly, I agree with my hon. Friend that LMS has been a great success in Wales. Six hundred and fifty primary schools and 200 secondary schools are now locally managed and all schools will be locally managed by April 1995. It is indeed a short step from local management to grant-maintained status. I agree with my hon. Friend that parents who wish to consider grant-maintained status should be given fair play and should certainly not be bombarded by local education authorities. We are taking steps in the Education Bill to ensure that the amount of money spent by LEAs is equivalent to the amount of money that could be spent by a school seeking grant-maintained status.

Mr. Wigley: The Minister must surely be aware of the groundswell of opinion against the provisions that were put forward in the consultation paper in the summer and the implications that they have for all schools in Wales. May I press him on guidance to governors with regard to special needs education? Is he aware that many governors will not have a background in respect of the special resources that are needed, and that, if they have to make value judgments on the use of available resources, they may not have the necessary backgrounds to reach such decisions? What steps is the Minister taking to safeguard the needs of those who require special education?

Sir Wyn Roberts: There is a later question, as the hon. Gentleman probably knows, about special educational needs. However, over the past four years we have spent £12 million on support and training for school governors in Wales, so they should know about children with special educational needs.

Mr. Ron Davies: May I thank the Minister for the kind words with which he started this Question Time? I hope that he will enjoy my stay at the Dispatch Box as much as I shall.

When the Minister informs LMS schools of their rights, and, incidentally, tries to bribe them into opting out, will he be slightly more honest than he has been recently in his analysis of LEA expenditure? Not all Welsh local education authorities are underspending on education. Why does he not admit that there is no pot of unspent gold, as he suggests? If schools are bribed into opting out, that will be at the expense of the majority of schools in Wales which will not opt out. Why does he not accept that?

Sir Wyn Roberts: There is no bribing whatsoever. Through grant-maintained status we are ensuring that schools get their proper share of the money. The hon. Gentleman must know that local education authorities retain a substantial amount of money to maintain their services and their local bureaucracy. With regard to capital allocations, I have made the point clear again and again that there has been an underspend of 15 per cent. overall in Wales in the amount of capital spent on schools and colleges. There was a similar underspend, although not as large, last year and, indeed, the year before.

EC Funding

3. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to seek objective 1 status for Wales, or parts of Wales, under the structural funds of the European Community.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): May I also add my words of congratulation to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies)? I think that I am the third Secretary of State for Wales in 13 years and he is the third shadow spokesman in 13 weeks, but I wish him well for many years to come as Opposition spokesman on Wales.

On question 3, I shall of course be submitting to the EC proposals to secure the maximum support for Wales from the structural funds.

Mr. Dafis: I am sure that the Secretary of State recognises, or at least I hope that he recognises, the immense importance of strengthening the structural funds —the only hope for a vigorous regional policy in Wales. Is he willing to undertake to attend the Edinburgh summit and represent Welsh interests directly and specifically in talks about the importance of the structural funds for the development of the Welsh economy?

Mr. Hunt: So far as the Edinburgh summit is concerned, of course we work through our colleagues in the normal way, but I will personally undertake to do everything possible to secure the maximum possible support for Wales under the structural funds. As the hon. Gentleman knows, such matters are governed by the nomenclature for territorial statistical units, which is known affectionately in the Community as NUTS, and the NUTS classification is very important. Notwithstanding that, I will do my best to secure the maximum resources for Wales.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Will my right hon. Friend, in putting together his submission in support of aid under the structural funds, draw specific attention to the survey that was published in the *Financial Times* on 12 November, confirming the excellent record that has been achieved by the Welsh Office in ensuring that Wales is ahead of the league in the whole of the United Kingdom in attracting inward investment throughout the 1980s?

Mr. Hunt: The partnership with the European Community, with local authorities, with central Government and with the Welsh Development Agency has meant that Wales has consistently won record levels of international investment, as the report bears out. Just as the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) and I were at Stradey park on Saturday to watch Llanelli gain a brilliant victory, so Wales wins in the world.

Mr. Barry Jones: I warn the right hon. Gentleman not to strip Deeside of development area status. That would imperil its objective 2 status. Does he agree that this would be the wrong time, during a slump and with rising unemployment, to detract from the assisted area status map of Wales? May I warn him that the steel industry in Europe, Britain and Wales is under severe pressure and ask him what be intends to do to safeguard Wales's steel interests?

Mr. Hunt: In Wales we are proud to have some of the finest steel plants anywhere in the world, with a producitivity to match that of anywhere in the world.

As for assisted area status, I am about to meet a delegation from Clwyd county council about it, and I will of course bear what the hon. Gentleman says in mind.

Mr. Ron Davies: I thank the Secretary of State for his courtesy. I may be the third shadow that he has had to face in 13 weeks, but I assure him that I fully intend to be the next Secretary of State, representing a Welsh constituency.

The fact is that we in Wales need all the help that we can get, from the European Community and from the Government. Wales is now at the bottom of the British wages league. Last week's autumn statement will be a bitter blow. One third of Welsh workers in the public sector are already on low wages, and in effect they now face a pay cut.

Why will not the Secretary of State accept that, with rising unemployment and poverty wages, the last thing that Wales needs is a question mark hanging over its assisted area status in the important belt from Bridgend to Cwmbran—and as my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) said, beside the Dee estuary?

I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's undertaking to consult, but why does he not give the House an assurance that he will fight for assisted area status in Wales? Why will he not assure us that he will fight for Wales?

Mr. Hunt: I am delighted to hear that the hon. Gentleman intends to remain Labour spokesman for many years to come. I am pleased that the game of musical chairs has stopped, and I wish him well as Opposition spokesman for many years to come.

Since I became Secretary of State, wages in Wales have risen faster than the average in the United Kingdom—*[Interruption.]*—that is a statistical fact. But I also recognise that there is a longstanding problem in Wales. I want many more high-quality, highly paid jobs to come to Wales. I repeat what I have said about the importance of bearing in mind all representations received on assisted area status.

A470

4. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has for the improvement of the A470; and what work has been done so far.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Since 1979 over £115 million has been spent on the A470. We have plans to spend a further £120 million including the major improvements shown in the 1992 "Supplement to Roads in Wales".

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend expect that the whole route will eventually be upgraded to dual carriageway standard? If so, can he give any idea of when that might happen?

Sir Wyn Roberts: There is no economic or environmental justification for upgrading the whole route to dual carriageway standard. Our policy is to undertake selective improvements for safety reasons and to reduce journey times.

Mr. Rowlands: If the economy is to be made to grow by investing in capital projects, is there not a better scheme to extend the A470 than the one from Pentrebach to Cefn Coed? Will the right hon. Gentleman move heaven and earth to bring in the scheme ahead of schedule and get it started in 1993? Will the Minister at least assure us that the development of the A470 scheme will not be the subject of any silly experiments along the lines of private financing or tolling, as foreshadowed in the autumn statement?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Pentrebach to Defn Coed scheme is one of the bypasses envisaged under the plans that I just mentioned. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the supplement for "Roads for Wales" he will find the time band in which it has been placed. Meanwhile, the draft line side road orders were published in September and draft compulsory purchase orders are expected to be published this month. A public inquiry could be held in the spring of 1993.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Is my hon. Friend aware that many of my constituents will be greatly relieved to hear that he does not propose to drive a dual carriageway through some of the loveliest parts of mid Wales, where there is clearly no economic demand for such a road. On behalf of my constituents, I ask him for an assurance that the representations made at the presentation in Builth Wells, concerning the proposed bypass, will be closely considered by his Department before any announcement is made?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I can certainly give my hon. Friend the last assurance that he requested. Consideration is being given to the views expressed following public consultation. I am glad that he agrees that, on environmental grounds, there is no case for upgrading the whole route; nevertheless, as he knows, many parts of it require improvement.

Mr. Alex Carlile: While there is no requirement for a dual carriageway throughout Wales from north to south, will the Minister tell the House by what date we can expect a decent-quality trunk road from north to south Wales? Will it be in this century or in the next?

Sir Wyn Roberts: Certainly we are improving the A470 and the A483. The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the considerable improvements that have been carried out. I have mentioned that among our future plans are the Pentrebach, Cefn Coed, Merthyr bypass, the Builth Wells western and eastern bypass, the diversion east of Llangurig to Wern Villa, the Commins Coch bypass, the Lledr Valley improvements and the Llanwrst bypass, with a possible further improvement to the Pontypridd to Coryton section of the A470. We expect considerable progress, in addition to the considerable improvements which have already been carried out.

Council Housing

5. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's latest estimate of the number of people on local authority waiting lists for rented housing; and what is his planning figure for the number of new public sector rented housing units which will become available next year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): Information on local authority waiting lists is not available centrally. Decisions on resources to local authorities following last week's autumn statement, will be announced shortly.

Mr. Llwyd: In view of the large amount of informed opposition to Tai Cymru's recent discussion document, does the Minister agree that the proposal in it—that there should be housing on a development scale of 50 to 200 units, centred in four or five geographical areas of Wales—is utterly unsuited to the needs of rural Wales? Does he further agree that it flies in the face of the purpose of setting up Tai Cymru, which it was said was for local and sensitive development? Finally, does he agree that it would be far preferable to purchase existing housing stock and to refurbish rather than to build?

Mr. Jones: Tai Cymru's consultative process finished on 31 October. I hope that the hon. Gentleman took the opportunity to submit his comments. I know that Tai Cymru is keeping an open mind and will consider fully all representations made to it, as I am keeping an open mind on the matter. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was able to announce last week a further £38 million to be spent before the end of this financial year and I look forward to that adding about 1,000 new homes for rent in Wales.

Mr. Roger Evans: On waiting lists, can my right hon. Friend explain the other side of the issue and tell us how far Welsh housing stock has increased in recent times?

Mr. Jones: I am delighted to tell my hon. Friend that Housing for Wales and the housing associations have been making superb progress. This year more than 4,000 new homes will be added to the stock, which is a tremendous step forward by Housing for Wales.

Mr. Kinnock: Is not it plain that last Thursday's statement was, in respect of housebuilding, both incompetent and misleading? Is not it obvious that if local authorities must depend on additional sales to generate funds for new building in the middle of a housing slump, new building is unlikely to take place? Would not it have been much better, for the sake of the slump-hit construction industry as well as to meet housing needs in Wales, if the Chancellor had allowed local authorities properly to release their capital assets so that we could get on with some real building?

Mr. Jones: I feel that I may be in a unique position in trying to answer a question from the right hon. Gentleman. I am not sure whether he has previously asked a question since he returned to the Back Benches. I fear that he may have missed the point because the £38 million is to provide some 1,000 new homes. It is extra money provided by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to take the matter forward. The point that he misses about past capital receipts is that all of that money, except that allowed by special dispensation, has been used permanently or temporarily to offset debts that have already been run up.

Mr. Murphy: If the Minister is unwilling to say how many people in Wales are waiting for council houses, may I be permitted to tell the House that between 80,000 and 90,000 people in the whole of the Principality are on council house waiting lists? If capital receipts in the next 13 months are to be used to try to build new houses at a time when it is unlikely that people will want to sell them in any event, what logic is there that nearly £600 million-worth of capital receipts, which are still tied up in our local authority coffers, cannot be used? Is not the Minister's suggestion a crazy nonsense?

Mr. Jones: No. The crazy nonsense is the fallacy to which the hon. Gentleman still clings. Except for the dispensation already allowed for, housing receipts have been used temporarily or permanently to offset the debt that has already been run up. Even after allowing for all redemption, Welsh local councils still have a debt of some £1 billion, which must be paid for by the people of Wales.

Railways

6. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of British Rail to discuss the reduction in services along the north Wales coast main line.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend last met Sir Bob Reid on 7 September. They discussed a number of issues, including services in north Wales.

Mr. Jones: In his letter to me dated 9 November, the Secretary of State for Wales said that reports that rolling stock from the north Wales inter-city service would be withdrawn for franchise services were without foundation. However, we all know that during the summer that rolling stock was under considerable threat, as Richard Branson and others were bidding for franchise services. Will the Secretary of State now come clean on the issue? Was there a threat to inter-city services this year as a result of the franchising proposals? Will he give a categorical assurance that those services will continue when the next franchising proposals come forward in 1994 and, if they are to continue, that all services will begin and end at Holyhead?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome the privatisation of British Rail and franchising because it is possible that the north Wales coastal services will do considerably better. The hon. Gentleman knows only too well that direct services from London to Holyhead are to be reduced from three to two—[HON. MEMBERS: "Disgraceful."] Yes, but we do not run British Rail. It is not for us to involve ourselves in operational matters, which are entirely for British Rail. If I were the hon. Gentleman, I should be looking forward to the privatisation of British Rail and to franchising.

Mr. Rogers: When the Minister meets the chairman of British Rail to discuss services in north Wales, will he remind him that the valley lines in south Wales have experienced enormous problems with the lack of capital funding? As a result, they now state that they hope that there will be no demand——

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman is moving around rather geographically.

Mr. Rogers: It is a branch line.

Madam Speaker: Order. I know my Wales better than that. If the hon. Gentleman can stay within the question, he may have a supplementary, but if he is moving I am afraid that he cannot and we must move on.

Dr. Marek: As a north Wales Member, may I ask the Minister whether he accepts that at the last general election almost twice as many people voted Labour as voted Conservative? The hon. Gentleman has no mandate to be a Minister for Wales. In answer to an earlier question, he sought to wash his hands of services provided by British Rail for north Wales. He should make way for somebody else.

Madam Speaker: Order. That was by no means a parliamentary question. We shall now move on to question 7. I hope that the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) will do rather better.

Neath and Port Talbot Hospital

7. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about Welsh Office capital allocations for the planned Neath and Port Talbot hospital.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In my right hon. Friend's statement on 29 October he advised that capital allocations were available for the next infrastructure works on site. It will be for West Glamorgan health authority to bring forward its requirements for future capital allocations.

Mr. Hain: I shall endeavour to stay within the perimeters of Neath and Port Talbot, Madam Speaker. The Minister has not denied that there is a view among the mandarins in the Welsh Office that Neath hospital, in which local people take considerable pride, will be downgraded to a new cottage hospital on Baglan moor —centralising trauma in Morriston and maternity in Singleton—thus reneging on a commitment given to the House last year by the Secretary of State. Will the Minister give an absolute and categorical assurance that the £18 million capital allocation for the construction of the new hospital, with all its planned specialties, will go ahead as originally planned?

Mr. Jones: I know of no suggestion that there shall be a cottage hospital for the new provision for Neath and Port Talbot. In addition to my right hon. Friend's statement last year, he specifically said in a statement on 29 October that we remain committed to a new hospital on the site at Baglan. We seek to go further and have asked West Glamorgan health authority to conduct a review into the best balance of services in addition to the hospital at Baglan.

Hospitals, South Glamorgan

8. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on future hospital provision in the area of South Glamorgan health authority.

Mr. David Hunt: This is a matter at the present time for the health authority.

Mr. Morgan: We in the Cardiff area are concerned about the delay in knowing exactly how many hospitals are to remain open and how many will be closed. As I have received letters from consultants at one of our leading hospitals, Llandough, saying that junior hospital doctors do not have any work to do, the Secretary of State will naturally, I hope, share my concern that the Under-Secretary of State, who is responsible for health matters in Wales, should think of giving up complacency for Lent. There is one big difference between the Under-Secretary and me as the two Ministers responsible for health matters in Wales. If I roll up my right trouser leg, it is to show people——

Madam Speaker: Order. I should appreciate it if the hon. Gentleman remained within the terms of his question.

Mr. Morgan: The point about the future of health provision and hospitals is that they have to be run by people who have a genuine interest in their proceedings and who do not make provision for appointing their own secretaries to the board of the health authority.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman is not one of the Ministers responsible for the health service in Wales and he never will be. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary and I have seen in South Glamorgan an increase in expenditure from £57 million in 1978-79 to £218 million this year. As a result, health care in South Glamorgan has improved considerably. The hon. Gentleman mentioned Llandough hospital. It received one of only 36 chartermarks awarded in the United Kingdom; that award is based on the highest standards of service and the high standards offered by the hospital. The hon. Gentleman should rethink what he says before he spouts his script without reference to what is happening on the ground in South Glamorgan.

Mr. Sweeney: How many more people are being treated in Welsh hospitals than were treated in 1979? Is that not the real test of the success of the health service?

Mr. Hunt: We have seen enormous increases in resources, from £57·8 million to £218·3 million. Over the past year alone, the in-patient list in South Glamorgan has come down 12 per cent., and the number of people waiting over a year for in-patient treatment is down 34 per cent. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the achievements of South Glamorgan. I pay tribute to all those who work in the health service in South Glamorgan, and I ask them not to pay attention to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and instead to pay attention to the achievements of the Government and the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney).

Mr. Michael: If everything is so marvellous, why have wards at Llandough been closed when there are patients waiting for operations? As the question is about future provision, why is it that, since 1987, we have not had a proper plan for the future of hospitals in South Glamorgan, the plan produced then was unsatisfactory and was only partially approved and the planning of health services in South Glamorgan is in such a shambles?

Mr. Hunt: It is not in a shambles. The health authority asked in 1989 whether it might review its strategic plan and that is the review which is taking place. That is why the answer to the original question was that this is a matter for the health authority to determine.

Special Needs Education

9. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what extra resources have been allocated for special needs education in Wales for 1993-94.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is for local authorities themselves to decide how much to make available for special educational needs, but we are doing all that we can to encourage improved provision. Next year, for example, there will be a 17 per cent. increase in the grants available for training teachers of pupils with special education needs and, for the first time, funding to encourage the integration of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools. That is on top of a parallel initiative under our all-Wales mental handicap strategy for those with severe learning difficulties.

Dr. Howells: Does the Minister know that attempts have already been made to integrate into state schools children who are suffering from one impairment or another, and some have been successful? Throughout Wales, parents of those children are at a loss to understand how funding will be provided in the future, with all the gimmicks and experiments that are going on in self-financing and so on, and are desperate to know what the Government intend to do about what encompasses some of the vulnerable elements in society. Does the Minister agree that children who are afflicted in this way should at least be given an equal opportunity to make progress with their peers?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's last statement. The whole policy of integrating children with special needs in mainstream schools was initiated by the

Government in 1989. I realise only too well that resources are necessary, but they can be held back by local education authorities or delegated to schools. There is a duty on the LEAs to ensure that, where children are statemented, provision is made to meet their needs. We know that some children are not statemented but have special educational needs. My impression is that the entire education system, in every kind of school—LEA maintained, grant maintained or whatever—is paying special attention to the needs of those children.

Mr. Richards: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Education Bill which was given its Second Reading last week will improve matters for such special needs children and their parents?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Bill will improve matters by enabling parents to express a preference for a school in the maintained sector, speeding up the assessment and statementing process, extending parents' rights of appeal and setting up an independent appeals tribunal to replace the current system of local appeals and appeals to the Secretary of State. Furthermore, in this coming year we shall spend £1·1 million on training teachers for children with special educational needs.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: Can the Minister advise parents in Wales who believe that their children deserve to be statemented, when they are in classes with those who have already been statemented, and who feel that their children are suffering a tremendous injustice? What would the Minister advise those parents to do?

Sir Wyn Roberts: That is one of the points that I covered on Second Reading of the Education Bill, which is due to go into Committee tomorrow. The Bill deals with parents' rights and it enables parents to have a far greater say about the education of special needs children.

House Building

10. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new houses were built by *(a)* councils and *(b)* housing associations in Wales in 1979, 1989 and 1991; if he will make a statement on the performance of Tai Cymru, Housing for Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Figures are not available for 1979-80 in respect of new homes. In the remaining two years, local authorities built 301 and 119 and housing associations built 534 and 1,003 respectively. Housing association stock has increased by more than one half since the inception of Housing for Wales in 1989.

Mr. Carlile: On the question of quantity, will the Minister tell the House his excuse for the burgeoning shortage of houses to rent in rural areas of Wales? On the question of quality, will the Minister join me in expressing sympathy to the family of Stanley Gregory, who died on Saturday having been burned in a property owned by Cartrefi Cymru housing association, to which he had been transferred under care in the community provisions? Will he ensure that, in future, those who go from hospitals into the community receive nursing care as part of that care in the community?

Mr. Jones: I join the hon. and learned Gentleman in offering my condolences to the family. I am aware of that sad case, which is being closely looked at by officials of my Department.

On rural housing, I remind the hon. and learned Gentleman that Housing for Wales has contributed £35 million towards meeting housing needs in rural areas, in addition to a further £10 million that has generally come from local authorities. The need for new homes is accepted, but again I must point out to the hon. and learned Gentleman that, since the Conservative party came to power, 126,000 new homes in Wales have been provided, which is an increase of more than 11 per cent., while the population has grown by less than 3 per cent.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

30. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Attorney-General what steps he is taking to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Crown prosecution service.

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): The Crown prosecution service is continuing to develop best practice on a national basis through the national operational practice initiative. It is continuing to recruit high-quality lawyers and is making substantial progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the working group on pre-trial issues.

Mr. Lidington: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply. Is he aware of the problems that the CPS has caused to the police service in Aylesbury and elsewhere by its insistence that the police should supply it with lengthy written summaries of tape-recorded interviews? That insistence is causing police officers to spend hours seated at word processors instead of being out on the beat catching criminals. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that that is a waste of time? Will he consider whether the situation could be improved?

The Attorney-General: I understand my hon. Friend's point, but I would strongly acquit the CPS of the use of the word "caused". The use of summaries is standard procedure, but I recognise the advantage of typed transcripts, done by typists, straight off. That can provide tremendous benefits to the criminal justice system, as can the immediate typing of all the papers at that stage.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Attorney-General satisfied that at all times the CPS gets the right people charged? Is he satisfied that its effectiveness and efficiency, which resulted in the three Matrix Churchill people being brought before the court, were correct? Would it not have been more proper for all those Cabinet members to be brought before the court, instead of those three people? Is it not a coincidence that that case managed to last over the general election and was sub judice for all that time, so the real truth could not come out about Iraq-gate? If it had, we would have been faced with a different situation in that general election—where the Prime Minister and all the rest of them would have been referred to as the guilty men, and not the three people in that case.

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman's comments are as riddled with confusion as any of those that we have heard recently. An important feature of our prosecuting system is that it is independent. The prosecuting authority in the Matrix Churchill case was Customs and Excise, an independent prosecuting authority which employed independent counsel. The independent leading counsel is someone of great experience who is much respected in his profession. He acted throughout with complete integrity—as, I believe, did everyone involved in the prosecution process.

Mr. Wilkinson: Is it my right hon. and learned Friend's belief that the Crown prosecution service is a more reliable prosecuting authority than Customs and Excise, which brought a successful case against Ordnance Technology in the Crown court in Reading last February? It led to the conviction of three directors of that company and two other personnel on charges relating to the transfer of weapon-making equipment, supposedly to Jordan. Will my right hon. and learned Friend examine that matter as well?

The Attorney-General: If I understand my hon. Friend correctly, he is worried about the propriety of a particular case. Although I do not know enough about that case, I think that he may well be able to refer it to the independent inquiry to be set up shortly and chaired by Lord Justice Scott.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the Attorney-General confirm that if the Scott inquiry shows there to be evidence of criminal offences by any person, however high his position and whether or not he be a Member of the House, the same level of independence will be applied to possible prosecutions as that about which the right hon. and learned Gentleman spoke earlier?

The Attorney-General: I confirm that absolutely. The prosecuting process in this country is carried out by independent prosecuting authorities without fear or favour and without regard in that sense to whomsoever it may have to consider.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the allegations by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) were superbly refuted by leading and junior counsel in the case, who said that everything had been carried out with complete propriety and that Ministers could not avoid their responsibilities? Were not those points made clear by prosecuting counsel when laying the papers before the court?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend makes valid points, all of which will be capable of being considered learnedly, independently and impartially by Lord Justice Scott when he carries out his inquiry.

Mr. Fraser: Is not it the duty of the Attorney-General—both as head of the prosecution service and because of his inherent power to put an end to any prosecution, whether brought by the CPS, Customs and Excise or anybody else—to undertake that never again will he allow a prosecution to proceed where he had personally obliged Ministers to sign immunity certificates and where, if the judge had believed what those Ministers were saying, innocent people might have been sent to prison?

Is not the right hon. and learned Gentleman's duty to justice greater than the duty to Ministers to hide behind immunity certificates? Just what is the authority for saying that immunity certificates are mandatory? Surely somebody could use some common sense in these cases.

The Attorney-General: First, I agree with one of the hon. Gentleman's points—that the duty to justice supervenes all others. That said, I was surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman repeating a number of points that, quite frankly, are badly made and ill-founded.

The hon. Gentleman and I frequently ask and answer questions across the Dispatch Box, so with all respect I say to him that he is mistaken in a number of his suggestions. However, all those matters will be capable of being properly investigated by Lord Justice Scott.

Sentencing

31. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Attorney-General how often he has appealed against the leniency of sentences since he was granted that power.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): Since 1 February 1989, when the power to seek leave to appeal against an unduly lenient sentence came into effect, 103 references have been made to the Court of Appeal, including nine references to the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland. As at last Friday, 69 references have been determined. In 56 of those the original sentence has been increased—more than 80 per cent.

Mr. Marshall: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that the Court of Appeal and the Attorney-General have combined to create entirely acceptable sentences that can be applied in future sentencing policy? Does he agree also that the high success rate emphasises the extreme folly of those who opposed the introduction of the new power by this House?

The Solicitor-General: My hon. Friend is right. We hear a great deal from the Labour party about justice, but let us examine the Opposition's record when the provisions passed through the House. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said that they were "wrong in principle", had been introduced for political purposes, and would impose

> "political influence and political pressure on sentencing."—[*Official Report*, 18 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. 692.]

That was an astonishing complaint because the letters that my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General receives asking for cases to be referred include a considerable number from Labour Members. Have they changed their policy in the meantime?

War Crimes Act 1991

32. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the operation of the War Crimes Act 1991.

The Attorney-General: The special unit established by the Metropolitan police is investigating all the allegations made to the Hetherington/Chalmers inquiry, together with other allegations made subsequently to the police. Inquiries are being concentrated initially on those cases offering the best prospects of a useful investigation.

Mr. Winnick: I hope that the 1991 Act will not be a dead letter and that those who should be prosecuted according to the rule of law will be so prosecuted. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that under no circumstances will Ministers sign immunity certificates in such cases? Bearing in mind recent events, such an assurance is much needed.

The Attorney-General: I can certainly confirm that if and when the police come forward with a case to be considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions and myself, prosecution decisions will be undertaken precisely in accordance with the code for Crown prosecutors and normal standards.

As for the hon. Gentleman's second point, he repeats a misunderstanding that has fairly wide currency—that to claim public interest immunity in accordance with legal duty is to deny the court a document. In fact, under the system documents are put before the court by prosecuting counsel. The judge then performs a balancing exercise having, if he considers it appropriate—as he normally would in a criminal case—seen the documents himself.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Drought, Africa

36. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he expects to visit the drought-affected areas of the African continent in the next six months; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development hopes to visit drought-affected areas of Africa again in the new year. She did so last September. We are wholeheartedly exerting ourselves to help the victims of drought and other disasters in Africa.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does not the Secretary of State agree that the 100 mecu currently languishing in Community development budgets should be urgently released? Will he bring his influence to bear at the EC Development Council meeting later this week, to ensure that money is spent on establishing a special plan for African recovery? Surely there is something seriously wrong with the system that allows money to languish when thousands are starving in Africa.

Mr. Hurd: I will certainly try to speed things up. This year, Britain has committed £150 million in humanitarian help to Africa, including £63 million to drought-affected areas. A great deal is being done to help.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Does not our noble Friend Lady Chalker enjoy a high reputation because of all the work that she is doing to improve our relations with Africa, and is not this country already doing a considerable amount to aid Africa—not least in the important matter of water extraction and the water industry throughout Africa, which is part of the base of the problem?

Mr. Hurd: That is certainly true. I am glad that—contrary to dire predictions from Opposition Members—we have been able to maintain our aid programme in the public spending review. I think that, in the circumstances, most people would regard ours as a very reputable record.

Child Labour

37. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it the policy of the Overseas Development Administration to use the aid budget to seek to eliminate the employment of children in dangerous or unhealthy conditions in recipient countries.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): It is the policy of the Overseas Development Administration to help those children who are forced, through poverty, to work in dangerous and unhealthy conditions.

Mr. Bayley: Is the Minister aware that an increase in the volume of exports of Colombian coal is forcing more and more people in Colombia to buy from the domestic market serviced by small mines? According to a recent statement by the Anti-Slavery Society for the Protection of Human Rights, 900 of those small mines employ children, some as young as five years old.

Does the Minister accept that the Government's policy of electricity privatisation has led to the purchase of considerable amounts of Colombian coal by PowerGen and National Power, and that compulsory competitive tendering has forced local authorities to do the same? Will he make it his policy to use the development budget to support development projects that will eliminate the use of child labour in Colombia?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have been informed by Carbocol, the Colombian coal company, that no coal exported to Britain from Colombia is produced through the use of child labour. If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence of the contrary, I shall of course want it to be considered very carefully.

It is very much the Government's policy to use ODA resources to help with the awkward problem of child labour throughout the world. Children are sent to work because of the great poverty that exists throughout the world. All our projects take cognisance of that, and try to improve living standards so that child labour is no longer used.

Procurement Policy

38. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of overseas aid is used for the procurement overseas of British goods and services.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The proportion of bilateral aid commitments tied to British goods and services was 76 per cent. in 1989, 79 per cent. in 1990 and 74 per cent. in 1991.

Mr. Fabricant: Do British manufacturers derive any export benefit from multilateral aid—aid given through the European Commission or, indeed, through agencies of the United Nations?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Certainly. I have just given the overall percentage for bilateral aid; a total of £934 million helped British industry in 1991. We reckon that, over the seven years between 1982 and 1989, every £1 contributed to multilateral aid produced £1·40 for British goods and services.

Aid Programme

39. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the level of the overseas aid programme for the next two years.

Mr. Hurd: As announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement, the aid programme for developing countries is planned to rise in 1993-94 to £1,900 million, compared with £1,835 million this year, and then to be maintained at that level in 1994-95.

Mr. Jones: Is the Foreign Secretary aware that today more than 3,000 Somalis are stranded, starving, in a ship in the Red sea? That is a matter of deep personal concern to my constituents in Cardiff who have relatives in Somalia. Is not the right hon. Gentleman ashamed that, on this day, we have frozen our overseas aid for the next two years, effectively saving £75 million next year and £150 million the year after, and cutting our aid budget by 12 per cent. over those two years?

Mr. Hurd: I am told that the refugees to whom the hon. Gentleman refers have now reached Yemen. Our aid to Somalia this year has been substantial—£27 million sterling. As for the total figures, I have received, as no doubt the hon. Gentleman received, many letters protesting against the Government's intention to cut aid by 15 per cent. I do not know where that story came from. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman does. However, it has been completely falsified by events. They show a rise, in cash terms, in aid to developing countries this year; a steady figure, in cash terms, in the remaining two years; and, as regards our total external assistance, including eastern Europe, a rise in cash and in real terms, throughout the three years. In the circumstances, that is a very satisfactory outcome.

Mr. Wells: Is it not true that the increase in the aid budget, which I congratulate my right hon. Friend on securing, clearly helps the poorest countries, and the poorest people in those countries? However, because it is tied to the acquisition of British goods and services and to the employment of British people, does it not help this country out of recession, as well?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, it does have that effect. Although much of our aid is untied, British industry benefits greatly as a result. It is widely felt in the House, even on partisan occasions, that the quality of British aid is high and that it is well targeted. I am delighted that the total agreed in the autumn statement is, in the circumstances, a good one.

Mr. Meacher: Contrary to what the Foreign Secretary said, does he not acknowledge that to freeze the aid budget for two years after 1993 will cut £75 million off aid programmes that had been planned in the first year, and £150 million in the second year, and that that represents altogether about 12 per cent. of the whole aid budget for this year—£225 million? Is the Foreign Secretary aware that the two-year freeze, plus the 15 per cent. devaluation after black Wednesday, will cut the value of British aid abroad over the next three years by no less than a quarter? Is he also aware that the latest cuts represent yet another prime ministerial U-turn and broken promise? At Rio, the Prime Minister promised that he would increase British aid, but it is being frozen and reduced. If he is still Prime Minister at the end of this week, should he not be hanging his head in shame when the European Community Development Council meets?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman has juggled rather desperately with figures which even he must admit are a good deal better than he probably expected. As regards his one substantial point, the effect on the exchange rate, he will know that a very large proportion of our aid is calculated and paid for in sterling.

Points of Order

3.32 pm

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As you know, I very rarely raise a point of order, but I do so today on an issue of considerable importance. May I respectfully ask whether you have received a request from the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), to whom I have given proper written notice of my intention to refer to him this afternoon, to make a statement about issues that he has raised in public on matters that are the proper concern of the Lord Justice Scott inquiry? It has been very much in the style of his recent unsubstantiated allegations on a whole range of topics and of statements that he had made that subsequently have been proved to be false. I refer to what the hon. Gentleman said in this place:

"I believe that self-governing trusts . . . are patently designed to pave the way for the privatisation of the Health Service."—[*Official Report*, 13 March 1990; Vol. 169, c. 339.]

As the House knows, that is totally untrue. Is there any reason to suppose that the hon. Gentleman's statement in connection with matters to be inquired into by Lord Justice Scott will not also prove to be other than false?

Madam Speaker: I think that I can deal with that point of order. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has not been in touch with me about these matters. As the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) knows, it is not a point of order, or a matter that the Chair of this House can deal with.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I hope that this is a fresh point of order and not the same point of order.

Mr. Flynn: Yes, it is.

Madam Speaker: Very well.

Mr. Flynn: You will be aware, Madam Speaker, of the long-stated concern of many Back Benchers about the need for parliamentary scrutiny of the secret intelligence service and MI5. There is news today that a committee is to be set up, but the suggestion is that it will not be directly answerable to Parliament. Given today's further allegation that MI5 has been spying on a member of the royal family, is not it crucial that a statement is made in the House and that the body that is established is directly answerable to the House?

Madam Speaker: No Minister or Department has informed me that they wish to make a statement.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm the deadline by which the subject for today's Opposition day debate had to be with your office? My understanding is that it was by close of business on Friday. If so, it seems a little puzzling that I have listened over the weekend to various Liberal Democrat spokesmen saying how they would rather debate Matrix Churchill and the Scott inquiry than the subject that has been chosen. Will you confirm that this is not censorship on your part, Madam Speaker, but incompetence on theirs?

Madam Speaker: There has been no censorship on my part; and I have been far too busy over the weekend to listen to the radio or to watch television.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As the guardian of hon. Members's rights, will you, Madam Speaker, deprecate the failure of Departments to answer questions tabled by Members? Last Thursday, I tabled 10 written questions to the Foreign Office and the Home Office about the impact of visas on Bosnian nationals. To date, I have not received even a holding reply. Would it be in order for the Minister speaking in tonight's debate on Bosnia to make it clear whether the 180 nationals who have been invited to this country by the Leeds-based organisation Alert will be granted visas so that they can enter this country for medical treatment and for the other urgent reasons why they need to come here?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman appreciates that it is up to the Minister at the Dispatch Box to make whatever speech he wishes to make. If he wishes to declare such matters, that is entirely up to him. It would not be for me to withhold any information or statement that a Minister wanted to make. No doubt the hon. Gentleman's point on parliamentary questions will have been heard on the Treasury Bench and he will receive an answer shortly.

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I seek your guidance on how hon. Members can obtain an early opportunity to debate public interest immunity, especially in the light of the public statement made by defence counsel in the Matrix Churchill case that Ministers acted honourably——

Madam Speaker: Order. These are matters for the Leader of the House at business questions on Thursday.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It has been announced that the Scott inquiry will go ahead, but its terms of reference have not been published—I checked with the Library before coming into the Chamber. Will there be some opportunity for the terms of reference to be debated in the House before the inquiry is set up? It will be extremely unfortunate if its terms of reference are rather narrow. The House will not have the opportunity of discussing the terms of reference, and if evidence is submitted Lord Justice Scott and his colleagues can argue that they cannot deal with it because it is outside the inquiry's terms of reference. Will we be in a position to debate the terms of reference and, if so, when?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting point. I refer him to the fact that it is for the Leader of the House to determine whether there will be a debate or a statement on the subject. It is not a matter for the Chair.

Sir Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You may be able to help me and other hon. Members. I understand what you said to my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) about the competency of the Chair in these matters. However, we are subjected almost daily to a barrage of allegations about hon. Members by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). In the past, such allegations have been totally destroyed when he has had to appear on television, for example, to justify them. Can you help us on the matter? Is there any way in which you can ensure that the allegations are made in the House to enable hon. Members to question the hon. Member for Livingston? If he has something to say, he should say it here where other hon. Members can comment on it.

Madam Speaker: Our rules and procedures are not being abused in any way. The straight answer to the hon. Gentleman is no, I have no authority in those matters.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In respect of questions about Saddamgate, we appreciate that there will be difficulties about what the Table Office will accept. One of the points I have been trying to get in the form of a question is how many Cabinet Ministers are involved in trying to pervert the course of justice. The Table Office is not very happy about taking——

Madam Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman has a point of order, I shall deal with it. I am not interested in any speeches that he may want to make.

Mr. Skinner: At the end of the day, all questions are a matter for you, Madam Speaker. If the Table Office says no, we can ask whether you are prepared to accept the question. If you are not prepared to accept my question —the way in which you jumped up suggested that you are not very happy about it—may we ask how many Cabinet Ministers are in the Saddamgate loop? That is the vital question today.

Madam Speaker: It very much depends on how the hon. Gentleman phrases questions. To quote a famous phrase, he should try harder.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I do not want you to think that I am not interested in the debates on homelessness and on Bosnia. However, further to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway), I clearly heard through the media at the weekened the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), the leader of the Liberal Democrats, say that he was forced to have a debate on those subjects and not on Iraqgate as he wanted. May we have your assurance that no pressure has been put on you to prevent a debate on Iraqgate? That will expose the scandalous lies that have been—*[Interruption.]* I withdraw that term.

Madam Speaker: Order. This is getting repetitive. Nobody puts pressure on me, either in the Chair or anywhere else.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Further to the answer you gave the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), may I ask you to clarify one issue? If an hon. Member deals in a distortion of documents, and peddles those distortions to the press, when the documents are clearly going to be the subject of a proper inquiry, will you rule it in order for Conservative Members to table early-day motions relating to that fact and to those distortions?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members must frame their early-day motions. I shall then look at them carefully.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On the question of documents, it is well within the recollection of the House that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has made something of a speciality of dealing in leaked documents of one sort or another. Will you advise the House on the proper relationship between an hon. Member and members of the civil service, especially in light of the hon. Gentleman's experience? On one well catalogued occasion, he used a document that had come from a civil servant via his adviser. Is that behaviour to be deprecated or to be applauded by the Chair?

Madam Speaker: The page number of "Erskine May" escapes me at the moment. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that the Speaker does not give such guidance and information across the Floor of the Chamber.

Mr. Jimmy Boyce (Rotherham): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) about the terms of reference of the Scott inquiry, I raised the same point of order last week and you, Madam Speaker, told me that I had overestimated your powers. I believe that this issue goes to the heart of democracy in this country. If you do not have the power, Madam Speaker, can you advise me, as a new hon. Member, how we can get to the bottom of the matter, given that people are hiding behind the Attorney-General's skirts and he is going to drop the terms of reference——

Madam Speaker: Order. The terms of reference of an inquiry are not a matter for the Speaker.

Mr. Boyce: They should be.

Madam Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman and the House feel that they should be, then by all means alter our rules and procedure and give me that authority which I do not have at the moment—but not today.

Opposition Day

[5TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Homelessness and Mortgages

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.45 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I beg to move,

> That this House notes the shameful state of housing in Britain and the horrifying total of well over 150,000 families a year now accepted as homeless by local councils; further notes that over 75,000 homes were repossessed last year and that over 190,000 people are now more than six months in arrears with mortgage repayments; deplores the fact that in real terms the proportion of national expenditure spent on housing has more than halved since 1979; recognises that in the Autumn Statement, although Her Majesty's Government has announced a few measures which will assist some of those in need, its proposals are altogether inadequate and have yet again failed to include the release of the accrued £5·5 billion of local authority capital receipts, higher credit approvals for councils with few or no receipts including those in Scotland, and a nationwide programme of home insulation; believes that the only reliable way out of the recession is a large scale public investment programme of which a central element should be higher capital spending for home renovation and new build; and calls on the Government to introduce such a programme which would rescue the construction industry, boost the general economy and provide real jobs, whilst at the same time ending for many the nightmare of a life in cardboard city, in bed and breakfast accommodation or in a home that is under imminent threat of repossession.

It gives me no pleasure to have to introduce a debate on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends on housing, homelessness and the mortgage crisis in Britain. I move the motion because, since the general election, the House has not had the opportunity to debate properly the state of housing in Britain. I move it because the housing crisis is a crisis the length and breadth of the country. I move it because, after 13 years of Tory Government, all their promises have been seen to be shallow and hollow and millions have suffered as a result.

In 1983, the former right hon. Member for Finchley, now Baroness Thatcher, said and had printed in the Conservative party manifesto for that year:

> "Our goal is to make Britain the best housed nation in Europe."

Nine years later, I wonder how far she believes that we have moved towards that goal.

The majority of people who come to Members' surgeries—and you, Madam Speaker, will be as aware of this as any other Member of this House—come with housing problems. It is clear to them that housing is the most fundamental issue that a Government must address. It is a kind of fundamental human right.

Housing is a moral issue as well as a practical issue. The Catholic bishops conference stated in 1985:

> "First of all, housing is a moral issue. Decent physical accommodation is a basic need and not a luxury; a right, not a concession."

Another quote sums up quite well how important housing is in the spectrum of policies that concern us all:

> "Housing is the greatest of all social needs. It is the first priority among social services. Even the best schools, clinics, hospitals, playing fields and libraries are something of a mockery to those thousands of families who have no decent home of their own."

That was a quotation from the then Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, to the Tory party conference in Blackpool the year after I was born. Everyone of right judgment would agree with Harold Macmillan, and it is a tragedy that the 13 years of Tory rule have not dealt with that agenda in a way that the people of Britain need and would have wished.

We could look at any of the last four Conservative manifestos, but perhaps we should concentrate on the last but one Tory manifesto in the middle of the period in the 1980s which encouraged and pushed people into buying even though one had always understood that it was Tory policy to encourage people to choose—in this case, to choose whether to rent or to buy. The 1987 Tory manifesto stated:

> "Housing is the biggest single investment that most people make, whether in money or in time, skill and effort. In the last eight years, as a result of our policies, we have seen a dramatic increase in home ownership. In the next five years we will complement that with policies designed to improve the supply and condition of the rented housing stock."

Four years after the goal of making this country the best-housed nation in Europe, other targets were set—other targets which also have abysmally not been met.

On 4 February 1992, the Minister for Housing and Planning, whom my colleagues and I respect and welcome to his job, when speaking in the "Roof" debate, which we both did, just before the general election, said:

> "The goal has to be a decent home for everyone in the tenure that he or she wants and at the price that he or she can afford."

There is a consistency about the rhetoric. There is also, tragically, a consistency about the practice.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way so early in his speech. The House will accept the sincerity of his comments and of the motion. While he is dealing with consistency and manifesto content, will he tell the House whether his party still stands by the pledge that was given in its manifesto in the recent election to scrap mortgage interest relief? Does he agree that if that pledge were implemented, and if it is still held strongly by his party, it would add to the misery of many millions of home owners today?

Mr. Hughes: Interventions are often predictable, and interventions that are culled from Tory central office briefings are more predicatable. I not only predicted but welcome the opportunity to deal with a distortion of the truth. I shall deal with that now because the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) and his colleagues might otherwise continue to press me, thinking that I am not dealing with that matter straight away.

My colleagues and I have had a very clear view, and it is supported by all informed opinion, no matter whether it is professional from the housing sector, from the Confederation of British Industry, from housing charities or from the most famous source of all, the inquiry chaired by the Duke of Edinburgh, and that is that a system of tax relief that advantages those who purchase over those who rent is unfair and should be replaced as soon as possible in the fairest possible way.

What my colleagues and I proposed at the election was very simple. It was not the abolition of mortgage interest tax relief; it was for the future and for those who have not yet bought the replacement of that form of tax relief by a different form of tax relief, which we called housing cost relief and which would be available to those who bought and to those who rented alike. We have never proposed abolition. We have proposed doing what all informed opinion argues should be done, which is to move to a fair system of assisting everybody to acquire a home of the sort that they want when they want.

Mr. Conway: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: I will not give way again, because I hope that the answer was not only comprehensive but that it will allow the hon. Gentleman to understand our policy and not distort it.

Conservative policies of the past 13 years have resulted for many in homelessness or old, cold and damp housing, and, worse in recent years, the increasing risk to those who have bought that their homes will be repossessed over their heads. That blight affects all parts of the country and people of all ages and backgrounds. Whether I talk to my hon. Friends the Members for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), who are from one of the most remote parts of the north of Scotland in rural Britain, my hon. and learned Friend from rural mid-Wales, the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), my hon. Friends from the south-west, whether in citiies such as Bath or Truro or in rural communities such as north Conwall and north Devon, my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), or my colleagues on the council in the London borough of Southwark, the problem is essentially the same. There are queues of people who cannot be housed and queues of people who, although housed, do not think that they will be able to stay in their housing either because it is unfit or because they fear that they will not be able to keep up the payments for the home which they have been persuaded to buy.

Young people and others on the streets of cities such as London are the most visible victims, but there are many other invisible victims of the housing crisis. Today, my colleagues and I want to show that there are in this House people who understand the severity of the crisis and who believe it possible, given the political will and within the term of one Parliament, to ensure that the goals expressed over the years are achieved and that everyone in Britain has a home at a price he or she can afford.

I shall deal briefly with the record. How many houses are there; are we meeting the need? The statistics are clear. The most recent figures on house building starts and completions were issued by the Department of the Environment in November this year. They show that starts in Great Britain in the past 10 years have decreased from 194,000 to 160,000—lower than ever before. Completions have fallen from 175,800 to about 167,000—lower than ever before.

The National Council of Building Material Producers, in its October bulletin on the state of the building industry, says:

> "There are ominous signs that the industry is now moving into a deeper recessionary phase and that the situation is very much worse than had been anticipated in our February survey. The autumn state of trade survey reflects the appalling state of the construction industry."

The number of jobs in all parts of the industry has fallen too. Since July 1989 the Federation of Master Builders has lost 260,000 construction workers. A quarter of the skilled work force is out of work, and apprenticeships are down by 50 per cent.

We are not building the necessary houses, and on current projections there is no prospect of our doing so.

What has happened meanwhile to the number of people wanting property? The most objective statistics are those for households accepted as homeless. Record numbers of such households exist. In England, in the second quarter of 1992, there were 34,840. In London, in the second quarter of 1992, 9,400 households were accepted as homeless and there were more than 10,000 in other English metropolitan areas. In the same period 62,780 households were in temporary accommodation—6,500 more than a year ago; 11,000 households were in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Last year more than 150,000 households in the United Kingdom were accepted as homeless, and about 1,250,000 were on waiting lists. Probably another 750,000 households need somewhere, but are staying with family or friends on settees or on floors. The census carried out a year ago counted just under 3,000 people sleeping rough, and at the same time a quarter of the housing stock is deemed unsuitable for human habitation, as defined by an Act of Parliament introduced by this Government.

England, Scotland and Wales exhibit similar characteristics. Increases between 1979 and 1989-91 are recorded in all three countries. In 1979, in England, about 55,000 were accepted as homeless; in 1987, the relevant figure was 109,000; and in 1991, 150,000. In Wales, the figure rose from between 4,000 and 5,000 to more than 6,000, and, in Scotland, from 7,500 to more than 10,000. These are not just statistics: they are people and families among the most vulnerable groups in society, and we all too regularly hear tragic stories of people in just such categories as these.

Of course, during the eighties, many people took the Government's advice and bought. They decided to avail themselves of mortgage interest tax relief and became owner-occupiers. What has happened to them? So far, 1992 has been—and is likely to continue to be—the worst year for house price reductions since records began. The transaction volume—the number of properties bought and sold—is the lowest since 1974, when far fewer people owned their homes.

Mortgage rates and mortgage repayments are low—no doubt the Minister will tell us that they are the lowest for 20 years—but, with the fears surrounding the prospect of purchase today, many people now will not buy.

The worst fear is that of unemployment. According to every projection, official unemployment is soon likely to rise to well over 3 million and people are not likely to buy if they do not think that they will have the money to pay for their house. They fear that the house price will fall below the value of the mortgage. One in five of the people who bought during the past five years now owns a property which is worth less than they paid for it. That is hardly a good investment, although one that has been explicitly encouraged by Tory policies.

As of June, according to the most recent report of UBS Phillips and Drew, there were 1·5 million households in the debt trap, which is one seventh of all households with a mortgage. The Bank of England estimates that 1 million people are in that position and have an average debt of more than £6,000 on their property.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): The hon. Gentleman referred to the UBS Phillips and Drew survey. He is aware, of course, that earlier in the year a UBS Phillips and Drew forecast was that there might be a 14 per cent. increase in house prices next year. One of the fears was that that might start too much of a sustained rush back into owner occupation. The picture that the hon. Gentleman paints, which reflects the concerns of many home owners, must be seen within the context of the survey he quoted, which also said that that situation might quickly turn round.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): We have heard that before.

Mr. Hughes: Yes, as my hon. Friend says, we have heard that before: we have heard all too many promises about green shoots and things turning round.

I have read the whole of the most recent survey, which makes it abundantly clear, in black and white, that the prospect is that things will get worse and not better in 1993. That was before the autumn statement, which I shall deal with later. The survey states that, at best, things might improve for some people in 1994. I hope the hon. Gentleman does not dispute what the survey says.

The survey also states that confidence in the housing market is at an all-time low. I do not think that there is any dispute about the fact that all those people who were encouraged to buy are now in as bad a position as many who stayed in the rented sector.

To put the most unpleasant icing on this unpleasant cake, one of the saddest things that I have read was in a law report in *The Times* in August. The headline read, "Children of mortgage defaulters have no right to be rehoused." If one fails to keep up mortgage payments, one can be declared to be intentionally homeless and cannot therefore be housed by the local authority, which would otherwise have a duty to house people who were on the streets.

Our last major indictment is on debt. The right hon. Lady who was, until recently, the Prime Minister of this country for far too many years said that she was in favour of family life and against debt. What has happened to debt which is the product of house purchase, which is normally the most expensive purchase that anyone makes? In the early 1980s, personal debt was about 55 per cent. of the annual disposable income of adults in Great Britain; it is now 114 per cent. of disposable income. At the same time as the number of people waiting to be housed has risen, so the number of people in debt with their properties and likely to remain so has risen. Many of them bought under the right-to-buy scheme initiated in the 1980s. They are in as bad a state as the rest, with unexpected capital, service, and sinking fund charges to pay. Having bought council stock from a council whose tenants they had been for years, they now find that they cannot keep up the mortgage payments either.

All those things are happening while around us tens of thousands, or even hundreds of thousands, of empty properties lie waiting to be used.

Tory policy in relation to tenants and owner-occupiers could be summarised so far as a double whammy. It is now in danger of becoming a triple whammy because a potentially final knockout blow is about to be struck. Next April, people in housing will have to pay a council tax, and the bills of many people who pay a poll tax may go up by 50 per cent. The council tax about to be brought in by the Government will make the properties to which many people have hung on through the bad times impossible to hang on to any longer.

It is not surprising that the Government's policies have not lived up to expectations because their expenditure on housing as a percentage of our national wealth has dropped phenomenally. When the Government came to power, we spent about £11·5 thousand million on housing; we now spend less than £6 thousand million. The Minister cannot argue that such a large proportion of people have bought their own homes that the percentage is bound to go down. He knows that the number of people who have bought their own homes has not doubled in the past 10 years and that, while the budget on housing has been slashed, expenditure on health, law and order and social security as a proportion of our national wealth has gone up substantially. The Government cannot expect people to be adequately housed when they cut the nation's housing budget from 2·7 per cent. to 1 per cent. of gross domestic product—a cut of 62 per cent., which is larger than the cut in the budget of any other of the Government's public expenditure programmes.

Not only politicians but many of our constituents were hoping that, at the Government's first opportunity since the election, they would have realised the urgency of the problem. Even Conservatives were hoping that, and many local Conservative associations submitted motions on housing to the Tory party conference, among other things, urging the Government to remove controls on local authorities' receipts. Motions from north Cornwall, Taunton and Honiton, among others from the south and from the north, said that the £6 billion or a little less from the sale of council properties should be used. The Confederation of British Industry, Shelter and all the opposition parties argued for it.

However, the autumn statement failed adequately to respond. On housing, it started by stating the obvious. The Minister said that housing and the construction industry had faced particular difficulties in the past two years, and then made some announcements. Although there is extra money, two obvious comments can be made about the £700 million plus which the Government committed last week. First, it is simply a drop in the ocean; and, secondly, it is a con because much of the money that has now been given has been taken away from programmes for the following two years.

A simple, objective analysis was made in the weekend press. *The Guardian* on Saturday said:

> "The Chancellor's Autumn Statement brought some cheer to home buyers but fell far short of the radical moves which many had hoped for."

The CBI said:

> "Capital receipts are also unevenly distributed and it is too early to assess the effects of the relaxation of the rules . . . on individual authorities."

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities said:

> "On capital receipts we are told we cannot spend the money we raised when the property boom was in progress but we can spend anything we can raise now the boom is past and gone. Such freedom is not going to lead to much rejoicing in the coalfields and the conurbations."

Last week the Government responded to the call for the release of capital receipts—but which capital receipts? Only those from 13 November 1992 until 1 January 1994, predicted receipts the Government say are worth about £1·75 billion. Putting aside the fact that most Government predictions over the past few years have been miles from the truth, there is not much point in saying that anyone who buys now from a local authority—and they might be mad to do so—will see their purchase money spent by that authority to increase the lowest ever amount of local authority building. As the AMA press release made clear, the capital receipts that were accumulated when people were buying because the market was good are still frozen in the bank. In England and Wales they are called receipts, while in Scotland they are called credits, but the result of the announcement is just the same.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I can see how the release of capital receipts would benefit my constituency in which there have been many council house sales and where we have had to tackle an acute but not large problem of homelessness. However, I am slightly at a loss to see how it would help the hon. Gentleman's constituents, because his local authority is already £0·9 billion in debt.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman touches on the important problem of how to render equal treatment to local authorities, given that the right to buy is exercised much more in areas where there are more houses than high-rise flats. He cites a good example because my authority has about 60,000 properties, the largest number of any London authority. They are mainly flats, and many of them are high-rise flats which do not sell as well as traditional council housing.

The subject is complicated and I shall not do the hon. Gentleman the injustice of pretending that it is simple. There are various ways to account for public expenditure capital receipts and to attribute the money to the accounting budget in terms of either the Government planning total or the public expenditure borrowing requirement. It is, however, possible to arrange the collection of receipts and the distribution of local authority rights to borrow to give a fair distribution that responds to the needs of local authorities.

My hon. Friends and I, whether we represent urban or rural constituencies, argue for a formula that will fairly distribute for housing renovation or repair the money that is currently locked in local authority coffers or banks. Of course, some of that money may already have been spent. It is quite possible to do that without exceeding the Government's public expenditure total of £45 billion. The Minister and I and others have had long debates about that. I shall give the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) an example. We could retrospectively legislate to allow receipts prior to this financial year to be counted outside the public expenditure total. It would have no effect on the Government total for the current year or on their projections for the year ahead. The issue is complicated, but there is a solution and the Government should find it.

The Government have given £750 million to housing associations to buy empty and repossessed properties and it is reckoned that about 20,000 such properties will be bought. However, the con is that, although the Government previously promised the Housing Corporation £1·92 billion for 1993-94, that sum has now been reduced by £133 million. For the following year, they previously promised the Housing Corporation £1·77 billion, but that has now been reduced by £190 million as well. There is money to bring back 20,000 properties into use, but it has been found at the expense of meeting the housing needs of Britain in 1993 and the years to come. If that is not a con, what is? It is also sad that the rough sleepers initiative, which was supposed to meet the needs of those at the acute end of the housing crisis, has also been cut as a result of the autumn statement.

My party has argued a consistent case for many years. It is that the only way for Britain to be adequately housed is for us to invest in it, led from the public purse by those in charge of the Exchequer and Ministers in spending Departments. We repeat that call today. Let me put it simply, because the arguments have been well made.

There should be a large increase in public expenditure, specifically to fund house building and house repairs. It is good value for money, and it not a foolish way to conduct public accounts. We should cut the uniform business rate as that will allow some businesses to put money into housing as well. We should have a stable interest rate policy so that people feel encouraged to buy, in the knowledge that they will not be penalised in the years ahead. We should invest in training and in keeping people in work so that the construction industry can recover.

Perhaps most acutely now, there should be a new element of public finance, a subsidy that would allow people in difficulty to keep their homes or perhaps convert from mortgages to rents. It is entirely possible—and we have put out figures to show this—to start turning the corner of Britain's housing crisis. Our indictment of the Government is that, over the past 13 years—and they cannot blame anybody else because they have been told over and over again—they have, worse than not listening and failing to act, condemned millions of people in a rich and civilised country to conditions that are not only unsatisfactory but often inhumane.

Of all elements of policy, it is this policy and record of which the Government should be most ashamed. I am sad that they have so far given no adequate answers. I hope that now they are at least embarrassed enough to do something about the crisis before many other people suffer as all too many have already done.

4.17 pm

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Sir George Young): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"notes the Government's continuing commitment to housing policies designed to ensure that a decent home is within reach of every family, and in particular to promoting the growth of owner-occupation, widening choice for tenants, and improving value-for-money and targeting of public expenditure; and especially welcomes the measures announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement which—consistently with the need to maintain tight control of public spending in the interests of the economy and the taxpayer—will contribute to stabilising the housing market, will increase the supply of social housing thereby helping homeless families, and will promote investment in renovation of run-down council estates."

The Government welcome this opportunity to debate housing. As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said, it is an important subject to millions of our citizens. The Government are happy to explain and defend their record on housing.

Last Thursday, while most of us were listening to the Chancellor's autumn statement, someone was drafting the motion before the House, a serious motion but one drafted with a strange mixture of *Sun* headlines and *Guardian* prose. As I hope to show, all the people mentioned in the

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motion have reason to welcome the measures in the autumn statement. Indeed, I see that, in a release last Thursday, Shelter said:

> "Shelter strongly welcomes Government initiatives to provide more homes."

That shows that, while Shelter regularly urges us to do better, it recognises progress when it sees it.

By contrast, the rather grudging recognition in the motion—

> "although Her Majesty's Government has announced a few measures which will assist some of those in need"—

does less than justice to the scale of the Government's response last week to the case for housing.

Let me set out those whom the hon. Gentleman has identified in the motion. They include those sleeping rough, those in "bed and breakfast accommodation", those

> "accepted as homeless by local councils",

those in difficulty with their mortgages, those in housing in need of improvement and the construction industry. Every hon. Member shares his concern for those groups and much was already being done to help, but we plan to do better.

Let me start with the most visible aspect of homelessness—rough sleeping. In a civilised society, no one should have to sleep rough. Over the past three years, under the rough sleepers initiative, we have made available £96 million to provide 900 hostel places, 2,200 places in permanent housing for those in hostels to move on to, and 700 places in flats and houses leased from private landlords.

Voluntary organisations estimated that, before the initiative began, more than 1,000 people were sleeping rough in central London. Their most recent count on 5 November showed that just over 400 people were sleeping rough, of whom fewer than 60 were under the age of 25. Many of those remaining will be helped by the initiative under way at Lincoln's Inn Fields to provide accommodation for them and, one hopes, to restore that open space to an attractive park that can be enjoyed by Londoners.

The rough sleeping initiative was to have ended on 31 March next year, but the autumn statement announced further resources to provide continuing help to rough sleepers. A further £86 million will now be made available to enable the excellent voluntary organisations, which are managing the programme, to build on their achievements and to drive the momentum forward to make it unnecessary for anyone to sleep rough. To project that funding as a cut does less than justice to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, because the hostels and permanent accommodation are, of course, still there. They will remain available in the forthcoming period. What is happening is that we are providing an extra £86 million over and above the resources originally planned. Moreover, I will shortly be announcing details of this year's cold weather shelters, which will open in a fortnight and which will provide accommodation for people who would otherwise have to sleep rough in central London this winter.

Even before the autumn statement the numbers of those in bed-and-breakfast accommodation had been falling. No one is in favour of it as a temporary form of accommodation. I see it as a measure of last resort. Many local authorities, to their credit, manage not to use it at all. In the past year the number of homeless families in such accommodation has gone down from 13,000 to 11,080. As a percentage the number is down from 24 per cent. to 18 per cent. In London the decrease has been more marked —from 8,110 to 5,870.

Those in bed-and-breakfast accommodation have more reason to welcome the autumn statement than any other group because of the way in which the 20,000 extra homes to be bought between now and the end of March compares with the figure of 11,080 who are currently in that accommodation. Those in bed and breakfast and other temporary accommodation will be rehoused more quickly as a result of the £630 million to be spent in England in the next four months. With the private finance that we plan to lever in, I expect the result to be a £1 billion package for recovery in the housing market.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): Will the Minister confirm that, at current rates of repossession, the number of home owners who are likely to lose their homes between now and the end of March will probably be well in excess of that 20,000? Will he tell us how there is any hope of significantly reducing the numbers in temporary accommodation when there is a huge additional demand to be met from home owners facing repossession?

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman knows that the number of court actions entered for repossession has fallen sharply by about 32 per cent. in the past year. The Council of Mortgage Lenders reckons that about 55,000 repossessions have been avoided as a result of the measures it introduced in December.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister quoted Shelter's reaction to the autumn statement and gave a litany of figures. What does he say to Shelter's comments in today's press release on rough sleepers, entitled "Government cuts in help for people sleeping rough. A matter of life and death"? It stated:

> "The Government has announced a cut of £5 million in help provided for the growing number of people sleeping rough on the streets of Britain . . . The 13 per cent. reduction . . . from £38 million to £33 million was revealed by the Department of the Environment on Friday morning, less than 24 hours after the Government's Autumn Statement".

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman is aware that the rough sleeping initiative was originally devised as a three-year programme and no provision was made in the public expenditure survey for any money after 31 March. We have found fresh resources to keep that initiative going and against that background it is misleading to allege that there has been any reduction in expenditure. Planned provision of help to rough sleepers has been increased.

On the question of the extra 20,000 homes to be made available, I am concerned—other hon. Members may share my concern—at the lack of mobility within the social sector of housing. New accommodation tends to go directly to those in temporary accommodation. It would be possible for an existing council tenant to move into the new accommodation and then to move a homeless family into the accommodation thereby released. A council tenant who chose to move would lose his right to buy, but he might be prepared for that if it meant that he could live in a more attractive property than his present home. I want the new stock that is acquired to be used to promote mobility. There should be more transfers for existing tenants where the scope for mobility within a council's stock is limited.

Of course, councils and housing associations must consider the issue in the light of local circumstances and they must take account of people's preferences. They should not assume that people are not prepared to move voluntarily outside the council sector if that would get them better houses.

I have been in touch with the National Federation of Housing Associations, the Housing Corporation and the Council of Mortgage Lenders. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment met mortgage lenders and the chairman of the Housing Corporation again this morning, when they underlined the importance that we attach to taking as many properties as possible off the market through the initiative. I am pleased to say that those lenders present confirmed that they would play a full and constructive part in the initiative. They are confident of responding to the challenge that the Government have set them and of providing the target number of homes.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: My hon. Friend referred to his meeting with the Council of Mortgage Lenders. Did he also discuss our right hon. Friend the Chancellor's announcement last week of a reduction in interest rates and the apparent difficulty of some mortgage lenders in passing on that benefit to home owners, sometimes deferring it for many months?

Sir George Young: I was not at that meeting, which was attended by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. From the press statement issued after that meeting, I understand that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor reminded lenders of the importance of passing on interest rate reductions as quickly as possible. I understand that shortly after the meeting the Halifax announced a welcome reduction in its mortgage rate.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I am anxious to pin down the Minister on one point. He is suggesting that the scheme that the Chancellor announced in the autumn statement to create an additional 20,000 properties to rent should be used in some way to facilitate mobility in housing. My understanding is that housing associations are required by statute to operate an allocation procedure and that most allocations are zoned to a particular location. Without specific Government intervention to ring-fence the properties for a national mobility scheme, I cannot envisage how the Minister's suggestion can work in practice.

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman is making rather heavy weather of this matter. The housing associations will buy 20,000 properties. In the normal course of events, they would give the nominations to local authorities, which would then nominate families currently in bed and breakfast or temporary accommodation. My suggestion is that the housing associations should continue to give the nominations to local authorities, but that instead of them nominating people in bed and breakfast and temporary accommodation, they should offer transfers to existing tenants. Those people could move into the new homes, if that is what they want, and the homeless families could move into the local authority stock thus vacated. That would improve mobility in the social housing sector. It is certainly difficult in London to get a transfer unless one has strong grounds. My suggestion would encourage transfers within local authority stock and also within housing association stock——

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Will the Minister give way?

Sir George Young: Yes, but for the last time as I am anxious to make progress.

Ms. Jackson: My local authority has an inadequate number of two and three-bedroom houses, so the problem of families transferring would not be alleviated by the 20,000 properties to which the Minister referred. Indeed, inadequate properties for the size of family groups are endemic.

Sir George Young: The hon. Lady is making heavy weather of this matter. The whole point about the package announced last week is that the housing associations and local authorities should consult and the stock acquired by the housing associations should be of the sort that local authorities want—the right configuration and size to meet the needs of their areas. It is important that there is close liaison between housing associations and local authorities to avoid the mishmash to which the hon. Lady refers.

Against the background of an extra £597 million for the Housing Corporation this year, I hope that the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) will have the decency —for I believe him to be a decent man—to admit that the rumour to which he referred in Committee last Tuesday, that the Conservative party might abandon its manifesto commitment to provide 153,000 homes through the Housing Corporation over the next three years, was ill founded. The figure will rise by 12,000 to 165,000.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): The Minister refers to this year's commitment, but he will recall the Conservatives' clear manifesto pledge of money over three years ago. Is the third year absolutely guaranteed?

Sir George Young: There is a lot of battle smoke around. However the hon. Gentleman looks at the figures, he will find that there is more money for the three years covered by the manifesto—an increase of £597 million this year, with a decrease in the following two years of £155 million and £191 million. That represents an increase, and extra homes are being provided in the early part of the period in question. If the hon. Gentleman wants to intervene again to admit that our manifesto is being more than honoured, I shall be happy to give way to him.

Conditions for tenants on many council estates are unacceptable. The autumn statement made it clear that our popular programme of housing action trusts can continue. Our expenditure provision for next year will allow the momentum of the HAT programme to be fully maintained. That will allow the establishment of three further housing action trusts to follow those in Hull, Waltham Forest, and the successful ballot in Liverpool. I am sure that will be warmly welcomed in areas where housing action trusts have already begun work or are under consideration. The feasibility work on Castle Vale in Birmingham and the Bow estate in Tower Hamlets is largely complete and I expect to make decisions on ballots shortly.

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There will be more resources for the estate action programme. The amount available in 1993-94 will be £356 million, which is £16 million more than this year. On current practice, that expenditure will allow us to fund 135 of the 270 schemes that authorities are anxious should go forward. However, the capital partnership approach announced last Friday will enable us to spread resources even further. The more that authorities contribute from their capital receipts, the higher the number of schemes that we will be able to include in our programme.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my hon. Friend the Minister favourably consider the scheme submitted by Morecambe, which has a substantial housing need?

Sir George Young: I am delighted that that popular element in the Government's housing policy has won such favour in a constituency adjoining that of my hon. Friend. I will be happy to send my hon. Friend details of the HAT programme and the procedure that must be observed if a trust is to be established in her part of the country.

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): I welcome the prospect of greater mobility and extra funding that my hon. Friend's new scheme will introduce, but Isleworth council is encountering considerable problems because of the way that the points system is used to allocate council housing needs. The new system has disadvantaged many thousands of people. Will my hon. Friend consider re-jigging it to allow for a more equitable share of council properties?

Sir George Young: I hope that my announcement that the Government felt that there should be more mobility within the local authority stock will encourage councils —including Hounslow—to review their transfer policies, and also to review the way in which priorities are allocated among competing demands from local authority tenants. I hope that all councils will try to find ways of promoting more transfers.

The relaxation of the rules governing local authority capital receipts over the coming year will provide authorities with an extra £1 billion for housing. I expect them to devote the money mainly to renovating rundown council estates, and to implementing the housing investment programme strategy set out in their recent bids. The figure is derived from evidence on local authority returns. Tenants awaiting improvements do not mind whether the work is paid for by borrowing or by a capital receipt; they want the work done, regardless of how it is funded—and more work will now be done.

"Capital receipts" is a phrase that has been much on the lips of Opposition Members. It is worth reminding them that there would be few capital receipts for us to debate if we had taken their advice on the right to buy. We did not think it right to allow authorities simply to spend the capital receipts that they had already built up. The current need is to stimulate the construction industry, and that justifies a temporary relaxation of the requirement to set aside part of the new receipts for that purpose. The relaxation gives authorities some £1·75 billion of extra spending power. Our proposals give them an incentive to promote new asset disposals, and to get in fresh receipts rather than recycling past ones.

I expect interest in the right to buy to increase as the economy recovers; I also expect interest in the rent-to-mortgage scheme to increase when the Bill reaches the statute book. Predictably, Opposition Members have already criticised the scheme: the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), for instance, described it as facile and short term. I see nothing facile or short term in treating people as adults and giving them choice—a word used by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. Authorities will gain a capital receipt, and they will be able to spend all of it, provided that it comes in before 31 March next year. I predict that Opposition Members will abandon their objection to the rent-to-mortgage scheme when they realise how popular it is, just as they abandoned their objection to the right to buy.

The motion makes the fair point that some local authorities have less prospect than others of generating receipts. We can handle that, up to a point, through the services of a lady called Rita—receipts taken into account. When we allocate credit approvals to local authorities— this, I think, is the process towards which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey was cautiously nudging his way—we take into account the relative availability of receipts. That enables us to give higher basic credit approvals to the authorities with the fewest receipts —a point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin).

Authorities with limited receipts will also be able to compete for the capital partnership scheme that was launched on Friday by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. The scheme provides up to £600 million of public money for projects that will stimulate growth.

The motion also mentions owner-occupiers. The package included help for those facing difficulty with their mortgages: a further and welcome reduction of one percentage point in interest rates. Over the past two years, interest rates have fallen by eight percentage points; that translates into a saving of more than £130 a month on a typical £33,000 mortgage since the level reached its peak in October 1990. For those who are concerned about the value of their properties, we are taking some 16,000 empty homes off the market in a short space of time. That will increase the number of transactions in the property market, and will reduce the overhang that has deterred many prospective buyers. The measure can only help to return confidence to the market—although none of us wants a return to the excesses of four years ago.

Measures taken a year ago have probably reduced the number of repossessions by about 50,000, but the best mortgage rescue scheme is provided by lower interest rates and a recovering economy, which was the purpose of the measures in the autumn statement. The number of court orders for repossessions has also fallen: in the third quarter of the year, the number of actions entered was 32 per cent. lower than it had been a year earlier.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the Minister give way?

Sir George Young: No. I promised that I would not give way again; indeed, I believe that I made that promise three times. The longer my speech lasts, the less will be the hon. Gentleman's chance of making his own formidable contribution.

One consequence of the fall in house prices has been the number of people with negative equity—perhaps 1 million, according to one estimate by the Bank of England. That phenomenon does not call for the domesday scenario painted by some commentators. Most negative equity borrowers are not having trouble meeting their payments, nor do they want to move, but if they do want to move the property that they move to is likely to have fallen in value, along with their own home. My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary announced on 20 October two measures, which were widely welcomed, to help to promote mobility in those circumstances.

The building and construction industry is also mentioned in the motion. It was assisted last Thursday. Builders have the opportunity to improve their cash flow by selling unsold homes. There will be opportunities for smaller builders to carry out necessary repairs to repossessed homes that need attention. These measures have been welcomed by the construction industry. Neville Sims of Tarmac, for example, praised the Chancellor's proposals as imaginative and as a good way to get money into the construction industry in the regions. The new public-private funding rules announced on Thursday will give a further boost to investment in the inner city areas covered by city challenge.

There is even something in the package for estate agents. The £50 million to enable local authority and housing association tenants to buy homes in the market will increase transactions, as well as freeing up more homes for those on the waiting list.

Because of the rough sleeping initiative, there are now fewer people sleeping on the streets. There are fewer families in unsatisfactory bed-and-breakfast accommodation. The last figures for homeless acceptances showed a reduction, not an increase. The provision of good quality accommodation by housing associations has doubled in the past three years and the ambitious target that we set ourselves in our manifesto is now to be exceeded.

The programme for modernising and improving local authority estates can proceed at a faster pace, thanks to the change in the capital receipts rule. With interest rates for some first-time buyers at 6 per cent., home ownership is more affordable than it has been for more than 15 years; 20,000 homes, instead of lying empty, are to be put to the use for which they were built and that will help to restore confidence in the housing market.

I recognise that we have much work to do. Any London Member of Parliament knows that there are still shortages of social housing and that too many council tenants live in unacceptable conditions, but we are on the right track. It would be too optimistic to expect the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey to withdraw his motion, but I ask the House to support the Government amendment with enthusiasm.

4.41 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): We, too, welcome the debate. There is nothing in the motion with which we disagree. It is particularly welcome at this time, coming so soon after the autumn statement. The autumn statement day ought to be remembered as the day when unemployment passed, in real terms, the 4 million mark. According to the original calculation of the figures, before the Government's 30 changes to massage them down, on 12 November this year unemployment passed 4 million. I mention that at the beginning of my speech because rising unemployment is the primary cause of homelessness and the housing market crisis.

The scale of the housing crisis is daunting and worsens day by day. However, the Government try to put on a brave front and say that they are coping with it. Since the late 1970s, homelessness has more than doubled. In England alone, 147,000 households were accepted as homeless by local authorities in 1991. Many more were turned away as ineligible. More than 1·5 million are on local authority waiting lists. They comprise what could be described as the hidden homeless, often living in overcrowded and inappropriate circumstances. It is estimated that in 1991 an additional 80,000 single people were homeless but ineligible for help. In the past 18 months, more than 100,000 families have had their homes repossessed.

Not surprisingly perhaps, fewer than 100 families have had their homes saved by the Government's "intended" mortgage rescue scheme, which was announced this time last year. The Government promised us at the Dispatch Box that 40,000 households would be rescued. That never happened. More than 200,000 households are now more than six months in arrears with their mortgages; more than 1 million cannot afford to move because their homes are worth less than they paid for them.

Recently, the Bank of England estimated that further small falls in property values would add an additional 500,000 households to that total. In September this year, after the general election, the Department of the Environment disclosed that a record number of 62,780 homeless families were living in sometimes terrible quality temporary accommodation. As we now know, since 1979 the proportion of national expenditure, in real terms, spent on housing has more than halved. There has been a significant cut in expenditure. I say "significant" because the cut amounts to £5·3 billion—ironically, exactly the figure of accumulated capital receipts that local authorities have in the bank. To this day, the Government are preventing them from spending that money on housing.

What is the Government's response to the housing crisis? I submit that it is feeble. When we look at the small print of what we were offered in the autumn statement, we see that we have been short-changed. Barely six months ago, on 23 March, during those heady days of the electioneering period, the Secretary of State for the Environment asserted:

"House sales under the Conservatives are picking up."

All this, we were told, would change on 10 April if there were a Labour Government. We were also told that the recovery—I am tempted, Madam Deputy Speaker, to insert the word "sic"—in the housing market would be devastated, just as it was getting under way. The Secretary of State for the Environment was echoed by the Prime Minister on 31 March, when he said:

"We're going to make life easier for people buying their home. Our policies will mean a stronger housing market."

[Interruption.] The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) may mutter, "Hear, hear", but what every other hon. Member and everybody else in the country knows is that exactly the opposite is true. People were truly conned on 9 April. Families now face the worst housing crisis in our society since the war. It is tempting to add that all the Government's special offers have been heard before and have been found to be second-hand and shoddy goods.

[Mr. John Battle]

The latest evidence from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report, which was published last week, shows that further small falls in house prices threaten to double negative equity. It points out that four out of every 10 Londoners who bought their homes in the past five years now have properties worth less than their mortgages. Basildon now has a negative equity rate of 60 per cent.—an average shortfall of £6,500 for every household. That is where the rent-to-mortgage pilot scheme was undertaken. In those circumstances, I cannot imagine that it is going down well in Basildon.

What of the scale of the Government's response? The Government amendment is remarkable in its complacency. It says that the Government are keen to promote the growth of owner-occupation. Many commentators on housing and economic policy now submit that, at 69 per cent., owner-occupation in our society is unsustainable because there are not sufficient homes for people who need to rent. The Government do not seem yet to appreciate that fact. The amendment refers to widening choice for tenants. It does not refer to the fact that under the Housing and Urban Development Bill which is being considered in Standing Committee the Government are taking away tenants' rights in order to push through compulsory competitive tendering.

The amendment refers also to the targeting of public expenditure. It is tempting to add that that may be the only truthful statement in the amendment. It is true that resources are being targeted, because existing resources are being wrapped up and disguised as new money when in fact they prove to be old money.

The moves on interest rates are welcome. They will give hard-pressed home owners some relief, if the interest rate reduction is passed on, but that relief will apply only so long as people have a job and continue to be able to pay their mortgages. The question that many people are asking is whether this will be enough to revive the housing market. Many people think that they live simply one pay cheque away from redundancy and worry that their home may be the next to be repossessed.

The autumn statement was trumpeted in the press as offering extra money, but the Secretary of State was careful to use that weasel word and say that money had been "earmarked" rather than to suggest that new money was available. We discover from the fine print that that was a sleight of hand—a clever piece of news management to create the impression of new money. The Government are simply juggling the figures in a remarkable creative-accounting exercise.

What does the figure of £1·75 billion mean? It is tempting to ask the Minister, in the light of his statement, how firm that promise is. We are glad that the Government are at last coming around to our common-sense arguments on the need to use capital receipts, but it is not clear whether that promise of funds will be realised.

The autumn statement is based on illusion—the £1·75 billion in estimated capital receipts is not there. The Government have acknowledged that only £1·1 billion of that money will be available for housing, and only capital receipts that may be available in the next 12 months will be available as extra expenditure.

What will happen to the £5·5 billion of receipts that is sitting in local authorities' banks? Why cannot those funds be released?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): If the hon. Gentleman is to take that point, perhaps he will redefine his position. I quote from an interview with *Inside Housing* as recently as mid-September in which the journalist commented:

> "redefinition of the PSBR, which could theoretically release capital receipts for housing, is clearly not something Mr. Battle is prepared to argue for today."

The hon. Gentleman said:

> "Those are the arguments that the Treasury team are going to have to sort out, not me as the Housing spokesman. At the moment, redefinition is not on Labour's agenda. It is not one of my priorities."

Has the hon. Gentleman and his team managed to redefine the PSBR for the benefit of the country?

Mr. Battle: What I said still stands. We have pressed for the phased relief of capital receipts to enable them to be distributed according to need. The Government have not responded. They have simply told authorities that they may spend money which may or may not come in. Amazingly, in the face of current evidence, the Government assume that right-to-buy sales will pick up from their present low, but if they do not do so, the extra £1·75 billion will not materialise. Is not that the truth and should not Ministers be spelling that out? In practice, as the figures work through, people will find that they have been shortchanged again. The key question is whether the money will be available, and that depends on homes being sold to tenants on low incomes, under the right to buy, during a housing market slump and at a time of record repossessions. Most people in work feel that they cannot afford to take the chance of moving to purchase in case they lose their jobs.

A London Weekend Television programme on Friday night revealed that 70,000 people who bought their council flats cannot sell them because mortgage lenders are again doing what used to be described as red-lining. In his conversations with mortgage lenders this morning, what did the Minister say about that and what do the Government propose to do to unlock that situation? In turn, that will be a check on further house sales.

The small print of the autumn statement shows that Government capital allocations for local authority housing will be cut and that credit approvals will be substantially lower. We cannot now say what the figures are, because they will be revealed only in the forthcoming months, but that is the logic of the arithmetic in the autumn statement.

I suspect that the capital partnership is another example of iniative dazzle—an initiative for the media that lasts 24 hours, but in the afterglow realises little. In practice, it is top-slicing—taking money out of budgets and organising them from the centre again. It is a form of revamping of the estate action scheme. It is also clear that it will depend on bids and competition, with local authorities competing against each other according to how they use capital receipts in forthcoming years.

Sir George Young: Hear, hear.

Mr. Battle: The Minister says "Hear, hear", but that action reduces local authorities' ability to respond to local need and the total amount that is available for them.

Sir George Young: When I dealt with the capital partnership, I specifically explained that if, for good reason, a local authority has no access to capital receipts, it will not be penalised in its bid for estate action.

Mr. Battle: It is encouraging to receive that reassurance, but we shall watch to see how it works in practice because we were told the same about the city challenge, and we saw how that worked in practice. Many authorities have been disappointed.

The promised new £600 million depends on sales that may never materialise. The whole project will buy only 16,000 homes, whereas more than 200,000 are empty, and that overhang is dominating the housing market. There is no new money, because £400 million will come from the Housing Corporation's allocation and £200 million from local authority credit approvals.

In practice, it could be argued that housing associations were worst hit in the autumn statement. Housing association grant rates are being cut from an average of 72 per cent. to 67 per cent. In an article in *The Roof*, Mr. David Edmonds, the former Housing Corporation's chief executive, pointedly showed how private finance would be more difficult to obtain because investors would be worried about whether housing benefit would continue to meet the tab for higher rents. The corporation's 150,000 homes promised over the next three years could be jeopardised because the Government have not got their act together and are forcing up rents. David Edmonds said:

> "There is very solid reason to argue that the point has been reached beyond which grant rates should not be diminished. How does an association explain to a banking credit appraisal expert that higher amounts of loan are needed, payments on which are serviced primarily by people on HB who pay rents which are increasingly viewed as unaffordable?"

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that there must always be a correlation between private finance and the grant rate made available by the Housing Corporation to take account of reductions in interest rates? There has been a substantial reduction in interest rates. Whenever an interest rate reduction is made—at least this is what happened when I was deputy chairman of Housing for Wales—an alteration is made to the grant rate.

Mr. Battle: The hon. Gentleman is missing the point that the critical figure of 67 per cent. for attracting private finance is on the margin below which the private sector will not lend money to construct houses in the first place. The promised partnership between public and private money will collapse because the Government are reducing their contribution to housing associations.

Mr. Jenkin: I suggest that the matter is in the nature of public-private negotiations. The private sector will negotiate, of course, for the best terms that it can get and it is right that the Government should play their part and negotiate the best terms for the public sector to get better value for money. Those matters are resolved in the fullness of time. If one goes into negotiation on the basis that one will lose that negotiation, all I can say, on behalf of the homeless, is thank goodness the hon. Gentleman is not in charge.

Mr. Battle: The hon. Gentleman is missing the point that, for months, all the housing associations and the private housing finance world have spelt out to the Government that 67 per cent. is the bottom line. Below that point, schemes will not go ahead.

I hope that the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) will join me in pressing the Minister to make available the report on affordability which was prepared by the Housing Corporation and which now rests in his Department. I am pretty sure that it reveals that housing associations are being forced to push up rents, which makes schemes unsustainable. The net result is that housing associations can only take tenants who can guarantee that they are on full housing benefit. If they cannot, they will not get a place.

I urge the Minister to make the report available so that it can be discussed and the figures can be worked through in those terms. By changing grant relationships and by not taking account of housing benefit changes, the Government are pricing people out of even housing association housing, yet the Government insist that housing associations—and only housing associations—should provide affordable housing.

Special capital grant approvals are to be cut from 75 per cent. to 60 per cent. That means that for improvement grants to be paid at all to hard-up owner-occupiers, local authorities will have to meet 40 per cent. instead of 25 per cent. of the cost. We had hoped that there would be some reference in the autumn statement to the problems that local authorities face in terms of mandatory grants. The whole of their housing investment programmes could be consumed by the demand for improvement grants, yet the Government seem simply to be turning a blind eye. I urge the Minister to look again at mandatory grants and at their impact on local authorities' ability to serve housing needs in the round.

Let us look in slightly closer detail at the £750 million package to take 20,000 properties off the market through acquisitions by housing associations. We believe that that is inadequate when almost 250,000 properties either have been repossessed or were unsold in the first place. On BBC News on 12 November, John Wrigglesworth of UBS Phillips and Drew referred to the sum as

"a snowflake on an iceberg".

Although the scheme is limited, the Government could sharpen it and substantially improve it.

Can the Minister assure us that the available money will go only to mortgage lenders who are running or who are about to set up mortgage rescue schemes? Why is the money not tied in so that there can be real and workable mortgage rescue schemes? That would make the money go further, as properties would not just be taken off the market. We would be reassured that repossessions would slow down, which would in turn prevent more repossessed houses coming on to the market. Why not link the scheme so that it does not simply reward lenders who repossess but goes some way towards keeping people in their own home?

Surely the same grant rates should apply to those schemes as they do to any other schemes funded by the Housing Corporation. Lower grant rates will simply lead to unaffordable rents and to dwindling housing association involvement in the scheme. In practice, the scheme is too inflexible. Some lenders may want to lease properties rather than to sell them outright. Why cannot the Government relax leasing restrictions on local authorities and on housing associations, and allow 20-year leases? There should be a combination of buy-back and leasing.

[Mr. Battle]

It is not clear whether the properties that are in disrepair or have been vandalised are to be included in the scheme. It is now evident that many properties that have been repossessed are in a terrible state. It is estimated that 100,000 repossessed properties standing for sale are in a poor condition and increasingly are being vandalised. Although lenders should bring properties up to standard, why do the Government not allow previously rundown properties to be included in the scheme as long as the lender agrees to do the necessary improvement work to bring them up to scratch, so that people can move into them?

Why cannot local authorities be given a guarantee of first refusal so that they can use the properties for homeless families? There would then be a direct link between cutting temporary accommodation bills and bringing the properties back into use.

What do we find for local authority tenants in the small print of the autumn statement? We find that council rents are to be forced up by 9 per cent. in the coming year—more than twice the rate of inflation. It will mean an average of £2·50 on everyone's rent. The Government then tell us that there is no problem of people being priced out of their homes. The measures in the autumn statement will have that effect and will force people into debt and insecurity. How can people exercise their rights if they find that they are increasingly in debt and unable to meet the primary demand to pay the rent? The Government fail to help not only those with mortgages, but those with rents.

There was no housing windfall in the autumn statement. Many homeless families, tragically, will still face a cold and bitter winter. There is no real evidence that the Government take the housing crisis seriously. Perhaps in the coming months they will listen to the lobby of the tenants and of the churches which is coming to the House. In the meantime, the autumn statement is part of the Government's clear strategy of simply putting off what they cannot bear to face today because it is politically embarrassing. We are not being presented with a new policy. It is simply a time-buying exercise to get the Government into the calmer waters of less hostile headlines.

As homelessness and unemployment inexorably rise, the Government's pitiful failure to recognise and to take seriously the scale of the housing crisis will become plainer for all to see. We intend to keep the spotlight on the Government's lack of housing policy. We continue to monitor initiatives that constantly prove ineffectual. We shall continue to press for emergency measures to tackle street homelessness not only in London but elsewhere. I remind the Minister that rough sleeping is no longer confined to London.

We shall press for real measures to revive the housing market and we shall continue to demand that people have the right to rent. We shall harass the Government in detail until our society is a lot closer to ensuring that everyone's right to a decent, appropriate and affordable home is realised. The Minister's great claims today for his Government's minuscule measures will not even stand the test of this Parliament.

5.7 pm

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): I am pleased to have the opportunity to follow the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle). I noticed that the words "welcome" and "glad" passed his lips. However, the tone was rather different. It was a speech by a rather lugubrious hon. Member. In terms of visual aspect, he was the nearest thing to Clement Freud.

I can understand why the hon. Gentleman was so gloomy. He appears to be an aficionado of "Black Dog" in the *Mail on Sunday*—his required Sunday reading, at least according to his speech in the Committee considering the Housing and Urban Development Bill. Last Tuesday, he gave us a warning about what was likely to happen the following Thursday when the Chancellor made his autumn statement. He quoted "Black Dog", saying:

> "'There is worrying news about Sir George Young the affable Housing Minister, whose budget has reportedly vanished in this autumn's draconian spending round.'" [*Official Report, Standing Committee B;* 10 November [illegible]92; c. 3.]

The hon. Gentleman then quoted more from that article. I can understand why the hon. Gentleman was so gloomy. He has found that the budget of my hon. Friend the Minister has not evaporated. Instead, it has been considerably expanded and I welcome that. I particularly welcome the extra funding that has been made available in Wales. Some £38 million of extra funding will be used by local authorities and Housing for Wales and to assist the work of housing associations.

I am pleased that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has already said that he will discuss that allocation with the chairman of Housing for Wales and that wide-ranging discussions will take place about how that money can be spent because we must ensure that the money is spent wisely. In that regard, I want to raise some concerns with my hon. Friend the Minister.

It is important that the money should not be used as a catalyst for mortgage lenders to take further action in cases where they are staying their hands in respect of repossessions. The hon. Member for Leeds, West referred to the deterioration of properties which have come on to the market. If the money was to be spent solely on purchase and rehabilitation of those properties, it is important that we consider the taxation rules.

When I was involved with Housing for Wales, I was concerned about the fact that there was a shift towards new build away from the rehabilitation of property. That shift occurred because 17·5 per cent. VAT is added to the cost of the rehabilitation of property. It would be deeply damaging if much of the new funding was leaked away in that fashion. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to consider that point in the discussions with the Housing Corporation and the local authorities when they assess how the funding can be used.

I am also anxious that the rural housing problem should be recognised in Wales and elsewhere. So often when we discuss homelessness the problem is referred to in the context of cardboard city and images of people in desperate circumstances sleeping in the shop doorways of many of our major cities. Many of the problems are being addressed by initiatives referred to by my hon. Friend the Minister. However, as a result of those stark images, we sometimes lose contact with the fact that there is also a rural housing crisis. The problem of people who earn the lowest wages and live in rural areas is pushed into the background.

I am pleased to say that in Wales at least that problem has been recognised. Twenty-eight per cent. of the funding to housing associations in Wales is given to associations that work in rural areas and perhaps that lesson could be followed in England. Some of the Welsh initiatives will avoid situations that have occurred in towns because it has been recognised that the funding should be invested on the basis of local needs.

Although councils may have ideas about local housing needs, sometimes the people who live in the villages have the best means of identifying the local housing needs. That is why several initiatives have been started in Wales which draw together local needs surveys. They have identified problems in relation to housing which the local housing authorities may not have recognised in some parts of the Principality.

Once the problems have been identified, there is investment, but not in those vast council estates—the monoliths of municipal socialism of the past as I like to describe them. Instead, perhaps between two and eight houses are built in a village and they become part of the village. They do not become ghettoes. Those houses are not just part of the community; they are attractive to local people and young people can stay, live and work in the communities in which they have been raised.

Initiatives have also been taken on a national level, and also in Wales, to bring into use the empty accommodation above shops. That is a worthwhile initiative for which funding has been made available and it is quite apart from general support made available for the vital renting and shared ownership programme.

My hon. Friend the Minister outlined the steps being taken to attempt to deal with rough sleeping in our cities. I particularly welcome my hon. Friend's attempt to reduce the figures in terms of the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for so many families. Before I came to the House, and subsequently in articles that I have written on the issue, I have stated that it is unacceptable for a Government who have been in office for 13 years still to have so many people, even on today's figures, living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. That is not something with which I want to be associated and I know that my hon. Friend the Minister does not wish to be associated with it either.

More than that, the provision of bed-and-breakfast accommodation does not make economic sense. All the surveys show that it can cost between twice and three times as much to accommodate people in those absolutely unacceptable conditions than if we were to house them properly in the first place. I welcome the steps that have been taken to reduce the proportion, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, from 24 per cent. to 18 per cent. During the many years that I will be a Member of this place, I hope that we will ensure that the figure is reduced substantially —and the earlier the better.

I hope that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) will not take offence when I say that he adopted a sanctimonious approach. At one point, he seemed to say that the Government should simply be building more houses. That may be a disservice to him, but I do not believe that simply more housebuilding is what is needed. On the contrary, it seems that we have sufficient properties.

It is well known that there are about 750,000 empty properties in private and public hands. We can all argue about the accuracy of the figures and we often hear all sorts of figures bandied around the House. However, we might agree that about 150,000 families are currently accepted as being homeless by local authorities. In such circumstances, we should urgently seek a marriage between the two sets of figures.

According to the figures that I have seen, 9·7 per cent. of public housing in Liverpool appears to be empty. It is unacceptable that there are local authorities—including authorities which at least two hon. Members in the Chamber now represent—in which the amount of council house rents outstanding is colossal. The highest amount outstanding is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. According to my figures, there are some £35 million of uncollected council house rents in the hon. Gentleman's authority.

I know that it is said that the cause of such outstanding rents is that people are in desperate financial circumstances and they cannot afford to pay the rents. I notice that the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) is in the Chamber. He will be aware that his local authority, within which many people face strained financial circumstances, has performed much better in terms of collecting council house rents than Southwark and Bermondsey or Greenwich.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that there is a serious problem in respect of people being able to afford rent or mortgages in the rented and privately-owned sectors? Does he accept that mortgage arrears have increased dramatically, as have rent arrears? When the Government propose to increase rents in council properties by on average 9 per cent., when they expect public sector workers to accept a maximum 1·5 per cent. pay increase, does the hon. Gentleman accept that that is a recipe for further increases in arrears?

Mr. Evans: I made a misjudgment. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was about to explain why Greenwich had an outstanding figure of 25 per cent. in council house rents —about £13 million. I was hoping that the hon. Gentleman would be able to tell us how many houses in his constituency might be built for that sum.

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): Has my hon. Friend noted the correlation between councils that are dilatory at collecting rents and those that have bad records in respect of occupied housing and the number of vacancies in boroughs such as Southwark? Southwark is the fourth worst borough in London in terms of vacancies. One of the few councils with a worse record for vacancies is the Liberal Democrat-controlled borough of Tower Hamlets.

Mr. Evans: I also have made that correlation. I represent the largest constituency in Wales—I think that it is also the largest constituency in England and Wales—and we have managed, through all local authorities in Wales, many of which are controlled by friends of the Labour party, to keep down the number of public housing voids. The figures that I was able to gain from the Welsh Office in a parliamentary answer only last week show that there is a direct balance between housing association voids and council house voids of 1·2 per cent. in Wales. When we compare that with the situation in which there have been

[Mr. Evans]

up to 10 per cent. voids in some local authority areas in England, we see that far more needs to be done than just throwing money at the problem.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I agree. The hon. Gentleman will imagine that, for obvious reasons, I am critical of my local authority, but one thing that he may not know, which is relevant and has been raised with Ministers, is that there is an unfair method of calculating the amount needed per unit of property, which is called the management and maintenance allowance, across different authorities. For no current, valid reason there is a differential allowance—government to local authority money—which means that boroughs such as Southwark get far less than otherwise identical boroughs with the same housing needs.

Mr. Evans: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. I am sure that he would not wish to excuse his local authority's performance in terms of that staggering figure of outstanding council house rents, particularly when he so graphically illustrates the housing problem in London.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: The hon. Gentleman has spent some time being highly critical of local authorities. I should like to give him an example of what is happening in the private rented sector in London. In one case, a young woman found a room for herself in a house where the rent was £45 a week. She would have had to claim housing benefit to pay it. Her landlord suggested that, as she was claiming housing benefit, they should bump up the rent to £60 and split the difference. She refused to do that and is therefore homeless.

Another case involves a young couple, one of whom was a student. Her boyfriend became ill. When their landlord discovered that they would be reliant on housing benefit, they were asked to leave. That is yet another example within the private sector. Local authorities are saints in comparison.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Before the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) continues, let me say that interventions are becoming progressively longer. That is not confined to one side; I make the observation to all.

Mr. Evans: I am obliged for your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am trying to be as generous as possible to Opposition Members.

I certainly do not defend the activities of landlords who behave in the way that the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson) has outlined. She appears to have in her hand a document which presents some detail of that case, but it seems to me as a lawyer that the first case that she outlined is one in which the involvement of the police should be considered at an early point. It clearly was an invitation to participate in a criminal offence.

Ms. Jackson *rose*——

Mr. Evans: I shall give way just for clarification and then I shall make progress.

Ms. Jackson: A lawyer would realise that any case requires evidence.

Mr. Evans: I am sure that the hon. Lady has not been putting points to me without evidence. I rather hoped that she put her case with evidence to support her assertion. I shall now make progress.

It has become clear that it is the Government's responsibility to ensure that we improve the supply and condition of our rented housing stock. Quite apart from the other choices and availability that there may be of different tenures, that has to be a cardinal point. The Government, sometimes in the face of substantial opposition, have given positive support to housing associations, and they deserve congratulations for that. In the course of that work they have had to attempt to deal with a manifest distortion in the rented housing sector. I refer in particular to the way in which the private rented sector, sometimes because of the abuse that is piled on many landlords who have attempted to operate within the private sector, has declined substantially. That has been regarded with some sadness by hon. Members.

It must be recognised that if there are three quarters of a million empty properties, although many are in the public sector, a large proportion of them are in the private sector. One would wish those properties to be brought into better use. One factor that must be borne in mind when we consider the Opposition's figures is that the Government have given substantial support through the housing benefits system.

I note the point that was made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, but, according to figures that I obtained from the Library this morning, in the past year £5·9 billion in support was given. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) is not terribly happy about that because, in seminars and conferences around the country, he has been saying that that is manifestly dreadful and stupid. Taken together with the other amounts of support in terms of the Government's house building programme, there is substantial assistance—up to 18 per cent. of the public sector borrowing requirement, according to the figures that I saw today.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey referred to such evidence and said that mortgage tax relief is a bad thing. The hon. Member for Greenwich shares that view. The proportion of support available under mortgage tax relief has substantially eroded over the years, and that must be recognised. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey is shaking his head, but that is absolutely true. Inflation and tax decreases have substantially eroded that benefit, as a result of which it is fairly likely in the current year that the amount of support available through housing benefit will overtake the support that is given under mortgage tax relief. At the moment, 69 per cent. of households in Wales are receiving support through the housing benefit structure initially directly from the Government and then from local authorities.

Hon. Members recognise that there is a housing crisis in this country—I hope that I made that clear at the beginning of my speech. If there were no crisis there would not be a need for all the steps that the Government have taken to address the problem. My hon. Friend the Minister is regarded throughout the country as a person who genuinely recognises the scale of the problem. Many of the initiatives over the past few years are directly as a result of the pressure and influence that he has been able to bring to bear. I am absolutely sure that, with my hon. Friend in charge of our housing programme, we have a policy that all our colleagues can support.

5.28 pm

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Although I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate, I do not welcome the fact that for the fourth time in this Parliament we are debating the issue of homelessness. I look forward to the day when homelessness will have no place in this Chamber or in the cities and towns of this country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) has referred to homelessness as a scar on the face of society. While agreeing wholeheartedly with his sentiment, I disagree with his analogy, because over time scars heal, but during this Government's tenure of office the number of households accepted as homeless has tripled, to stand at 150,000. That represents 400,000 adults and children. According to the Shelter briefing, which I am sure all hon. Members received in time for the autumn statement, almost 63,000 of those families will spend this Christmas in unsuitable temporary housing, such as bed and breakfast hotels and local authority hostels.

There are enough learned documents around to prove the dangers for children in bed and breakfasts—quite apart from the economic costs. In London, the cost of keeping a family in bed and breakfasts is estimated at £14,500 a year. The damage done to children is almost inestimable. Children in bed and breakfasts tend to catch illnesses far more easily and to have greater difficulty in learning and in creating real social relationships. The borough in which my constituency lies has 1,900 families with no homes of their own; that figure does not include the number forced to use voluntary hostels or squats or cardboard boxes for shelter.

There is no doubt that the plight of the homeless is a matter of concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House, but a former leader of the Conservative party once said that it is not enough for people merely to say that they care; their actions must support their words. The Government's actions so far have failed to alleviate, let alone eradicate, the evil of homelessness.

Last week, the Chancellor of the Exchequer unveiled a number of proposals in his autumn statement designed to boost the housing sector—proposals to which the Minister referred today. One proposal was to purchase 20,000 empty homes. Another was that councils would be allowed to spend the capital receipts that they earn between now and December 1993. That was done, the Chancellor said, to make a real contribution to housing families in need.

What was the background against which the announcement was made? Twenty thousand homes are to be purchased, but last year 75,000 homes were repossessed. Capital receipts will be released from now until December 1993, but more than £8 billion in capital receipts have already been accumulated. So the Government can buy 20,000 homes, yet they allow the seizure of 75,000.

This is a time of deep recession, when people are much concerned that they may have no jobs, when—to quote Shelter—the rate of mortgage repossessions in England alone is running at 200 a day and when loans more than 12 months in arrears had risen by June 1992 by almost 25 per cent. to more than 110,000. So the Government, on the most optimistic estimate, are giving £1·75 billion in capital receipts but are blocking the £8 billion that councils have already raised from the right to buy.

On top of all this, the Government tell councils, which have the prime responsibility for housing those in need, that they will give them less money next year to discharge their duties than they did this year—that has always been the trend while the Conservative party has been in power. Spending on housing in real terms fell from £11·6 billion in 1978-79 to £5·5 billion in 1991-92—a reduction of £6·1 billion.

The Government claim that they care about the homeless, but in the next breath they say that it is not for central Government to generate the growth in the housing sector which the homeless so desperately need and in their third breath they announce that they will bring in spending measures that will prevent local government from generating growth.

Homelessness under this Government has become an epidemic, and it is eating away at the fabric of society. How much potential is wasted in the doorways of the shops lining the Strand? How many doctors, teachers and business men could have grown—could still grow—out of the people who have no home of their own and hence no opportunity? What can be said of a Government who deny them that opportunity?

The Conservative manifesto states:

> "The opportunity to own a home and pass it on is one of the most important rights an individual has in a free society."

But what of those denied the right to live in a home, never mind own one? A right to clean, decent, affordable housing should be guaranteed, and if all else fails it is incumbent on the Government to safeguard that right. If solving the problem of homelessness means Government intervention before lunch, breakfast and dinner, so be it. Homelessness will not be solved by the reintroduction of restrictions on capital receipts, due to come into effect in December 1993. Nor will it be solved by the restrictions on council spending due to come into effect in April 1993. Nor will it be solved by unemployment, by recession or by the slump to which no end is in sight——

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Jackson: I shall shortly have finished my speech.

The glossy brochure in my hand is not, it may surprise my hon. Friends to hear, a charter produced by the Government. It is called, "The London Day Centres Directory: Services for Homeless People". As Conservative Members can see, it has many pages and many more sub-divisions. Instead of tackling the basic problem of homelessness and our inadequate housing stock, we are being directed to manage homelessness—to find it acceptable and to tolerate it. Many people have asked me why homelessness and the problem of housing are not higher up the political agenda——

Mr. Evans: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Jackson: I say that these issues are high up the political agenda—we will all see how high as Christmas approaches. For a few weeks before Christmas, local and national newspapers will publish schemes under which the homeless will be taken off the streets and put in damp, drafty vaults under bridges. There they will be fed turkey

[Ms. Jackson]

dinners on paper plates and there they will toast each other in champagne from polystyrene cups. Come Boxing day they will become invisible again.

I urge the Government to set in train before Christmas real measures that will make this glossy brochure utterly irrelevant by this time next year.

Mr. Evans: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not clear whether the hon. Lady is giving way.

Ms. Jackson: I have concluded my speech.

5.37 pm

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): This will be the fifth time I have spoken since becoming a Member inApril. By some strange coincidence, you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have been in the Chair on each occasion. I do not presume to detect any connection beyond the fact that we represent neighbouring seats.

I was interested to hear the excellent remarks by my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), who said that he foresaw many happy years in the House for himself. Given that he has a majority of 130, one can only conclude that that was an example of great confidence—admirable confidence.

I congratulate the Government on the excellent measures in the autumn statement to help boost the housing market and meet housing need. We all want everyone to have a decent home at an affordable price, and it is encouraging that the Government have introduced more measures to meet that end.

I refer first to the £750 million to be provided for housing associations to buy up an estimated 20,000 repossessed properties in the next 12 months, to convert them to homes for rent. That will be an important measure to free the housing market, which has been bogged down during the past two years. The Government have taken an incisive and imaginative measure to get the market moving again at the lower end, by removing 20,000 empty and repossessed properties from the market. I support that excellent measure, as it will help to stimulate the housing market.

I welcome the reduction of the interest rate to 7 per cent.—as low as I can remember during my working life—which is an excellent boost for the property market. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister is listening——

Mr. Baldry: Yes, I am.

Mr. Streeter: I am sure that my hon. Friend is—I did not wish to infer otherwise. I thought that he might have nodded off and that perhaps the headphones were his personal stereo. I hope that he will speak severely to building societies that fail to pass on the benefits of lower interest rates for several months. Recently, the Halifax announced that it would pass on the benefit in January. I must declare an interest, as it is lending me a small amount of money. Why cannot the Halifax pass on the benefit of that rate reduction in December?

Building societies and banks have a lot to answer for in failing to pass on interest rate reductions early enough, and we shall hear more about banks in the Adjournment debate tonight. I hope that the Government will get tough with those building societies and banks that fail quickly to pass on the reductions.

Excellent deals are available in the market place for first-time buyers and people who want to move house, who will be able to borrow money at advantageous rates. I scanned the Sunday newspapers and found that one could get a loan on a fixed rate of interest for seven years—long enough to tide us over the next upturn in the property cycle which is bound to come—at 8·25 per cent. Anyone who wants to plan ahead with certainty can take the sort of packages on offer at 8·25 per cent. There has never been a better time to buy a property, and I hope that that message is getting across to home owners and first-time buyers.

Even estate agents have begun to report an upturn in activity during the past few days, which is greatly to be welcomed. We hear much about the difficulties that home owners have suffered during the past two years—about negative equity and repossessions. Those are real problems, but it is not right for us to concentrate on a short-term problem and to allow it to negate a long-term benefit.

There is no doubt that home ownership remains the aspiration of the vast majority of families, and so it should be. In the long term, home ownership is a great asset to any person or family. It is undoubtedly the single biggest asset that most people have, and is to be encouraged. I welcome Government measures to encourage it and the forthcoming rent-into-mortgage scheme which will extend the choice of home ownership to another layer of the population.

I also welcome the capital receipts initiative, announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his excellent statement on Thursday. I am not the only one to welcome it. On Friday 13 November, a report was published in the Plymouth *Western Evening Herald*—an excellent local newspaper—which stated:

> "Plymouth could be in for a £2 million windfall from council house sales, courtesy of Chancellor Norman Lamont it emerged today. City Housing Chairman Pat Kelly gave a cautious welcome to Mr. Lamont's announcement yesterday that councils can now spend all the money they make from selling land and houses. Mr. Kelly said, 'I have done some sums which indicate we could generate between £1·5 million and £2 million from the sale of about 100 council houses that we have in the pipeline'."

That is a cautious welcome from a left-wing Labour-controlled authority, which is no friend of our party or of the homeless. By May 1991, when I ceased—by the will of the people—to be the housing chairman in Plymouth, I had already set up many deals between the council and housing associations, which the local authority instantly froze for ideological reasons. It preferred to keep people waiting on the streets and in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, rather than to deal with evil housing associations, which it saw as the wicked private sector. That was an absolute disgrace. That same council has welcomed the statement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on capital receipts, estimating that it will release up to £2 million during the next 14 months, which will enable the council to build up to 100 council houses. That is a measure of the support that my right hon. Friend's excellent initiative has in this country. A cautious welcome from the left-wing Plymouth city council is the highest accolade.

I welcome the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) to the Opposition Front Bench, although he is no longer in the Chamber, and I listened to his speech with interest. I am pleased that he intends to press for measures to improve housing, and I offer to accompany him on his trips around Labour-controlled local authorities—I am sure that that was what he had in mind—to urge them to get their act together, to collect rents, carry out repairs, utilise voids and deal with housing associations rather than turning their backs on them.

Mr. George Howarth: Does the hon. Gentleman care to name one Labour authority that turns its back on housing associations?

Mr. Streeter: I have already named Plymouth city council, which turned its back on housing associations for 18 months, hoping to keep all the land in its ownership so that it could build council houses, knowing that it would never have the money to do so.

Mr. Howarth *rose*——

Mr. Streeter: No, I must move on. I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman.

I welcome the fact that the hon. Member for Leeds, West at long last understands the need to press for measures to improve the housing stock—doubtless by putting pressure on Labour-controlled authorities.

In addition to the Chancellor's excellent statement about capital receipts on Thursday, I welcome the fact that he has been able to maintain the Housing Corporation's budget for the next three years and even to add to it. That is greatly to be welcomed. Housing associations in Plymouth are planning to build more than 250 houses in the next 12 months and the 100 houses that the city council may be able to add to that will be an excellent step towards meeting the needs of the homeless. I welcome the fact that the budget has been not cut but augmented. No doubt that owes much to the Government's commitment to the homeless.

The Government should encourage councils to consider not merely selling houses or land to release capital receipts to spend on housing. Plymouth Pavilions is a leisure and conference complex, which was built by the local authority at a cost of £25 million and which is running at a loss of £1·5 million per annum. Local authorities should not run such centres. If that complex were sold to the private sector, it would make a profit, and release money which could be spent on noteworthy assets and meritworthy schemes in Plymouth. I suggest that local authorities should consider such sales. The Government can only create a framework and it is for local authorities to deal with their housing stock, and to suggest initiatives to take full advantage of the excellent leadership given by the Government.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) spoke about releasing the £5·5 billion currently held by local authorities; he referred to those funds as "historic capital receipts". But the motion does not say how local authorities would deal with the shortfall in their general funds which spending that money would create. The interest currently accruing on those capital receipts comes from the general fund of local authorities throughout the country. If that money were spent, the interest would not enter the general fund and the shortfall would have to be covered by community charge payers. The hon. Gentleman did not mention that. If he is committed to that course of action, I invite him to make it perfectly clear in the leaflets that will no doubt flood the land in the run-up to the county council elections next May that it is Liberal Democrat policy to spend those capital receipts and to double community charges throughout the country, massively increasing the council tax. That will allow voters at the county council elections to decide whether they wish to follow such a policy.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's accusation is that we have a simple view, which I hope that he, as a former local government councillor, supports. Each local council should have the freedom to spend all its capital receipts or not. That decision should not be imposed by central Government.

Mr. Streeter: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's intervention. I take it as a confirmation that the Liberal Democrats will be courageous enough to spell out in its election material the implications not only of 1p in the pound for education but of doubling the community charge to pay for capital receipts.

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Liberal Democrats also want to abolish capping, which would increase last year's community charge or next year's council tax, placing a further burden on home owners?

Mr. Streeter: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is of great concern that those Liberal Democrat policies slip through the net because no one takes the party seriously enough to read its manifestos and see what its policies are. Most people would be alarmed at the prospect of those dreadful policies.

The Government are committed to ensuring that local authorities give value for money in their management of public sector housing. That is vital if we are to resolve housing issues. We should remember that 4·2 million household units owned by local authorities are still let in the public sector. The best way to improve the condition of housing stock and the plight of the homeless is to persuade local authorities to become increasingly efficient. I welcome the measures which the Government have pursued for many years to drive local authority housing departments towards greater efficiency.

The compulsory competitive tendering measures shortly to be introduced are welcome, but they do not go far enough. One of the biggest problems of housing departments in managing housing stock is the fact that they are bogged down by local authority culture. Legal, treasury and general administrative services supplied to housing departments throughout the country are a major impediment to efficiency.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister consider the point that I made in my maiden speech—it now seems a long time ago—about independently managed local authority companies buying in services from wherever they wish, at the best price that they can find, whenever they want them? They would buy in repair, legal, financial and every other service, rather than being suffocated as they are now by local authority culture, which most housing departments must suffer. CCT is an excellent measure that will introduce efficiency into housing departments. But it will not help housing management to escape the icy grip of local authority culture, and I hope that the Government will look again at that point.

[Mr. Streeter]

It has been said that the Government's proposals will result in a 9 per cent. increase in council rents. The average council rent in Plymouth is just less than £25 a week. From the way in which Opposition Members react when the matter is discussed in the House, one would think that we were talking about £125 a week. I believe that £25 still provides excellent value for money and that 9 per cent. on £25 is not a draconian increase. Moreover, housing benefit exists to support those who cannot afford to pay it.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Streeter: I am just winding down, so I shall not give way.

It is wrong to suggest that the Government are introducing measures that will penalise council tenants. However, I urge them to look again at the most effective way of encouraging local authorities to run housing associations.

I reject the motion put forward by the Liberal Democrats and support the Government's valiant attempts to make affordable housing appropriate and within the reach of everyone in the nation.

5.55 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I wish to take up a point made by the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter). He should not try—in the House or elsewhere—to characterise Labour-controlled local authorities or any other local authorities as being generally obstructive towards housing associations. I am familiar with how Labour-controlled local authorities and housing associations operate, and it simply is not true to say that Labour-controlled authorities have a general policy of obstructing housing associations. I am not familiar with his example of Plymouth council, but as a general principle it is not the case. I expect that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), who has some experience in these matters, will confirm that that is the case in Wales.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The hon. Gentleman will concede, however, that even I know of instances where some authorities take such a hostile line.

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton was trying to establish the fact that Labour-controlled authorities have such a general policy, and that simply is not true. That is the only rebuttal that I care to make of his speech.

May I say a few words about the consequences of the autumn statement for housing policy? We need, first, to consider the Government's diagnosis of the problems in the housing market and, secondly, to look specifically at how their proposed remedies follow the diagnosis. The generally accepted diagnosis, which even Ministers may accept, is that there is a double problem of overhang in the housing market. On the one hand, a debt overhang is causing considerable hardship to families but is also acting as a brake on the housing market. On the other hand, there is an overhang caused by the number of properties on the market that cannot be sold because of general market conditions. Those two problems feed off each other: the glut of properties on the market causes problems for people who wish to sell and their debt therefore mounts up. Part of that equation is the effect of falling prices—the negative equity that has already been mentioned. That is the broad diagnosis of the problem.

I shall not go into the problems of homelessness, which have been more than adequately dealt with by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson) and others. I wish to concentrate on the narrow area that is of immense importance to the development and execution of housing policy in the next year or so.

Two remedies are proposed. First, £750 million is allegedly being made available to the Housing Corporation to enable housing associations to acquire, it is said, 20,000 additional properties. Secondly, the Government will grant permission to use capital receipts between now and the end of next year. According to the Housing Corporation press release issued on Thursday, £600 million is being made directly available to that programme and another £150 million will be directed from capital receipts.

In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) and to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), the Minister said that additional money would be available over the period covered by the press release. I have not had the opportunity to make a precise calculation, but the amount available during the 12 months of the scheme will be more than £200 million. However, it will be available in principle only.

On Friday, I spent a good deal of time telephoning a wide range of contacts in the housing association movement. Some of them are directly employed by associations, some are consultants, and some have general expertise in housing finance. I do not claim that it was a scientific survey, but it led me to the view that for two reasons the scheme will not work. First, considerable delays will necessarily be imposed on housing associations because of the negotiations and surveys that must take place before any property is acquired. Unless the associations can buy huge portfolios of properties by way of auction or some such scheme, much time and resources will need to be spent carrying out the necessary searches and surveys and in conducting negotiations. I spoke to a surveyor who carried out some preliminary work of that nature. He told me that the repair bill to make a property fit for habitation and available for rent is likely to be between £5,000 and £10,000.

A substantial amount of public money is used to fund the housing association grants system and those associations have to go through all the proper procedures to acquire property. That will take time. Secondly, they have to identify the extent of the necessary repairs, and if they are very expensive the transaction may have to be abandoned. Given a tolerance level of plus or minus 20 per cent., I predict that the 20,000 target will not be achieved. I could go further and say that it is unlikely that the Government will achieve 2,000 units within the time available. That will result in a huge difference between the actual cost and the money that the Government have identified for the programme. Much but not all of that money has already been taken from the Housing Corporation's agreed development programmes for the next two years. If I am right and there is a substantial underspend in the programme, will the money be put back into the corporation's agreed development programme over the next two years? I shall give way to the Minister if he wishes to give that assurance.

Mr. Baldry: I have every confidence that the Housing Corporation and the housing associations will be able to meet the target that we have set for them.

Mr. Howarth: In that case, I conclude that if the scheme fails to meet the target of 20,000 properties, the corporation's agreed programme for the next two years will have had money taken away from it and not spent. The overall impact on the construction industry will therefore be negative rather than positive.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Even if the hon. Gentleman's worst fears were realised in a short time, he will know from his knowledge of housing associations that they are currently working on cash-limited allocations for years ahead. If it is a matter of spending money, it should not be difficult to advance programmes that have already been planned or to make off-the-shelf purchases.

Mr. Howarth: That may well be the case, but it was not my point. In his intervention the Minister did not make it clear that the resources will be returned to the Housing Corporation's programme over the next two years. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) may dissent from the specifics of my prediction but, given his knowledge of the Housing Corporation, he would probably accept its generality. If my prediction is correct, the impact on construction will be negative.

The second part of the programme announced in the autumn statement was that local authorities will be allowed to spend capital receipts that they accrue during the 12 or 13-month time slot. The matter is notoriously unpredictable. In his speech, the Minister used submissions by local authorities for credit approval bids to assess the amount of money that would be available. I think that I am right in assuming that. I do not know how one assesses the accuracy of those bids because they are always best guesses. However, I know from experience in my constituency and elsewhere that the market is in such an appalling state that many potential buyers of land and council properties—of which about 40 per cent. have probably been sold—are wary about entering it. I suspect that even local authorities did not anticipate the depths to which the market would sink. The Government's assessment will turn out to be extremely optimistic.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Many people are not willing to exercise their right to buy council properties or properties in the private sector because they fear redundancy and unemployment, a cloud that is hanging over hundreds of thousands or millions of people.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend makes a most important point in justifying my argument. Confidence in the market by builders, developers and potential purchasers simply does not exist. I would be delighted if the autumn statement and subsequent pronouncements from the Department of the Environment and the Housing Corporation boosted confidence. However, the proposed programmes do not contain sufficient substance to inject such confidence into the market.

Another point arises out of the autumn statement. In this, I support what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West from the Front Bench. By reducing the housing associations' grant percentage to 67 per cent., the Government are hoping—this is an arguable point—to raise additional private finance and thereby to expand the amount of programme money that will be available. In other words, they hope to make the available public money go further.

My fear is that, rather than achieving that, it will have one of two effects. First, it could make it more and more difficult, in each given scheme that a housing association considers, to arrive at a combination of private finance and grant that will result in affordable rents. I know that, even at higher levels of grant, housing associations are having difficulty making that equation work.

If submissions from housing associations, through the National Federation of Housing Associations and others, prove to the Minister that this will create problems, I hope that he will listen to those representations and find a compromise solution to enable the programme that we all want to see in place go ahead. I hope that he does not get tied down to the figure as the last word when it may turn out to cause a problem.

The other possible consequence that I fear is that housing associations will be obliged, if they try to stick rigidly to that percentage, to drive down standards so as to make the equation work. We know from the example of local authority housing in the 1960s and 1970s the consequence of allowing standards to slip. It creates expensive long-term problems that are the source of great misery to many people.

I had hoped to say more, but I shall cut my remarks short as several hon. Members still wish to speak. I hope that the expectations that the Government have created through the Chancellor's announcement can be met, but I strongly fear that they cannot. After all the hype and the fuss over the past week have died down, if it proves, as I fear that it will, that the problems built into that announcement overwhelm the projects that have been set in train, I hope that, as quickly as possible, the Government will think again. I hope that the Minister will listen to the submissions that are bound to come from housing associations and others and will be willing to modify the details so that the Government's objectives —rather than the hype—can be met.

6.13 pm

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): For a variety of reasons, I have no hesitation in supporting the Government amendment. Some of the major points missed by Opposition Members include the important one that, since the Conservative party came into power in 1979, we have changed the nature of the housing market and the link with councils. The base line has changed so radically that many Opposition Members have been left behind. The changes are not only in the position of councils but in the expectations of individuals. The simple fact that well in excess of 60 per cent. of the population own their own homes is a significant factor. It means that people are determined to take decisions about their own lives into their own hands and to get away from the problems resulting from the bad running of estates by local authorities.

The Government have recently made some significant commitments. I congratulate them on their stated hope to exceed the commitment to build 53,000 houses. Over the period that we have been in power, of the 6 million householders who have bought their own homes, about 1·4 million have done so under the right-to-buy scheme, of which all of us are justifiably proud.

[Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith]

I shall not speak for too long as many others wish to speak, but I wish to dwell on the subject of the housing action trust scheme, introduced by the Government. For a while, it was faltering as councils opposed it. In my area, the tenants in Waltham Forest gave it their full support. The Conservative party should thank them, because more than 70 per cent. of them voted in favour of taking their housing estates out of the control of local authorities and instead to put them in the hands of a housing action trust. It is important to bear that in mind because that is the key to the issue. We have here people whose lives have been blighted by some of the worst-run estates in central London and who chose, in significant numbers, to get away from that.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the hon. Gentleman recognise—the Minister will, as he was aware of this—that the tenants in Waltham Forest voted for the housing action trust only when they had been given a clear and categoric guarantee that they could return to local authority control after the properties had been renovated?

Mr. Duncan-Smith: When I go around the estates, I am told that the tenants have no wish to see the properties return to local authority control. The record of the local authority in running the estates, particularly Chingford Hall estate, which is in my constituency, was appalling. One has only to walk around the estate to see that it has been left in rack and ruin and that it is falling to pieces, to such an extent that the housing action trust will take down most of the estate and rebuild houses that will be perfect for people who wish to live there in comfort.

Mr. Raynsford: The tenants still wish the properties to return to the local council.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: They do not wish that.

When I have visited the housing action trust for Chingford Hall estate, I have found that people are buoyed up with enthusiasm about the scheme—I know that my hon. Friend the Minister can attest to that as he recently visited the area. Furthermore, those who run it, both from the Hoe street headquarters and from Chingford Hall estate itself, show what can happen when people are in charge who want to do something for those who live on an estate and want to help them to solve some of the worse problems. That is a great bonus, and shows how a Conservative policy is working well.

In support of Conservative policies over the past 12 years or so, particularly now, it must also be said that Government expenditure on housing is a significant £8·5 billion. That includes £2·3 billion for the Housing Corporation, £1·5 billion for local authorities and £3·7 billion for housing revenue account subsidy. That shows clearly the Government's commitment to housing.

Others have talked at great length about homelessness, but the Government's record on that, particularly their recent record, is one on which they can stand up and be counted. Single Homelessness in London, in its recent annual report, stated:

> "Extra resources which the rough sleepers' initiative and the homeless mentally ill initiative are providing a welcome recognition by central Government of the scale of the problem in central London."

That is significant.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister has spoken already about those two initiatives, but I shall highlight some points about them. Some £96 million will be provided for the rough sleepers initiative and that should give 2,900 spaces in permanent or leased accommodation and 900 in hostels and emergency accommodation. Some £20 million will be made available over the three years for the mentally ill initiative, to develop a new housing advisory service.

I support the amendment and the Government's housing policy. Building on what has been achieved over the past 12 years, it will take us more and more down to the level of individuals looking after themselves while those who cannot are supported and directed through group initiatives and housing associations rather than through councils.

6.19 pm

Mr. Paul Tyler (Cornwall, North): I shall make a brief contribution because I suspect that others wish to speak before the winding-up speeches.

There has been an unusual degree of three-party agreement today. My colleagues and I did not expect to find ourselves in agreement with the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter), who offered words of wisdom to lenders. They must watch their reputations carefully in the coming weeks to see that they pass on the interest rate cuts that they have now been permitted.

I was also extremely surprised to find that I agreed with the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) who made an eloquent plea on behalf of rural areas. When I worked for Shelter in the south-west, my primary work was centred on Plymouth—the city represented by you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the hon. Member for Sutton. If I still had that job, however, it would now take me as much to the rural areas and the market towns as to the large cities. There are rough speakers—I mean sleepers—in almost every market town; there may be rough speakers, too, at some hours of the night, it depends on when one disturbs them. When I spent time on a sleep-out, I was staggered to find how many full-time professional rough sleepers there were compared with a once-or-twice amateur like me.

The rural areas face a serious homeless problem. The excellent work conducted by Glen Bramley and his team at Bristol university in 1990 and 1991 has shown that up to one third of new households in the rural areas require rented accommodation. Those people will not be accommodated through the right-to-buy provisions or as a result of liberating the now frozen owner-occupied market. More than half of those newly formed households simply cannot afford the full value of anything on the market, even now with so many depressed house prices.

The work undertaken by Action for Communities in Rural England—ACRE—estimates that about 377,000 homes will be required either immediately or in the next five years in rural areas. Recently, I visited rural areas in north Yorkshire, Cumbria, Scotland and in my home area of Cornwall. It is clear to me that we must have a continual programme to provide rented accommodation of all sorts for those communities.

In recent years, the Minister has not shown himself to be dogmatic about the split between the rented and owner-occupied sector. He is a man of great stature, because he listens to both sides of the House on this subject

[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".] I agree with the Minister's colleagues. In the months ahead, we look to him to be flexible and to ensure that if the new programmes are not successful he will be prepared to argue with his colleagues at the Department and in the Cabinet for a bigger slice of the cake for those who seek rented accommodation.

The study undertaken by the Department of the Environment of communities with populations of fewer than 3,000 has revealed that they will need far more new homes than are currently proposed. In the housing association rental programmes for 1991-92 and for 1992-93, the DOE figure show that 2,436 additional housing units will be provided under the supplementary credit approval scheme. That number will be insufficient to meet the needs of those areas. In Cambridgeshire, for example, only 106 new units will become available; in Cheshire, Cumbria and Cornwall the numbers available will be 38, 51 and 78 respectively. Those numbers are a drop in the ocean. When one considers all the forms of social mix and occupation that make up the rural areas, I cannot believe that the vast majority will be able to make the dramatic shift from the rented to owner-occupied sector—their needs cannot be met.

Good work has been done by the House-Builders Federation, the Association of District Councils and others to try to find ways in which matters can be improved, but the social and housing mixture is extremely difficult to achieve for legal, funding and planning reasons.

In the Chancellor's statement last week some limited help was offered to the hard-pressed building industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has already drawn attention to the problems of that industry. It is labour intensive and if more money had been made available to it immediately, that could have had a major impact not only on the housing problem but on the jobless totals in many areas.

The disappointment felt at the inability to invest the historic receipts from council house sales is particularly great in rural areas, because many authorities there have few suitable properties still for sale. In the present depressed state of the rural economy, even fewer authorities expect their tenants to be able to exercise their right to buy. I note what the Minister said about Rita, but she will have to work extremely hard in the coming months if an effective equalisation of opportunities is to be offered to people in rural areas.

As the Minister will know, there has been cross-party support in the south-west—I am surprised that the hon. Member for Sutton did not refer to this—for the campaign by *The Western Morning News* to obtain a phased release of council house receipts. That approach would be a much more sane and effective way in which to achieve the investment in housing that is required in the rural south-west.

The rural areas have one national champion when it comes to job opportunities, help for small businesses and housing—the Rural Development Commission. That excellent body has recently produced an excellent report entitled "Homelessness in Rural Areas". It undertook special studies of Derbyshire, Hertfordshire, Shropshire, Northumberland, Lincolnshire and north Cornwall.

In the particular section relating to my area of the country, that exhaustive report showed that 90 per cent. of applicants for housing had incomes of less than £10,000 a year, 63 per cent. had incomes of less than £6,000 and 36 per cent. relied solely on pensions or benefits. The waiting list in the area has grown at the rate of 80 individuals or families a month. In recent months, repossessions have had a marked effect on the problem.

One would think that the Rural Development Commission, given its excellent pioneering work—which I acknowledge happens to be of particular interest to my constituency—would be given additional funds to help it to meet its housing responsibilities. But what did we find in the autumn statement? Its modest budget of some £40 million is to be cut by £2 million. That organisation is the only one that can effectively try to overcome the homeless problem in some of the lowest income areas, but its budget is to be cut. It is a sad day when such effective organisations, with such small means, find that they are at the mercy of the Chancellor's axe.

When the Prime Minister, who represents a rural constituency, took over from someone whose suburbanity was a terrible example to us all, some of us hoped that the country areas would get a fair crack of the whip. We have had a sad few days since the autumn statement because, once again, the rural areas will be deprived of expert help, limited though it was, which it received and which was designed to try to ensure that they got a fair slice of the housing action.

6.28 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): It is clear from the speeches of the hon. Members for Cornwall, North (Mr. Tyler) and for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) that this subject is becoming less and less of a purely party political issue. The hon. Member for Knowsley, North was keen to emphasise that Labour authorities have now come round to the idea of housing associations, and the hon. Member for Cornwall, North even paid warm tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister. I take it as progress that other parties are coming round to our way of thinking.

Colchester borough council is a hung council that takes a non-party political approach to its small but acute homelessness problem. It is one of the key issues in my constituency and the reason for that is simple: the vast majority of people live in excellent housing, which makes it all the more unacceptable that an albeit tiny minority should be excluded from that element of prosperity. All parties on the council are determined to resolve the problem and are committed to using housing associations to achieve that end. There is a remarkable lack of party dogma.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale) and I have been invited to attend a meeting with the council on Friday to discuss how to make further progress. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister, in the spirit of political co-operation between all the parties, to approve an application for additional credit under the Government's estate action programme.

I shall be brief so that the replies can commence. I had intended to comment in detail on housing need in Colchester and what is already being achieved by housing associations. In summary, a total of £15 million is being spent, with £8 million coming from the Housing Corporation. Considerable progress is being made. The estate action programme on the Greenstead estate involves 3,200 properties and a £2 million programme of mainly flats and maisonettes. The problems are familiar and it is

[Mr. Bernard Jenkin]

worth emphasising that not all acute housing problems are in our inner cities; there are just as many in the surrounding towns and the rural areas.

The environment has deteriorated and, for no apparent reason, vandalism and crime are on the increase. The people on the Greenstead estate have an undeserved reputation. They want to improve their area. I know that many of those people are as decent and law-abiding as any anywhere in the constituency and they deserve better. The council has developed plans in close co-operation with the estate's residents and there is evidence of a strong desire for greater self-determination and for the area to recover its standing. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to consider the application favourably.

There are also certain actions that we can urge the council to take. It could sell its assets and make use of the proposals in the autumn statement. It could sell the bus company and Colchester Contract Services to raise the necessary capital. All those issues and many others will be discussed at the meeting on Friday.

I commend the Government amendment to the House.

6.34 pm

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): It is a great pleasure for me to have the opportunity to reply to the debate. It has been a good debate. However, I am disappointed that only a few hon. Members have attended it. I hope that it is not a signal to the wider audience that the House does not take seriously the subject of homelessness and the housing crisis. It is a matter that we should take very seriously. My hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said that a home is a right, not a concession.

Many people in my constituency and elsewhere fear buying houses while there is a lack of confidence in the housing market. They have three main fears. The first is that prices will continue to fall—and over the past two months there have been large falls. Secondly, there is the continuing fear of unemployment—and a report published today shows that 46 per cent. of people fear that they could lose their jobs. Thirdly, there is a fear of negative equity—and my hon. Friend said that one in seven households currently live in a property worth less than the mortgage.

One Conservative Member accused the Liberal Democrats of wanting to abolish mortgage interest tax relief. My hon. Friend dealt with that suggestion so firmly that Conservative Members did not mention it again. I want to lay the matter firmly to rest. Our manifesto at the general election said that we would

> "introduce housing cost relief weighted towards those most in need and available to house buyers and renters. This will replace mortgage tax relief for future home buyers . . . People holding mortgages will be protected: they will have the choice of moving to housing cost relief or continuing to receive mortgage interest tax relief."

I hope that that clarifies the matter for Conservative Members, who clearly have not read our manifesto. I must admit that I have not read the Conservative party manifesto, but I prefer non-fiction.

I was grateful for some of the Minister's comments. I am enjoying working alongside him and other familiar faces on the Committee considering the Housing and Urban Development Bill. I am sure that we will be on that Committee for a number of months to come, so it is important that we maintain good relations.

I welcomed the Minister's comment that no one should have to sleep rough, but I question the cut in funds for the rough sleeping initiative which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey pointed out, was announced on Thursday. I am concerned about the provision in the autumn statement of £750 million to buy 20,000 vacant houses. I take seriously the comments of the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) about delays and the Government's possible lack of ability to meet that target. The key intervention was that by the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford), who pointed out that, during the time it takes to buy those 20,000 homes, it is likely that there will be more than 20,000 further repossessions. The scheme is a drop in the ocean.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) said that, on the 1979 basis for calculating unemployment, the true unemployment figure is now in excess of 4 million. It is right to link the unemployment rate with the number of houses on the market and the number of people in financial difficulty. The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the curious logic in the Housing and Urban Development Bill—which we shall seek to amend—where the Government propose to take away the rights of tenants through compulsory competitive tendering.

When the Minister replies, will he deal with the point about accumulated receipts of £5·5 billion? It is the crux of the matter. It is well known that the best and most sure way out of a recession is through the construction industry. A phased relief of £5·5 billion in councils' bank accounts throughout the country would get the building industry back to work, with all that that means.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: I will not give way as I am short of time and I have a great deal of ground to cover.

If that £5·5 billion were released in a phased way, it would enable houses currently requiring repairs to be brought back into use. It would allow housing associations and councils to make an impact on their waiting lists. It would also put back in work many of those in the construction industry who have lost their jobs.

A family who recently visited my constituency surgery believed that the way to instant riches was to buy their council house, so in 1987 they voted Conservative and bought their property the following year. The husband was a skilled bricklayer, but in 1989 he lost his job and the family home was repossessed.

That family found themselves again on the local council's books, and the home that they occupied as council tenants for 11 years was left empty. Every Sunday, the family used to visit their old house and look through the front windows of the property that was once their home. If they had not believed Conservative party propaganda, they would still be contented council tenants.

That family was placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, which had a serious effect on their health, for 56 weeks—at a cost to the council of £18,000. That is the economics of the situation.

Mr. Stephen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way now?

Mr. Jones: No, because I have much more ground to cover.

The most remarkable contribution in today's debate was that of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr.

Evans). Many of his comments might lead one to think that he had a place on this side of the House. I agree with him that local authorities must be efficient in collecting rent and in turning round property. I pay tribute to Cheltenham local authority, which has cut the time between lets from seven weeks to four weeks and is reducing it still further. As a consequence, the number of families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation has also fallen and continues to do so. I point out that the council is controlled by Liberal Democrats, and that is Liberal Democrat policy in action.

The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson) said that she would like to see £1·75 billion of receipts released. She is right to argue that, though I believe—because I was absent from the Chamber—that the hon. Lady confused some of her figures.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor summed up the situation when he asserted that there is a housing crisis and that after 13 years in power it is unacceptable that under the Government there are so many individuals and families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. I am sure that everyone on this side of the House agrees with that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said that the purpose of housing policy is to provide a decent home for everyone, on a tenure of their choice, and at a price that they can afford. By any measure, the Government have failed to do that. The autumn statement does not address the issue. As the hon. Member for Leeds, West said, the autumn statement is a snowflake on an iceberg. I urge right hon. and hon. Members to reject the Government amendment and to support our motion.

6.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): As Liberal Democrats appear to have spent most of the weekend trying to change the topic of today's debate, I have little doubt that they now regret choosing the subject of housing. Even as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House was announcing last Thursday the business of the House for this week, a headline in the *Evening Standard* was proclaiming "Billions to boost housing". A front page article reported:

> "Chancellor Norman Lamont pumped billions into the housing industry today to spearhead his drive for the economic recovery of Britain."

Even Labour Members were compelled to acknowledge that, as a result of the autumn statement, there will be more money for housing than was set out in our general election manifesto.

Government spending plans provide for all the commitments in our manifesto to be met, including more housing action trusts and continuing help for rough sleepers—and I may explain to the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) that £86 million for the rough-sleeper programme that was not there before is not a cut. There will be further large-scale voluntary transfers of council housing and increased output of social housing.

Capital spending on housing funded through the Housing Corporation increased this year by £600 million to produce an immediate boost to the housing market, and nearly £6 billion will be spent over the next three years. We estimate that that will enable substantially more than the 153,000 homes forecast in our manifesto to be provided over that three-year period—and the Government, rightly, will be looking to lever in more private finance in support of the £7·5 billion of public capital spending to be made this year and over the public expenditure survey period. That is expected to produce a total of £10·5 billion of spending on new social housing across four years for people in need.

Anyone reading the speech by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) would be disappointed. It contained no new ideas or suggestions, but was just a clutch of recycled speeches and other people's press releases. The hon. Member for Cheltenham regretted the paucity of attendance for this debate, and I agree. Three out of the motion's six sponsors have failed to make an appearance, such is their considerable interest in housing matters. It would be interesting to know where the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), and the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) might be. Perhaps they hoped that they would be successful in changing the topic of today's debate.

The absence of new ideas and lack of interest from the Opposition Benches is not surprising. It is often the case that, when Opposition parties have local responsibilities for housing, their record is truly appalling. Five per cent. of Hackney's housing stock—2,000 homes—stands empty and a further 1,200 homes are illegally occupied. The council has no clue who lives in those properties. That council has 3,200 empty or illegally-occupied properties, but its homeless total is just under 2,000. That council could house them all and still have some change.

The Liberals are no better. Tower Hamlets has a 4·5 per cent. void rate, or 1,895 houses. That is rather more than the total of 1,669 persons that council had in temporary accommodation at the last count.

The 1990 auditor's report described Islington council as "incompetent". He mentioned eight flats leased from private owners to alleviate homelessness that the council had left empty for one and a half years. A report by a Queen's Counsel commented that the council had

> "the cash office staffed by the innumerate, the filing done by the disorganised, and the reception in the care of the surly and charmless."

Basil Fawlty on the rates.

Islington council also paid a firm to maintain communal television aerials in a block of council flats that has been demolished 10 years previously, and £25,000 on constructing a 40-yard cycle track the wrong way down a one-way street. Islington council also had £10 million of usable capital housing receipts but spent it elsewhere.

As was made clear by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle)—whom we welcome to the Dispatch Box for the first time—Labour is still confused about its approach to capital receipts. As *Inside Housing* reported in a recent issue:

> "In the run-up to the election, Clive Soley ran into trouble with the leadership when he was quoted as saying that a redefinition of the public sector borrowing requirement, taking council capital receipts out of the calculation, was on the party's agenda. Mr. Battle is obviously keen to avoid similar problems. Redefinition of the PSBR, which could theoretically release capital receipts for housing, is clearly not something Mr. Battle is prepared to argue for today. 'Those are the arguments that the Treasury team are going to have to sort out, not me as the Housing spokesman. At the moment, redefinition is not on Labour's agenda. It is not one of my priorities.' And when asked for clarification today, he said that that approach still stands."

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

We welcome the opportunity given by today's debate to make clear our commitment to the promotion of greater owner-occupation, the widening of choice for tenants and an increase in the number of homes available for rent.

Mr. Stephen: Does my hon. Friend agree that there would be no capital receipts from council house sales if Labour and the Liberal Democrats had had their way, because there would have been no council house sales?

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend has made a good point: there would be little choice and opportunity in housing if the Opposition had had their way.

Our housing policies are good news for tenants, because they provide an opportunity and choice——

Mr. Pike: I assure the Minister that our position on the public sector borrowing requirement and on capital receipts is quite clear. In view of the Government's expenditure plans—announced last week by the Chancellor of the Exchequer—may I ask why it is all right for them to take into account over the next few years the use of capital receipts gained from the sale of public assets? What will the Government do when they have no more public assets to sell?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman has made a brave attempt to rescue his hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West. His hon. Friend failed earlier today, and the hon. Gentleman has failed now.

As I have said, our housing policies are good news for tenants. They provide more opportunity and more choice. Let me add that the proposed increase contained in next year's rent guidelines is less, in cash terms, than last year's increase. We are revolutionising the management of council housing and flats; we are giving tenants new rights, such as the right to improve and an improved right to repair; we are continuing to invest millions of pounds in estate action—and in housing action trusts, which concentrate resources on the worst council estates. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) that I will give careful attention to his request for further implementation of the estate action programme in his area. I am sure that his local authority, like every other, will want to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the capital partnership scheme.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) has direct experience of tenants' aspirations in his constituency and nearby. He reinforced the welcome given by those tenants for Government initiatives such as the establishment of housing action trusts—initiatives that Labour voted against, campaigned against and would have denied tenants. Only our policies are good news for tenants; only our policies provide choice.

Mr. George Howarth: Earlier, I asked the Minister a question which he failed to answer. Let me ask it again. If the money that has been targeted at the Housing Corporation with a view to the acquisition of 20,000 properties fails to materialise, will the Minister ensure that the underspend is carried forward into the following two years—from which much of it has been taken?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman's speech would have done Cassandra proud. I shall deal with it in a moment.

Our policies are good news for home owners. Following a further fall in interest rates, the cost of home loans is now at a 20-year low. Barratt Homes has announced a 30-year mortgage rate low of 6·5 per cent.; the majority of Abbey National mortgage customers will be paying their lowest-ever rate by Christmas; housing-market experts now expect loans to dip below 6 per cent., especially for first-time buyers. Little wonder that the chief executive of the Halifax building society stated, immediately after the autumn statement, that the 7 per cent. bank base rate was

"very good news for the housing market—it is what we have been calling for".

As my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) rightly pointed out, building societies should pass on the benefit of interest-rate cuts to home owners in lower mortgage rates as soon as possible. I am glad to say that, when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment met mortgage lenders this morning, all the mortgage lenders confirmed that they would play a full and constructive part in the initiative for the purchase of empty properties.

The housing market will also be helped by the Chancellor's £750 million package to enable housing associations to buy some 20,000 empty homes, including new homes and repossessed properties. That, in turn, will provide houses for families in great need. The £750 million will benefit the housing market by helping those in housing need, making it easier for some people to move and giving relief to mortgage lenders. The prospect of 20,000 families in housing need being housed sooner rather than later must be good news.

As the chairman of the Housing Corporation, Sir Christopher Benson, has observed, this

"has given the Housing Corporation the opportunity they are seeking—to help the revival of the housing market and to help people in housing need."

Let me tell the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) that building societies are queueing up to start positive negotiations with housing associations, to enable them to meet our target of 20,000 as soon as possible.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister misrepresented the truth about which of my colleagues were present earlier. Quite apart from that, however, does he accept that he has not delivered the sort of response that people outside expect? First, it may be a token of the Government's commitment that none of the amendment's signatories has been present for any of the debate—including the Secretary of State for the Environment, who is responsible for housing. Secondly, although we accept, along with others outside the House, that welcome measures were announced on Thursday, those measures are nothing in comparison with the scale of the current housing problem; and that is what the Minister has so far failed to recognise.

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman has expressed regret about Conservative attendance. He should look first to his own Benches: he will note that a significant number of the motion's sponsors are not present on what is, after all, a Liberal Democrat Supply day, having spent most of the weekend trying to persuade the House authorities to change the topic of the debate to anything other than housing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) reminded us that the autumn statement provided not just more money for England, but more money for Scotland and Wales. Wales is being provided with £38 million to purchase repossessed properties. Yes, we will rise to the challenge presented by rural housing: the capital partnership scheme will give us an opportunity to work together with more rural local authorities, presenting rural housing initiatives and responding to local housing needs.

Let me tell the hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Tyler) that rural areas have a champion: the Government. Our manifesto commitment to spend nearly £6 billion through the Housing Corporation to provide 153,000 homes over the next few years will be more than that. We now expect the Housing Corporation to provide some 165,000 further homes to rent. Local authorities will be able to use 100 per cent. of capital receipts, obtained between now and 1 December 1993. We anticipate that that will release at least £1 billion for spending on housing.

We have launched the capital partnership scheme to reinforce local authorities' incentives to spend their money on areas such as housing, which will be of lasting benefit to their communities. The scheme will be worth up to £600 million next year. An increase in Housing Corporation spending to well over £2 billion this year, together with further leverage of private finance, is expected to provide some £10·5 billion of public and private spending on new social housing.

We are investing in housing, and we are enabling others to do so. The money invested will allow us to tackle rundown council housing; it will provide new opportunities to help families on local authority waiting lists, and will enable more to be done for the homeless; and it will help and encourage the construction industry.

We are a Government committed to tackling the problem of homelessness: a Government determined to continue to take action to ensure that no one in our society needs to sleep rough, and determined that every family should have a decent home in which to live. The initiatives that we are implementing, the policies that we have announced and the money that we have made available are good news for families in need of housing, good news for tenants of rundown social housing, good news for the house-building industry and good news for the housing market. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to support the amendment.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 55, Noes 187.

Division No. 86] **[6.59 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Hall, Mike
Harvey, Nick
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Madden, Max
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
Olner, William
Purchase, Ken
Raynsford, Nick
Rooker, Jeff
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Alex Carlile.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rucliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve

Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Andrew Mackay.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved:

That this House notes the Government's continuing commitment to housing policies designed to ensure that a decent home is within reach of every family, and in particular to promoting the growth of owner-occupation, widening choice for tenants, and improving value-for-money and targeting of public expenditure; and especially welcomes the measures announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement which—consistently with the need to maintain tight control of public spending in the interests of the economy and the taxpayer—will contribute to stabilising the housing market, will increase the supply of social housing thereby helping homeless families, and will promote investment in renovation of run-down council estates.

Former Yugoslavia

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Madam Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

7.11 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I beg to move,

That this House regrets that the response of the European Community, and notably Her Majesty's Government, since it has assumed the Presidency, to the crisis in former Yugoslavia has been too little and too late; is appalled by the continuing slaughter in Bosnia-Herzegovina; is deeply concerned about the impact of winter in Sarajevo and other cities, where failure to protect and stockpile food will be paid for in lives; condemns the barbaric policy of ethnic cleansing; considers that the first priority must be to suppress the ferocity of the fighting by taking over the air space above Bosnia-Herzegovina under UN mandate and if necessary using it to prevent the use of heavy weapons and aircraft for offensive purposes; calls for the effective policing of the Danube to enforce sanctions; congratulates British troops on humanitarian protection for relief convoys; insists however that they must have full capacity for retaliation including, if necessary, air cover; insists that Her Majesty's Government must respond much more generously to the refugee problem, both financially and in the numbers accepted; is deeply concerned that the conflict may soon spread to Kosovo and Macedonia; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to co-ordinate a European Community wide strategy for refugees as proposed by Germany and for further urgent and appropriate action.

I suspect that many people in Europe allowed themselves a period of self-congratulation immediately after the break-up of the Warsaw pact, when the cold war came to an end and, in particular, when European countries participated successfully in the United Nations operation in the middle east to expel Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. But the sense of complacency that these events may have created has been rudely interrupted by the break-up of Yugoslavia into its historical components, fuelled by ethnic hatred of the most virulent kind. On our television screens, atrocity piled on atrocity, inhumanity, barbarism and cruelty have been commonplace.

Which of us can be content with the response of the international community? Which of us believes that Europe has done all that it can? Does any hon. Member feel no sense of shame about our niggardly attitude to refugees?

British troops are at last arriving in Bosnia, but it is right to ask ourselves in what circumstances they do so and for what purpose.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned refugees, and I share his views on visa restrictions. Is he aware that many hon. Members—certainly myself—have been repeatedly ringing the Home Secretary's Private Office and the Under-Secretary's Private Office about the 180 refugees who are isolated and some of whose children may die? In view of the ambiguous nature of the decision about whether to allow them to enter and all the other facts, should not those 180 refugees be allowed to come here as quickly as possible for the most humanitarian reasons?

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman makes a most eloquent plea, and I shall put it in context.

Let us consider how many refugees we are being asked to take compared with the numbers that countries surrounding Yugoslavia have felt obliged to take. Is not it time for a generous response from the United Kingdom? I suspect that it would do us much good in the international community. It would do us much good in Europe if some of our partners felt that we were as willing to assume these burdens as they have been. I think in particular of the burden that Germany has assumed and of some of the social difficulties that have resulted. It is a moment for some warmth of spirit, but so far we have seen little evidence of it from Ministers.

Our troops have gone to keep the peace. It is a peacekeeping operation, but we must ask ourselves what peace there is to keep. The decision to send British troops was taken many weeks ago, yet some of the concerns that were expressed in early September still have not been adequately met. I assert, I believe without contradiction, that we have no right to place brave men and women in circumstances where they risk their lives without giving them the clearest possible military objectives, the equipment and numbers to meet those objectives and, if necessary, naval and air support. It is said that our troops are in Yugoslavia for a humanitarian purpose—to assist the United Nations in ensuring that aid gets through. Those are desirable motives, but they are not clear-cut military objectives.

There has been much debate about the precise terms of the rules of engagement. I would not ask the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to be express about the terms of the rules of engagement—those who know about these matters know that it is by no means sensible to narrate in detail the terms of engagement—but I must ask him to confirm that the rules of engagement, as framed, conform to the nature of the military task that we are asking our troops to undertake.

It is one thing to issue rules of engagement based on self-defence and on negotiating a right of passage for convoys, but it is a quite different thing when, as happened at the weekend, United Kingdom forces are considered for the escort of refugees. Under what rules of engagement would our troops have conducted that exercise? If refugees in the charge of United Kingdom troops were fired upon, it seems self-evident that the troops would have returned fire. Would that be consistent with the rules of engagement under which they would have had to operate if the task of escorting refugees had been assigned to them?

We have sent to Bosnia Senator tanks and Warrior infantry fighting vehicles, but why did it take so long for those vehicles to get there? Why are men and vehicles having to familiarise themselves in winter conditions? How much easier it would have been if troops and their equipment had been deployed earlier.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will have heard colourful stories in the aftermath of the Gulf war about the performance of some British Army vehicles and how some of them were kept going only by cannibalising others in Europe to the extent that, as has been said, perhaps somewhat flippantly, there were hardly half a dozen decent tanks left in Europe. We must have guarantees about the availability of spare parts and the nature of the maintenance of vehicles, on which the lives of our troops depend.

I must ask the Minister—and I do so with some reticence because these are issues that people are reluctant to discuss openly and in public—what assessment has been made about the possibility of casualties? Will all medical evacuations be effected using Sea King helicopters, which have now been deployed offshore? If that is the case, what assessment has been made of the capability of that aircraft to fly in all circumstances in the Yugoslavian winter?

There are more fundamental questions. On what basis was the number of 1,800 arrived at? What assessment of the task was made in advance of a decision about those numbers? Is it true, as some with confidence have asserted, that the size of the force that the United Kingdom should deploy was determined before the nature of the task had been properly defined? What prompted the increase from 1,800 to the present figure of 2,400? Will the Minister tell the House whether there are any plans to send more troops?

If I recall correctly, the Secretary of State for Defence said to the Defence Select Committee that the initial deployment was for six months and that there might be a further six months of deployment, but that thereafter the matter would have to be reconsidered. If that is the case, are there any plans to send more troops?

What contingency plans are being discussed if, for example, as is not beyond the bounds of possibility, the United Nations were to take the view that the mass evacuation of refugees was necessary? Would the British troops, sent for humanitarian purposes to safeguard the passage of convoys, be turned to other tasks such as guarding airfields or similar tasks? If that is contemplated, are we satisfied that the equipment with which they have been provided is adequate for that purpose?

When Vitez was chosen, it was some way back from the fighting. Now it is right in the middle of the fighting. What consequences will that have for the nature of the operations that British troops are able to carry out? In recent weeks, Canadian, French and Spanish troops have been prevented by irregulars from reaching the areas assigned to them by the United Nations so that deployment, according to United Nations resolution 776, has not yet been achieved.

In the context of the weekend, we must ask how far our troops are empowered to go. I put the matter in a way that is not unnecessarily fanciful. If a drunken militia man with a Kalashnikov stands in the way of a convoy threatening to fire on those who are guarding it, can he stop it, or are our troops empowered to take such steps as they believe necessary to secure the safe passage of that convoy? I ask that question for the following reason.

With the onset of winter, when the lives of many people will be at stake, there is bound to be far greater pressure to get access with food and supplies to those who are in need. Let us remember that it was only when winter came to the people of northern Iraq that public opinion and international opinion were prompted to take the necessary steps. If people are dying in the snow in Bosnia, there may be pressure on us here. That will be nothing compared with the pressure on our troops who will feel compelled to take the steps necessary to ensure that food and supplies get to those who need them most.

In the winter conditions, access to our troops will be more difficult. What steps will be taken to ensure logistical supplies to our troops? Someone who claims some expertise in the matter put it to me the other day that, in the winter in Yugoslavia, British troops might find themselves concentrating almost exclusively on achieving sufficient logistical support to maintain themselves, never mind distributing food and supplies to those who required them.

[Mr. Campbell]

Let us consider the question of command and control. There are reports that there is some friction between the senior United Kingdom commander and General Morillon. It was always going to be a delicate relationship for reasons that those who understand the politics of NATO will clearly appreciate. Are we satisfied that that relationship is now on a proper military footing? The Minister has an obligation to confirm to the House that the Government are satisfied at the highest level that the command and control arrangements are properly drawn up for the most effective use of our troops and for the best protection that is available to them.

I turn to the question of air power. When the Secretary of State for Defence appeared before the Defence Select Committee, he was reticent when the point was put to him. I ask the Minister a direct question: if the United Kingdom commander on the ground needs air power to protect the lives of those under his command, will he have it? Have the arrangements been made? I do not ask the Minister to tell us from where or in what form—that information would necessarily require to be kept restricted. However, the House and the troops are entitled to know whether and in what circumstances they will have available to them the resources of the Alliance to protect them. I put the matter bluntly once more: if the commander on the ground needs to call down air strikes to protect United Kingdom troops, will he be able to do so? It is a straightforward question which deserves a straightforward answer.

In the context of air power, we know that the Serbs have used military aircraft. The United Nations has responded to that by declaring an air exclusion zone, but, contrary to the air exclusion zone we have established over southern Iraq, we have not yet willed the means to enforce such an exclusion zone in Yugoslavia. What use is an air exclusion zone unless it is enforceable? Will the Government today pledge themselves to ensure that the proper means of enforcing that relevant United Nations resolution will now be obtained?

It is uncharacteristic for such an operation to be carried on without a substantial contribution from the United States. Perhaps the fact that the United States has been locked in a seemingly interminable presidential election has had some influence on the nature and degree of its commitment. It is well known that the intelligence-gathering capability of the United States is second to none. I ask the Minister a direct question: can he tell the House whether, as a contribution to the United Kingdom's efforts in Yugoslavia, the United Kingdom is able to call on the intelligence-gathering efforts of the United States?

I am aware that I have concentrated on what some might think to be domestic military considerations. I hope that I may be excused. I do not lose sight of the scale of the problem, nor does the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who estimates that 400,000 people could perish in Bosnia this winter. I want the United Kingdom troops to help to prevent that, but I want them to have every possible assistance as they try to do so.

As we say on every such occasion in the House, we know that we have professional, versatile and committed forces. We owe them a duty not to expose them to unnecessary risk. My questions this evening go right to the heart of the role and of the effectiveness of United Kingdom forces in Bosnia. The more effective they can be, the more likely it is that the people of that troubled country will have a chance of survival.

7.28 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"congratulates the European Community and notably Her Majesty's Government in its capacity as Presidency on its unremitting work for a solution of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia; is appalled by the continuing slaughter in Bosnia-Herzegovina; is deeply concerned about the impact of winter in Sarajevo and other cities and the need to ensure the safe passage of relief supplies to them; expresses its warm support for the work of British troops in providing protective support for relief convoys and is reassured to know that they will have the full right to self-defence; condemns the barbarous policy of ethnic cleansing; calls for the effective policing of the Danube to enforce sanctions; welcomes Her Majesty's Government's response to the refugee problem; is deeply concerned that the conflict may spread to Kosovo and Macedonia; and makes clear its strong support for the work of the international conference on the former Yugoslavia under the leadership of Lord Owen and Mr. Cyrus Vance."

The House will recall the Adjournment debate on 25 September when my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence set out the Government's response to the troubles that continue to beset the former Yugoslavia, as part of a wider effort by the international community. Attention was focused especially on developments in Bosnia where the conflict has been extremely bloody and seemingly intractable.

We can all agree that the overarching need is for a negotiated, political solution to the conflict. We cannot impose peace on Bosnia militarily—nor should we try; there is no military solution to the problem. The House is well aware of the continuing work of the international conference on the former Yugoslavia in Geneva, which is continuing to draw together the efforts of the European Community and the United Nations in close liaison, building on and following up the achievements of the London conference and bringing together the key leaders on whom all hopes of a settlement depend. Under its co-chairmen, Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen, the conference is pursuing a comprehensive programme of work aimed at helping the parties make progress towards a solution. That work must be made to succeed. Without a solution which the parties arrive at of their own free will, there will be no end to the tragedy that is Yugoslavia and no peace for the people of Bosnia.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Before the Minister develops his speech, will he answer the question reflected in the exchange between my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) about the position of the 183 people, predominantly women and children, who have applied for visas to visit the United Kingdom? Have those applications been granted or refused, or has no decision yet been taken?

Mr. Hamilton: No decision has been taken on that. The hon. Gentleman will have to await further announcements from my right hon. Friends on that matter. However, it is worth making the point that, since the conflict began in Yugoslavia, more than 40,000 Yugoslav nationals have arrived in this country already.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I want to comment on this point because a bus from just outside my constituency has been turned back. I remind the Minister that, as the hon. Members for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) have said, these people are predominantly women and children. One child has a tumour which needs almost immediate surgery to save its life. Those people have been sitting on buses in miserable, cold conditions. I believe that the Home Office has been considering the matter since Friday.

For goodness sake, surely it is time that a decision was taken. If the Home Office cannot take a decision tonight, when on earth will it take one?

Mr. Hamilton: I have been helped out by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and I can now tell the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) what the position is. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department reviewed the applications for visas from that group of refugees this afternoon. He decided that six refugees with family ties in the United Kingdom should be granted visas. The two medical cases are still under review. The rest of the group will be refused visas to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I raised this matter with Madam Speaker this afternoon and complained about a number of parliamentary questions that I had tabled for answer on Thursday which have not been answered and to which I have not even received holding replies. I received replies just a few minutes ago and they reveal that the situation is being handled in an extraordinary way. Those men, women and children have applied for visitor visas to visit the United Kingdom. However, for some extraordinary reason, the normal procedure has been hijacked by the Home Office. As we have just heard, the Home Secretary has taken an extremely long time to consider the applications.

I understand from the Minister's mumbled reply that the bulk of the applications have been refused. My point of order which is directly for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that normally, under an application for a visitor visa, the Foreign Office and entry clearance officers at our post in Vienna will consider the application. Why they have been referred in this case alone to London and to the Home Office I do not know. However, it is disgraceful. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, who is in the Chamber, should be——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair and I suspect that the hon. Gentleman appreciates that. No doubt Ministers will have taken note of what he said.

Mr. Madden: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department very conveniently slipped a piece of paper to the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. Will the Minister from the Home Department be able to intervene in the debate to tell us why on this occasion the Home Office has hijacked the normal procedures, thereby denying those men, women and children an opportunity——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman appreciates that that is not a point of order for the Chair. As I have said, no doubt the Government Front Bench will have heard what he said.

Mr. Hamilton: That is right.

Ms. Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Further to the other points raised, I understand that the refugee organisation based in Leeds sought advice from the Home Office before it sent the coaches. Two of the coaches were taken from Rochdale to the Austrian-Slovenian border. They have now returned. However, all assurances were sought from the Home Office. The Minister should make a statement to explain why Home Office Ministers said on Thursday in the House that visas will be required, but arrangements were made before Thursday.

Mr. Hamilton: Those questions should really be referred to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. I do not think that I can be expected to answer them. However, I tried to help the House on the matter.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hamilton: No, I must make progress.

Progress is slow and attended by setbacks, as we always knew it would be, but there are encouraging developments. The new constitutional proposals for Bosnia tabled by Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen provide an excellent basis for negotiation. Discussions on a new constitution continue with all the parties in Geneva, despite the initial negative reaction from the Bosnian Serbs. We hope also that the parties will live up to the ceasefire agreement reached on 10 November by the Muslim, Croat and Serb military commanders under the auspices of the Geneva conference mixed military working group, although experience tells us that there are likely to be setbacks. Crucially, the agreements reached at the London conference and being reached, or still to be reached, in Geneva continue to provide benchmarks against which the parties' actions, and their willingness to pursue peace, can be judged.

Where the parties fall short, intense pressure needs to be applied. But that pressure must offer the prospect of an eventual solution, by making the warring sides see where their true interests lie. Military intervention of any kind offers no such prospect. Tighter sanctions if necessary, coupled with the effective enforcement of the arms embargo against the whole of the former Yugoslavia, must continue to be the main vehicle for bringing pressure to bear. Those measures will take time before they are truly effective, but I am confident that, despite sporadic reports of sanctions-busting, the tightening noose of the trade embargo will increasingly threaten any remaining economic and political stability in Serbia. Already shortages of essential materials have resulted in unemployment rising by 60 per cent. and inflation spiralling upwards.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): If the Minister is confident that those sanctions will have that kind of effect, how does he explain the fact that newspapers have reported today that petrol queues in Belgrade are almost non-existent and that a Community member, Greece, is colluding with sanctions-busting? If that is the case, how can the Minister possibly be so confident that sanctions over time will have any effect on the Serbian Government?

Mr. Hamilton: Sanctions are already having some effect. They are creating the most immense problems for the Serbian economy and will continue to do that. However, I take the hon. Gentleman's point. They must be made to work more effectively and that is how we must judge them. Measures are being taken to ensure that the sanctions work better.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I would be grateful if my right hon. Friend the Minister could help me because I am puzzled. If what my right hon. Friend says is right, all the Serbian people—the good, bad and indifferent—are being slowly strangled to death. Would it not have been better to have done many months ago what many of us wanted and had one or two strikes at military targets within Serbia?

Mr. Hamilton: I shall refer to air strikes. However, the answer to my hon. Friend is that that would not have been right. If there had been strikes, the UN troops of whatever nationality would have been seen to be the enemy. We do not want that. We are not in the business of going to war with the Serbs. We are trying to do what we can to help with humanitarian relief. We do not want there to be a situation in which the only thing upon which the warring factions can agree is that the people in blue berets are the enemy and should be ambushed and shot at at every available opportunity.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Is the Minister aware of statements by Lord Owen that the military activity in Bosnia is being conducted not from Serbia, but by the Bosnian Serbs themselves? In fact, intervention on a military scale from Serbia has already ceased. Attacks upon military targets in Serbia would inevitably involve civilian casualties and drive the Serb population more and more into the hands of the extremists in Serbia.

Mr. Hamilton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. That is absolutely true. We do not want to be in conflict with anybody in Serbia, in Bosnia or in any other parts of the former Yugoslavia. We are trying to negotiate humanitarian convoys through and to give protection to our troops who are involved in that. We do not intend to go to war with any of the factions in the former Yugoslavia. Indeed, it would be very regrettable if we got to the stage where we were involved in out-and-out conflict.

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hamilton: I am sorry, I shall not give way. I must make progress or I shall never finish my speech.

The United Kingdom has taken the lead in providing technical assistance to the neighbouring countries where the sanctions have to be made to bite. The pressures brought to bear by sanctions will need to be increased further if Belgrade does not take action to halt and reverse the expansionist policies of the Bosnian Serbs in accordance with the commitments made at the London conference. We shall ensure that this is kept firmly on the agenda.

It is self-evident that an end to the fighting in Bosnia cannot be brought about by military intervention, given the nature of the conflict.

Mr. Cormack: My right hon. Friend the Minister is contradicting himself. A few moments ago, in response to an intervention, he agreed that the Bosnian Serbs are no longer being egged on by the Serbs in Serbia. He now says that they are, which I believe to be the case. It cannot be both.

Mr. Hamilton: I was agreeing with the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) that we do not want to become involved in conflict or fighting with any of the factions in Bosnia. I was not particularly agreeing with his point about the Bosnian Serbs, but we are not in the business of air strikes or getting involved in military action against any of the warring factions there.

Ms. Hoey: Does the Minister agree that, if any arms embargo is to work, it must start with a level playing field? Any arms embargo when Bosnians do not have arms and the Serbians do must mean that those who already have arms will use them to massacre the minority of the people in Bosnia who have no arms and who have not been allowed to acquire them by the international community.

Mr. Hamilton: I am not suggesting that we should supply arms to the Bosnian Muslims to even the playing field. I do not think that many people would sympathise with that. It would merely lead to an arms build-up right across the former Yugoslavia, which would not help anybody.

There is no single aggressor and no single front line. In Bosnia we are dealing with Serb against Croat, Muslim against Serb, and Croat against Muslim, not just within one country but within districts, towns and villages, within streets and even mixed blocks of flats. A massive armed intervention might suppress the violence for a time, but it would achieve no permanent result. It could not force people to live together in peace; its withdrawal would be the signal for a resumption of the conflict.

I do not believe that any hon. Member here today espouses that course of action. We could not achieve our lasting aim, and we would run the risk of launching our troops into a bloody civil war, from which withdrawal would be much easier said than done.

A lesser intervention would be unlikely to suppress the violence even temporarily. Domination of Bosnia airspace, a suggestion put forward in the motion and raised by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), would achieve little. The fighting in Bosnia is taking place on the ground, by small groups and individuals who live and operate among civilians—the very people whom we are trying to assist and who would be most at risk from an aerial offensive. Indeed, many of those fighting are civilians who have taken up arms.

Even if the use of air power against the warring factions seemed justified, targets would be very hard to identify, both because of the mountainous heavily wooded terrain and because much of the fighting is done with small, highly mobile weapons such as rifles and machine guns, mortars, hand-held rocket launchers and air-defence weapons. Air strikes against such targets would be likely to add to the casualties without stopping the fighting. And, of course, it would put an immediate end to the humanitarian activities of the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. They could not continue to operate convoys under such conditions, nor could our troops continue to provide protection for them. We would no longer be regarded as impartial.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Is the Minister saying that the heavy artillery tanks and guns which ring Sarajevo, for example, cannot be targeted?

Mr. Hamilton: I am saying that they can very easily be moved at night and put into areas where there are schools, convents and so on. If one tried to take them out from the air, one would cause enormous civilian casualties. I think that we have learnt that lesson from previous conflicts.

But of course we cannot stand by and watch the appalling suffering which is already manifest in Bosnia and threatens to engulf the republic as winter approaches. Britain is playing a leading role in international efforts to bring relief to the civilian populations. We have given our full support to the extension of the mandate of the UN protection force—UNPROFOR—in the former Yugoslavia so that the force can provide protective support for humanitarian convoys throughout Bosnia. As the House knows, a British battalion group has been deployed for that purpose. Together with battalions from France, Canada and Spain, and support units from the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, the United States of America and Portugal, it will form part of a new Bosnia command under Major General Philippe Morillon. Their task will be, as we have described earlier, to escort relief convoys, on the basis of negotiated passage, to where they are needed. I am glad to have this opportunity to inform the House about progress with the deployment.

I should like to take up the point made by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East about the delay. The reason was that it took time to get the ships to take out the Warrior armoured personnel carriers and it took time for reconnaissances to be made of the area before the troops arrived there.

The last of the battalion group arrived in theatre today and will shortly be operational. The deployment has been a phased one involving 10 ships, including Royal Fleet Auxiliaries and merchant shipping, transporting vehicles and equipment, and 55 flights transporting personnel. That has been a substantial and complex undertaking which has been achieved smoothly and promptly with the professionalism that we rightly expect from the armed forces. We have been most grateful to the United States Government for their assistance in this process through the provision of the entire airlift for our troops.

The total number of British personnel being deployed is about 2,400 initially, including headquarters troops. The reconnaissance confirmed our earlier planning figure of 1,800 personnel for the battalion group, but there will still be a short term need for some 400 extra men and women, mainly Royal Engineers, to provide support services in the initial stages of the deployment, such as accommodation and sanitation, electricity and water, reflecting the physical damage which has been sustained by so much of the fabric of Bosnia during the past months of conflict.

Following further examination of the medical support for the battalion, we have decided to provide a helicopter casualty evacuation capability in theatre, and have deployed four Royal Navy Sea King aircraft for this purpose. They will operate initially from Royal Fleet Auxiliary Argus off Split, transferring to a base ashore when conditions permit. The provision of that capability involves 100 personnel, excluding the Argus crew. The helicopters will be used for casualty evacuation when that is judged to be preferable to evacuation by road.

The United Kingdom contingent will be operating in central and north-east Bosnia, with its headquarters at Vitez and logistic bases at Split, Tomislavgrad and Gorni Vakuf. That represents a change from the UN's earlier plan for our battalion, when it was envisaged that aid might be escorted into north-east Bosnia from Serbia in the east. The reconnaissance showed that that would involve the need to cross too many front lines. It was decided that the delivery of aid would need to go with the ethnic grain to the greatest possible extent, not against it. The French and Canadian battalions reached similar conclusions in their own reconnaissances.

We shall be contributing about 65 personnel to the two-star headquarters and about 180 to the national one-star headquarters in Split. Both are providing an essential contribution to the overall UN operation.

The battalion is well equipped for its role, with personal weapons carried by individual service men, and the Warrior and Scimitar armoured vehicles with their 30 mm Rarden cannon. Ninety-six such vehicles have been deployed. The battalion has its integral mortars and anti-tank weapons readily available should the need arise. Our assessment is that those equipments will be sufficient to meet the battalion's needs. And our troops will have the right to defend themselves as well as the means to do so. I can confirm that they will be operating under what are effectively British rules of engagement. I hope that that answers the point that was raised by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East. If anyone were in any doubt as to the effectiveness of those rules, I would draw his attention to an incident which occurred on Saturday 7 November, when a British reconnaissance party travelling in four Land Rovers from Vitez towards Tuzla returned fire when it came under small-arms and, possibly, mortar fire from unidentified assailants.

But we must also remember that the battalion's task is not a projection of force. This is a humanitarian mission and it is no part of the plan for the force to fight its way through opposition in order to deliver its aid. There will be no tanks, artillery or combat air support. That would profoundly alter the essence of the operation. Our troops are there to help bring relief to the suffering, not to add to the fighting. Their rules of engagement allow them to fire in self-defence. Retaliation is expressly forbidden.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: In the event that British troops find themselves in circumstances in which, for their own protection, it is the view of the senior commander that air strikes are necessary, will they be available to him to call down?

Mr. Hamilton: No, they will not. I had hoped to make that clear. That sort of asset will not be available. If the troops find themselves under heavy attack they must use their weapons of self-defence to fight their way out. They must retreat from their positions, or drive through using their self-protection weapons. If they find themselves in this position, that will mean that their negotiated passage has failed—the parties to some agreement have reneged on that agreement. It will mean in effect that the negotiated agreements have come apart. If the troops cannot get an agreement from the warring factions, they will not start out in the first place.

Though the battalion's relief operation is only now about to begin in earnest, with the arrival of the main contingent of the Cheshires, the Royal Irish and the

[Mr. Hamilton]

Lancers and their armoured vehicles, the advance parties of the British contingent have been active in preparing for the task, reconnoitring and preparing routes, establishing bases and getting round the table with local people to ensure that, so far as possible, our contingent gains the co-operation, understanding and respect of all the parties. They have also made a start on the humanitarian task. Over the weekend of 31 October to 1 November they escorted a UNHCR convoy carrying 86 pallets of relief supplies from Split to Vitez, in the aftermath of the fall to the Serbs of the town of Jajce, and the consequent flow of tens of thousands of refugees towards Travnik.

RAF participation in the relief flights to Sarajevo resumed on 10 October, in the light of assurances by the parties about the safety of humanitarian flights. Since the start of the operation in July, the RAF Hercules have flown 205 missions to Sarajevo and have delivered 2,812·5 tonnes of aid. An RN ship is taking part in the NATO and WEU naval monitoring operations in the Adriatic, which are monitoring compliance with the arms embargo against the whole of the former Yugoslavia and the trade sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro. We are also taking part in the operation by the NATO airborne early warning force to support the naval monitoring forces and to monitor compliance with the no-fly zone in Bosnia imposed in Security Council resolution 781.

As well as providing a battalion group, Britain is contributing to the humanitarian effort in many other forms. Our financial contribution is substantial: over £70 million so far, some £41 million of which has been channelled through the European Community and the remainder through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other international and British relief agencies. All our assistance is carried out in co-operation with international agencies working throughout the area—in particular UNHCR, which is co-ordinating the international community's response to the crisis. Our immediate priority is to provide food and shelter for refugees over this winter. The items for which our funds have been used include 43 trucks and support vehicles and staff operating as part of the UNHCR road delivery operation, running two or three convoys a week to Sarajevo and other areas; £2·6 million worth of medical supplies provided to the World Health Organisation and UNHCR; the provision of specialist personnel, such as medical advisers, logisticians to help plan and operate road convoys and manage the airlift, road engineers and radio operators, and mining and power teams. Our funds have also provided £3 million for the restoration of nine centres to provide winter shelter for up to 20,000 people in the Vitez-Travnik-Zenica area, where the number of refugees has increased following recent fighting.

We are also playing an active part, as president of the EC, in creating a European Community task force for the former Yugoslavia, and have provided and paid for the head of the task force and three other key staff.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): What action are the Government taking to ensure that the almost 2 million refugees who are being driven out of their homes by massacres and ethnic cleansing and who are still in parts of former Yugoslavia will be able to return home? Have the Government finally abandoned their idea of safe havens? There are none inside Bosnia-Herzegovina. If so, what alternative plans do the Government have to ensure that at least most of those people can eventually return home, bearing in mind that the Government are unwilling to enforce any of their humanitarian efforts against Serbian military attack?

Mr. Hamilton: That is a matter of great concern to the United Nations, and it has been discussed in Geneva. The United Nations has always taken the view that it is much better to try to provide a safe haven in the areas from which people originally come than to remove them from the country. Some areas of Bosnia are certainly much safer than others. Our troops will try to remove people from the areas where their lives are most threatened to areas which are relatively safer. The United Nations has always taken this view so that people can return whence they came when the fighting is, as we hope, finally over.

Mr. Meacher: The Minister's answer is manifestly unsatisfactory. I recently spent a week in Yugoslavia. The only area that is "safe" for the 43 per cent. of the population who are Muslims—they form the largest group —is the central corridor, whose size is rapidly being diminished with every day's fighting—as witness the significant recent fall of Jajce. The only other safe part is the tiny pocket of north-west Bosnia known as Bihac.

The Minister must get himself better briefed, because what he is saying does not relate to what is happening on the ground.

Mr. Hamilton: If the hon. Gentleman is trying to persuade the House that there is some simple solution to finding safe havens for 2 million refugees, he is misleading the House. This is an intractable problem, but everything possible will be done to try to help these people reach areas safer than the ones from which they are fleeing. I do not pretend that there is a straightforward solution; nor should the hon. Gentleman.

Finally, though the Government continue to believe that the solution to the refugee problem does not lie in the dispersal of refugees across Europe, we have made clear our commitment to take into this country a share of the highest priority cases. We have already responded to a request of this nature from the International Committee of the Red Cross.

These are the concrete actions that the British Government are taking to help the people of Bosnia, both in the immediate future and for the longer term. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and I welcome the opportunity to restate our policy to the House tonight.

7.58 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I am sure that all hon. Members have been appalled by some of the answers given by the Minister of State tonight. I should like to deal with some of the questions to which he seemed unable to provide the answers.

The main purpose of any action that we take is to bring the fighting to an end and to get food to the civilian population, both in their homes and in the refugee camps and concentration camps. Some of the Minister's answers leave much to be desired.

The Minister has not dealt with the issue of our acceptance, or non-acceptance, of refugees and the Government seem to be confused about their policy on refugees. That was highlighted recently by the tragic case mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), of the eight-month-old baby who desperately requires emergency surgery, in which the Foreign Office and the Home Office seem to have their lines crossed. Surely we can ask Ministers to consider urgently the possibility of establishing some form of hotline to enable people who are most in need of urgent medical treatment to receive it.

The Minister was asked whether a decision had been made about the refugees who are waiting in buses to come to this country. He gave the shameful answer that six have been allowed in. He tried to redress that shameful statement by saying that we must accept that there are 40,000 Yugoslavs in this country already. They have probably been here since the last war.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I meant that 40,000 refugees had been brought in to the United Kingdom since the conflict began.

Mr. Rogers: I am prepared to be corrected on that, but the Minister should have made it more clear. Whether we accept large numbers or not, we are adopting a shameful role. It is all right for the Minister to argue that it is better to keep people as close to their homes as possible, both partially to negate the aim of ethnic cleansing and to allow for a return when conditions allow. However, that argument was based on the assumption—highlighted by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher)—that the refugees will return to their homes fairly quickly. The likelihood of a quick return is rapidly fading and we must tackle the problem in that context and not the one in which it was originally set.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Does the hon. Gentleman recall that, on the two most successful occasions on which large numbers from Mozambique camped in Malawi and when people from Afghanistan camped in northern Pakistan, the refugees remained in those camps for many years with international and medical support but returned to their homelands with the conclusion of the internal conflicts? Does not the hon. Gentleman consider that that is the most successful way to deal with large numbers of refugees and that that might prove to be the best way to deal with them on this occasion?

Mr. Rogers: The cases that the hon. Gentleman illustrated were completely different from the situation in Yugoslavia. He was talking about two simple political conflicts: once the political situation was resolved, people were able to return. We are talking about an area where ethnic divisions run deep and have been exacerbated during the past few months. No one in his right mind can think that all the refugees—there are about 700,000 in Croatia—are likely to return to Bosnia in the medium term at least. We ought to agree that we cannot allow those people—they are mainly women and children—to live for ever in a limbo or never-never land of camp existence. It is shameful for a civilised country to turn its back on such a problem. Shame on the Government for not dealing with it properly.

If it were felt that we could not accept large numbers of refugees, surely we should increase financial help for countries that are prepared to shoulder their burdens.

Mr. Winnick: Opposition Members at least agree with my hon. Friend. Does he accept that the announcement regarding those 180 refugees was totally unsatisfactory? The Minister is not connected with the Home Office, and he was must reluctant to answer questions on the issues. Should not the Home Secretary come to the House on Tuesday to explain why his Department, and presumably he himself, have taken such a decision? There is mounting concern. Although the war cannot be helped, it does not alter the fact that a relatively small group of people have been caught in a diplomatic battle about whether Austria or Britain will accept them. Many of them are children and are very young and they are living in buses in an isolated place. Surely the least we could do is accept them, instead of which apparently only eight are to be allowed into this country.

Mr. Rogers: I understood that it was only six. I agree, and I am sure that my hon. Friend will press that matter with the Home Secretary.

Mr. Madden: Before my hon. Friend leaves that subject, can he cast any light on why the Foreign Office should abdicate its responsibility on this occasion? In other countries where visa arrangements are in force, entry clearance officers at British overseas posts consider visa applications. Why on earth did not the British post in Vienna decide to issue visit visas to that wretched group of people, who are seeking only to visit the United Kingdom? They are not seeking political asylum or refuge, but merely a six-month stay.

Mr. Rogers: I agree. Perhaps, after the debate, the Minister will be shamed into dealing with that problem urgently tomorrow.

One of the most crucial and agonising decisions to be taken at United Nations, European and local levels is whether we should deploy more military force in the former Yugoslavia. When we contemplate the increase in suffering for the civilian population during the next few months, the decision becomes more acute. As my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said on 25 September:

> "We support the deployment of British troops under UN auspices."—[*Official Report*, 25 September 1992; Vol. 212, c. 132.]

However, we have consistently argued about the precise role of the British troops in Bosnia, and the rules of engagement under which they will operate, as was highlighted by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) and my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), the Opposition defence spokesman, in the debate on 25 September.

That role has not been clearly explained to the House, although I was encouraged by the remarks of the Minister of State for the Armed Forces—the first time that I have been encouraged in four years of shadowing him in the defence team—to the Select Committee on Defence, when he said:

> "If ever we are going to commit our young servicemen into these situations we must be sure that they have not only the necessary equipment to defend themselves but also allow them to use that equipment."

I am disappointed in the Minister's reply to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East, who asked whether commanders could call up air strikes. He said, "No, they couldn't." The other part of his answer was more significant: he said, "We don't have the capability."

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Mr. Rogers: If the Minister looks at the record, he will see that he said, "They did not have them available anyhow". I presume that he meant that the commanders do not have the capability.

Mr. Hamilton: I have to put the record straight, as I have heard enough rubbish from the hon. Gentleman so far. I said that they would not have that capability in theatre, not that they would not have it at all. I want to make it clear that the capability to launch air strikes will not be available to our troops in Bosnia.

Mr. Rogers: I am used to the right hon. Gentleman's personal insults. Other hon. Members will recall that three years ago I accused him, during defence debates, of being part of the conspiracy to export arms to Iraq. I was told that I was making poisonous accusations—not by the Minister, but by Mr. Alan Clark. I was told that I was talking complete nonsense. I am probably one of the few Members of Parliament who can say tonight, with absolute certainty, "I told you so." Even the right hon. Gentleman's insults will not prevent me from speaking the truth.

To return to the issue of troops in Yugoslavia, British troops will be exposed and if the capability is not in the theatre, is it not about time the Minister of State for the Armed Forces put it there?

Mr. Hamilton *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Rogers: If the Minister is prepared to say that if young British service men come under attack from overwhelming forces he will allow Harriers and Tornados to sit there unused, that will not go down well outside the House. I accept that we do not want to use excessive force; but surely in such a critical situation it should be considered, at least as an option. The Minister shuts his mind to the problem, as he so often does.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the mere fact that the capability was available and could be called on could be a considerable deterrent?

Mr. Rogers: Indeed; I am glad that the hon. and learned Gentleman points that out. For years, the Government have said that deterrence is the basis of their military philosophy, but now deterrence goes out of the window. Perhaps that is because they are under so much pressure that they cannot think straight.

If we are to increase military intervention in the area, it must be done on the basis that the only way to obtain peace is to separate the warring factions by deploying a superior ground force or using air power to take out Serbian heavy weapons, thus creating a more level playing field, as the Bosnians have requested.

The decision on whether those options are feasible could be left to the generals—as a politician, I should hate to interfere in such a decision—but there seems to be an enormous difference even between the generals. Some say that two or three divisions, amounting to 30,000 to 40,000 men, combined with maritime air cover, would be needed and others say that some 500,000 or even more men would be necessary to maintain peace. The opinion on the required force levels seems to depend on whether one supports intervention.

We should be under no illusion because, as soon as either of those enhanced force options is used, the humanitarian assistance presently deployed will go out of the window. I agree with that part of the Minister's speech. If it reaches the point where we are involved in a war, it could have the opposite effect of what we are trying to do in other respects. No one could believe that the Serbs would sit back and accept that form of intervention. Whatever intervention is used, whether air strikes or ground forces, the present suffering among the civilian population will be as nothing compared to the direct and indirect suffering that will result from aggressive military intervention.

Even assuming that such intervention is feasible and effective, what happens next? Are we prepared to maintain a standing army in the area indefinitely? As soon as we pull it out, we all know that the fighting will start again.

For some people, military intervention may be morally desirable at this stage, but I doubt whether it is a solution to the complex problems, which, as the Minister rightly said, can only be resolved politically.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Will my hon. Friend comment on the Minister's reference to safe havens, which seems to be his only practical suggestion to deal with the refugee problem? Is not the basis of any idea of safe havens that they be safe? They cannot be safe in Bosnia if they are protected only by Bosnians who are not well armed, so if safe havens are to be a policy, should not that policy be safeguarded by United Nations troops?

Mr. Rogers: I must confess that I cannot give an expert opinion on the safe havens issue, which was dealt with by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West. I understand from my hon. Friend that the geographical location of safe havens will be extremely difficult in Bosnia and they may not be available as an option to save lives.

Apart from using large-scale military force, only one other practical measure is available to us—sanctions. That is why I welcome, in the Government amendment, the reference to sanctions and the Minister's statement that the Government will at last tighten up on them. They are supposed to have been in place for months and the Minister has virtually acknowledged that they have not been maintained.

In the past few weeks, I have heard people say that sanctions do not work. Normally, they say that as a preface to arguing for armed intervention. They are absolutely right—sanctions do not work if they are not enforced. We are seeing a flagrant breach of sanctions that were first agreed by the European Community and then reinforced by resolution 713 and subsequent resolutions of the UN Security Council. The bans on trade and the supply of weapons have been continually ignored. Mandatory sanctions have not been taken seriously and there is ample evidence that convoys of barges are using the Danube to take strategic materials into Serbia, as well as using land routes from the south and east.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) said in an intervention, today's *Financial Times* contains an article by Laura Sibler on how sanctions are being busted and strategic materials are getting through to Serbia. It is no good thinking that we are not involved in or responsible for that matter. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) raised that matter with the Department of Trade and Industry and was told that import-export trade statistics for the Yugoslav republics were not even available. I understood that we were at least monitoring trade, even if we were doing nothing to stop it. I hope that, in a couple of years' time, the ex-Prime Minister and ex-Defence Ministers will not say, "It is nothing to do with me, guvnor. Don't blame me, because I didn't know anything about it. Nobody told me" —just as they are now saying about the arms deals with Iraq.

We have held the European Community presidency for the past six months and have been in a unique position to insist that sanctions be enforced and properly monitored. But, yet again, the Government have failed lamentably. If sanctions are not given a chance to work, the argument against military intervention is substantially weakened. The crux of the matter is that if we allow those war profiteers to make their pound of flesh out of innocent civilians now, pretty soon they will make a pound of flesh out of British troops, too. We want the mandatory sanctions against Serbia to be enforced rigorously by a more effective monitoring of the River Danube and other land access routes into Serbia.

However difficult it may be to enforce sanctions, it will be much easier than attempting to apply a military solution. Even a ring of steel would be a much cheaper option than the cost of placing an army in Bosnia, not only financially but in the saving of human life and misery.

The heart of the matter is the intended acquisition of land by force, the physical and ethnic cleansing of areas ahead of a peace settlement. The acquisition of land of recognised neighbouring sovereign states is against the prime underlying ethics of civilised relationships and international law. That is why we must continually make it clear that boundaries between states or new states created by ethnic cleansing will not be internationally recognised. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said last August, a state based on such an obscene and uncivilised policy should be treated as an outlawed state and should be given no legitimacy in the world community.

8.19 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Most hon. Members would echo the concluding words of the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), although for reasons that I shall seek to explain some other parts of his speech were less easy to agree with. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) who opened the debate performed a signal service for the House with an admirable speech. He and his colleagues are to be congratulated on choosing this horrific subject for their Supply day debate.

When we turn our attention, as we do all too rarely, to the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, I feel an overwhelming sadness. All hon. Members have certain events seared into their memories. Some of my formative searing experiences were as a small boy seeing the Pathé news reels of Belsen and as a sixth former seeing the dreadful carnage in Budapest in 1956 and feeling at the time that everything possible must be done to ensure that such events never recur to deface the European continent. In the former Yugoslavia we are seeing a re-run of events as horrific as both of those.

No one could have been unmoved on reading the terrible accounts relayed by extraordinarily brave journalists from the former Yugoslavia. It is fitting for the House to pay tribute to those journalists, many of whom have lost their lives in bringing home to us what has been going on. The free world's response has been inadequate. I have felt that from the time before the Serbian forces started to shell Dubrovnik about a year ago. I felt then, and I feel now, that firm and concerted action might well have prevented the events in Bosnia. Some of us said that those events could and would take place but certain actions were ruled out.

The hon. Member for Rhondda spoke appositely about deterrence. A country with a weapon or a force that is viewed as a deterrent does not announce to the world that it will never use it. That was my party's consistent criticism of Labour's position on the nuclear deterrent. It was not that we were warmongers or that we viewed with anything other then abhorrence the possibility of using it, but we did not rule that out. Unfortunately, when Milosevic and his warlords in and outside Serbia got to work, the west—the free world, including the European Community—ruled out force.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) speaks with great knowledge and authority about Serbia, but I would say to him that if we had been prepared to bomb munition factories and take some tough, surgical action against Serbia about a year ago and had mounted a naval blockade of Dubrovnik, we might have avoided the subsequent carnage. I make no apology for saying that again.

We cannot undo what has been done, but surely we can learn some lessons, one of which is to eschew ambivalence. It is incomprehensible for any member of the Government to speak as if there can be neutrality between a fire brigade and a fire or between an aggressor and those who are being victimised. I do not suggest that no atrocities have been committed by Croatians or Bosnians because there is evidence of some, but the overwhelming evidence is that the massacres, the carnage and the destruction of a nation's heritage in Croatia and Bosnia have been the work of the Serbs.

Last week I attended a concert in the Royal Festival hall in aid of Dubrovnik. More than 3,000 people came to show their dismay at the destruction of one of Europe's prime cultural sites. Who destroyed it? It was not the Croatians. Serbia has persistently been the aggressor. Again I make no apology for referring to the video that was sent to us about eight weeks ago. It came from a rather improbable source which I think was the *Sunday Sport*. That video made the most appalling viewing. It showed trays of young men's genitals, and a woman being disembowelled to find out whether she was pregnant with a boy or girl. It is horrible to speak about such things, but one must do so to bring home the enormity of such happenings.

We cannot and should not for a moment seek to suggest that there is any equality of culpability between the Serbs and the rest because there is not. I am sure that many people in Serbia are as appalled and disgusted as hon. Members at the events there. Many of them would like to replace their present regime with one approximating to the system that we enjoy. However, the Serbian regime is culpable. That is why I find it so difficult to understand why we are unable to guarantee an air exclusion zone.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East asked some extremely pertinent questions. While I have great regard and affection for my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces who responded, I

[Mr. Patrick Cormack]

do not think that his response was adequate. It was a case of ruling something out, and we should not do that. The UN peacekeeping force includes our young men.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): My hon. Friend may be confusing two different propositions. The proposition advanced by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) dealt with the deployment of aircraft in support of the United Kingdom troops in Bosnia. My hon. Friend speaks about an air exclusion zone, which is a quite different proposition. I shall refer to it in my winding-up speech.

Mr. Cormack: I was happy to give way but my right hon. and learned Friend intervened a little too early. The point made several times in the debate is that British troops are on the ground in Bosnia as part of the UN force. A few weeks ago we were told that only 1,800 would be required, but that estimate has been increased by almost 1,000 to 2,658 according to the latest figures. If that force is subjected to unprovoked air aggression, it must be defended from the air and not left to defend itself from the ground.

Mr. Hogg: I think that that is a slightly different issue and I am sorry that there is confusion. Perhaps I am responsible for it. A breach of the United Nations resolution on a no-fly zone would raise different questions. I do not think that the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East raised that matter, but I shall deal with it in my winding-up speech. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces was entirely right in what he said about United Kingdom forces and prospective air power. There is a different answer if the Serbs use air power in breach of the United Nations Security Council resolution.

Mr. Cormack: If there is a different answer to be given, I am mightily relieved. What I believe to be clear, and what seemed clear in what the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East said, is that it is crucial that our forces are given every necessary protection. If my right hon. and learned Friend is saying that that is the case, I thank him for it, and I am delighted by it.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his polite observations about me. I made two points about air power. First, as the United Nations has declared an air exclusion zone but has not yet willed the means to enforce it, I asked whether it makes any sense to have a zone that one is not willing to enforce. Secondly, I asked whether, if the lives of those in the British force were at risk, the senior commander would have the right to call down air forces to protect it.

Mr. Cormack: I concur with the hon. and learned Gentleman's two points. It seems that we now have at least a partial assurance on one of them from my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister. As he said, he will develop that point when he winds up, and I am sure that we shall all be listening with great interest to what he has to say.

Mr. Hogg: I should rather say it later.

Mr. Cormack: I should prefer that as well, having already given way three times in quick succession. The House would be at one in expecting that the United Nations, having willed the troops on the ground, would will the means to defend them. I think also that the House would be at one in expecting any British commander to have flexible options, and not be leading his troops with one arm tied behind his back.

Mr. Macdonald: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cormack: I shall give way once more, but interventions make for long speeches.

Mr. Macdonald: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because this is an important point. I understand that the Government are now saying that, whereas British forces on the ground would not be able to call in air support to defend themselves from attack on the ground, they would be able to call in air support to protect themselves from attack from the air, such attack being in breach of the United Nations exclusion zone. One wonders whether that principle could be extended to the civilian populations on the ground to protect them from attack from the air.

Mr. Cormack: The hon. Gentleman moves us on, and I am glad to be moved on. I hope that we shall have a clear, definitive answer, deployed with all the forensic skills for which my right hon. and learned Friend is renowned, when he winds up. I agree with the hon. Gentleman and I would go on to say that there is still an overwhelming case for using strategic strikes against the aggressor, in the air or in Serbia. We should not rule that out.

I return to the deterrent point. We should not tell any potential enemies that we shall rule out anything. We should keep them guessing. We should continue to apply sanctions and try to make them as effective as possible as quickly as possible. We should try to deal with the Danube problem—a very real problem. After all, we did not rule out that option—indeed, we deployed it fairly quickly—when another sovereign state was overwhelmed in July 1990. Whether we like it or not, Bosnia was recognised as a sovereign state. There are those in the House—I pay proper tribute to them—who did not like that fact. Nevertheless, it has been so recognised, since the beginning of this year, by all the countries of the European Community and many beyond.

Therefore, we have an obligation to do something to ensure that this new nation, which we have recognised, is not completely dismembered. It is already pretty close to being dismembered. The figures are horrendous—2 million refugees, and people who are not given to exaggeration talk of perhaps 400,000 perishing in the ice and snow this year. If that happens, as it so easily could, it will be a damning indictment of us all.

My right hon. and learned Friend should not close his eyes, nationally, as part of the European Community or as part of the United Nations. I am not talking about massive involvement. I have never done so, and nor have people like the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), who is nodding now. I am talking about the sort of action that Lord Owen was advocating until the very day that he became the United Nations mediator. I am talking about the sort of action advocated by Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven, to whom my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces was such an assiduous Parliamentary Private Secretary for so long.

I urge my right hon. and learned Friend not to rule out that option entirely. What is happening in Bosnia is utterly shameful. Both the motion tabled by the Liberal Democrats and the Government amendment refer to Kosovo and Macedonia. We all know that terrible things are happening in Kosovo, as they are in Macedonia, although what is happening in Kosovo has been more widely reported. People are being excluded from their schools and colleges, being harried from their homes and being ill treated. The cauldron is boiling and it might boil over. If it did, we could find ourselves facing a full-scale Balkan war, a war that could involve Albania, Bulgaria and two NATO countries—Greece and Turkey—on opposite sides.

We must not rule out any option because, above all, that war is what we must deter. We cannot bring back the tens of thousands who have already been slaughtered or massacred. We cannot restore the tens of thousands maimed. We cannot, overnight, put together the families that have been shattered and dispersed. But we can do something to deter the warlords and others from plunging Macedonia and Kosovo into similar hardship and strife.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman said earlier that we should anticipate these conflicts and perhaps, if we had done so, they might not have escalated as they have in Bosnia. As I understand it, there are eight missions in Bosnia, including those from Norway and the United States. Would it not be appropriate—and perhaps the Minister can deal with this point—to put more missions and more monitoring in the area and perhaps to anticipate the problems that the hon. Gentleman is so graphically describing?

Mr. Cormack: That might well be the case. Firmness and resolution in dealing with the acute problem before us now will be the best deterrent to those who are tempted to tread this appalling path to devastation and destruction.

It is not just that. Those people, many of whom thought before the war broke out that they had been liberated from communism and totalitarianism, looked to the free world. They aspired to what they thought were the values that had been withheld from them. The problem is not just there. As we speak, all over the former Soviet Union there are cauldrons simmering—for example, terrible things are happening in Georgia, although we do not see them nightly on our television screens.

The firmness, resolve and effectiveness with which the European Community and the free world in general deal with the problem of the former Yugoslavia will have a significant effect on what does or does not happen elsewhere. The world is a far more dangerous place than it was before the wall and the iron curtain came down. I rejoice that they are down and that the cold war is ended.

But the new situation calls for great statesmanship, vision and resolution. Although I pay tribute to what Ministers have sought to do, we have not been effective enough and there is no point in pretending that we have. I hope that a stiffening of resolve will emerge from this debate.

It is also important to consider the position of the British infantry. I make no apology for raising this matter, which I touched upon in September. We are extremely fortunate in the way in which we are served by our armed forces. Their versatility, professionalism and cool courage is an example to us all, yet they are thin on the ground. Since "Options for Change" was published, many of us, some with a territorial interest—I do not apologise for my interest in the Staffordshire Regiment—have said time and again that we are stretching the infantry too far. That fear has been backed up by military men of immense experience and prestige, as was illustrated by the recent letter to *The Times* from Field Marshal Lord Bramall.

In September we were told that the number of men to be sent to Yugoslavia would be limited to 1,800; 2,658 troops are now there. I do not object to that. It might be necessary to increase that number to 3,000 and I would not object to that either. But we have Northern Ireland, and events in this capital city at the weekend have reminded us that that problem will not go away. There are other trouble spots in the world.

We will not lightly be forgiven if we deprive ourselves of the means of defence, but the infantry is being stretched to a dangerous degree. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will review this issue. He has already said that he will if circumstances change and, through my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, I should like to tell him that those circumstances have changed, are changing, and will continue to do so. I make no apology for urging, once more, that reconsideration.

Apart from the expressions of total revulsion and absolute sympathy, I hope that what comes out of this debate will be a determination to do everything that we can to bring this conflict to a close. I agree with the hon. Member for Rhondda that we cannot do that by massive intervention on the ground, and I have not advocated and will not advocate that, but we can do it by a demonstration of resolve and by a refusal to forgo weapons that we have every right to consider using. I hope that when my right hon. and learned Friend replies to the debate he will recognise that.

8.42 pm

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I agree with practically everything that the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) said. At the risk of upsetting some of my colleagues, I congratulate the Liberal Democrats on using this opportunity to discuss this serious topic.

Terrible events are taking place in the heart of Europe, and I was appalled not just at the banality of the Government's amendment, but by the speech of the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. There was a note of complacency in it and an almost total acceptance not just of what has happened but of what is likely to happen in the coming months in Yugoslavia. We as politicians, not just of the House, but of the European Community and the world, must take collective blame for what has happened. We must accept that blame because we have stood by, as a nation, and watched nothing less than the extinction of another nation and its cultural identity, the nation of Bosnia.

More than one third of a million civilians are trapped in Sarajevo alone, without food, electricity or running water. We all know that they are dying daily, and we must recognise that, apart from fine words, fine intentions and some belated military help with humanitarian aid, they are dying because this country and the rest of the EC have refused to intervene. I do not believe that we have used our position as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council to support the initiatives aimed at confronting Serbian militarism.

[Ms. Kate Hoey]

Consider the publicity that was devoted to the London peace conference in August and what was supposed to come out of it. At that conference the Prime Minister named Serbia as the chief instigator of atrocities and territorial aggression in the region. He claimed success in reaching specific agreements that guaranteed the integrity and security of Bosnia and its people. What has happened to those agreements? We were told that the sieges of towns and cities would be soon lifted, but that has not happened. We were told that there would be international supervision of the use of heavy weapons, but that has not happened. We were also told that there would be a ban on military flights, but no air exclusion zone has been observed. The promise to enforce sanctions on the Danube has not been fulfilled.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On the question of the air exclusion zone, we have no evidence of any combat mission having been flown since 12 October. We believe that, at the moment at least, the no-flight regime has been observed for combat missions.

Ms. Hoey: The Minister may say that, but that is not exactly what has happened. I believe that the air exclusion zone has not been monitored and has not been observed.

The agreement on the creation of an international criminal court has not been realised. I accept that some civilians have been released from detention camps, but just as some have been released, some have been imprisoned. We heard many fine words at that peace conference, but we have seen little action. In some ways Britain has even obstructed the UN in carrying out initiatives aimed at enforcing the agreements reached in London.

A lot of the blame must rest with the Foreign Office, which has continued to portray this conflict as a civil war and promoted the myth that all sides are equally to blame. I agree with the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South that anyone who has studied what has happened cannot fail to say that the blame must lie with the Serbians. There have been atrocities committed on all sides, but the systematic atrocities carried out by the Serbians must be recognised.

Civilians will get hurt in all wars, but all the evidence points to the fact that the Serbians have a deliberate and calculated policy of targeting civilians. Their policy is to kill them in sufficient numbers to make others run away. I do not believe that that is war; it is terrorism on a scale unprecedented in Europe since the Nazis.

It is equally clear that journalists have been targeted by the Serbians. I am sure that all hon. Members would want to pay tribute to the fine work done by television and newspaper journalists. Without their reports we would be unaware of some of the terrible atrocities that have occurred.

If we allow Bosnia-Herzegovina to be destroyed, I believe that all hope for the survival of democracy and decency in that part of the world will end. Britain has some responsibility and must take action; there is still much to be done. I may be out of line with some of my Front-Bench colleagues, but I believe that Britain should act to lift the UN arms embargo on Bosnia. I do not believe that it is right that Bosnians are dying because they have no weapons to defend themselves. They are literally being killed because they have no opportunity to get the weapons that they need to defend themselves. There is no point in sending in the military to ensure that food aid gets through to the people of Sarajevo only for those people to be killed a few days later. We should get the United Nations to lift the arms embargo on Bosnia.

We should be pressing for selective air strikes against the artillery and other heavy weapons of the former Yugoslav army. I agree that we do not want a wholesale military presence in the area, but, as other hon. Members have said, if when we saw the pictures of what was happening in Dubrovnik selective action had been taken, that might have deterred the Serbians from doing what they then did in Sarajevo. If we do not learn a lesson from that, there will be an escalation in the conflict in that area. I am also worried about what is happening in Kosovo. If the Serbians knew that we were prepared to take action, it might deter them from going further.

The greatest priority is to save the citizens in Sarajevo. That is essential for the survival of Bosnia's physical and cultural identity. Last year, almost 30 per cent. of Bosnians married people from different religious groups. That is good evidence of the tolerance that has sustained Bosnia's character and identity for centuries. It must be protected from the nationalism and ethnic cleansing that threaten not only that region but the peace and security of Europe.

Will the Minister say how much more Serbian aggression the Government will allow before they are prepared to take action? I supported our actions in the Gulf war in support of Kuwait, so I cannot justify Britain doing nothing about what is happening in central Europe. I hope that the debate will bring to the forefront the need for action. We must not sit back and allow more people to die. If we do not take action, in a year's time the conflict will spread throughout Europe. We could stop that happening, but currently the Government are refusing to do so.

Will the Minister answer some of the questions asked by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) which were not answered by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces? I hope that the debate will bring us a little nearer to the end of a conflict that we cannot allow to continue.

8.52 pm

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Although I agree with most of what has been said about the dreadful conflict in the former Yugoslavia, I want to concentrate my remarks on the refugees issue. I am concerned that we are thinking only about refugees in the former Yugoslavia and not taking the wider context into account. The problems in that area are repeated throughout the world, so it is wrong that the House should concentrate on the Yugoslav refugees.

What about the Sikhs in the Punjab, where there is also ethnic cleansing and the worst sort of brutality? To follow on the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), there is also murder, rape and pillage in the Punjab. Other than when I have raised the matter through Adjournment debates, I cannot remember the issue being raised on the Floor of the House, and certainly not by either of the two main Opposition parties. I remind the House that all that is happening in a former Commonwealth country which has a direct relationship with us. It is not a country in Europe which, if I may put it this way, has no direct connection with Britain.

The worldwide problems are caused by civil wars. I understand that there are currently 44 conflicts throughout the world. The problems of refugees arise from the economic chaos that is rife the length and breadth of Africa. Many African countries are former Commonwealth countries, but no one is as concerned about them as about Yugoslavia.

Many people are moving around the world in search of safer and better lives, but that is not the reason for our refugee legislation. There are problems in Romania, Iran, Iraq, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Somalia, Zaire, Uganda and Sri Lanka—and of course, the whole of the Soviet Union is breaking up. Countries are worried about refugees. France is worried about Algeria and Spain about north Africa and the border that allows refugees directly to enter Spain. Portugal is worried about the refugee problem in Macau, where people can apply for a full European passport. Germany has a problem because 250,000 refugees arrived there last year and a further 500,000 are expected this year from eastern Europe, Turkey, Afghanistan, Africa and, now, the former Yugoslavia. The anger of Germans has nothing to do with Nazi thugs—everyone is opposed to them.

Sir Russell Johnston: Surely there is a difference between economic refugees, of which the hon. Gentleman rightly says there are many, and people who have been burnt out of their homes.

Mr. Dicks: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point, but as I said earlier, people are suffering those same conditions in the Punjab, yet there is apparently no concern in the House about that. The Government show no concern about it in their relationship with India. It has been happening since long before the events in the former Yugoslavia, but no one cares. People are concerned about the former Yugoslavia—it is the in thing. I have almost 10,000 Sikhs in my constituency who ask, "Why the concern? We know what is happening in Yugoslavia and we do not want it to continue, but where is the concern about what has happened to our relatives in our country?"

If the refugees going to Germany are granted asylum status, they can move wherever they wish around the EEC. They could come to Britain if they so wanted—and many of those seeking that status in Europe might want to do that. We must consider the position facing Britain before we think of taking hundreds, thousands or even millions of refugees.

It takes up to three years to determine a claim. Between 1984 and 1990, 2,700 people from India applied for asylum. None was granted it because apparently none qualified, but 47 per cent.—more than 1,200—were allowed to stay because it took so long to process their applications. That can only encourage people to apply for asylum and to make bogus applications.

There are already some 4,200 people from Somalia in this country of whom 665 are seeking asylum status. Those 4,200 people came here as visitors or students. I am sure that the House is aware of the fact that, whatever the circumstances, they will not be sent back. I find that rather surprising. There were 50,000 applications for asylum in Britain last year and there could be even more this year.

During the past two years 106 unaccompanied children arrived at Heathrow in my borough of Hillingdon, which has had to find them accommodation and educate and feed them. So far, it has cost my local authority £1 million, but there has been no help from the Government.

On the specific matter of the former Yugoslavia, a parliamentary answer shows that in the year ending August 1992, 50,800 people from that area were given leave to enter Britain, mainly as visitors or students—but with the implicit understanding that they would not be sent back. A further 500 have applied for asylum. That makes nearly 52,000 refugees already from the former Yugoslavia who have nipped in rather quietly knowing that, whatever happens, they will not have to return.

I appeared on a television programme with a 19-year-old refugee who said, "I don't want to go back home. I get £30 a week and my accommodation paid for. I will not return, even if the situation changes." Who can blame him? He was allowed entry for a course that he has now given up, and he just wants to stay.

I hate to use the word "do-gooders" in this context, but one must question the actions of those who believe that it is a good idea to take empty coaches to a border and to return to Britain with refugees. I thought that a refugee was someone who sought refuge—and that the first place to do that was immediately outside the troubled area. However, some people are bussing refugees through two or three countries, which causes problems for others. One newspaper report states:

> "Dover, perhaps unusually, has never had a major refugee problem. But three weeks ago 250 people arrived in a convoy of coaches from Bosnia, brought by a voluntary group based in Leeds."

Two days before they arrived, the authorities were told that they were going to apply for political asylum, and that entitled them to the full range of benefits—housing, social security, health and legal aid. A council spokesman said:

> "It is all very laudable for these people to bring people in, but they haven't thought out who will foot the bill."

The Sikhs in my constituency might well say, "This seems to be the game to play now. We will charter a plane to India and bring out a few thousand Sikhs over a period of time." Another interested group might say, "The real issue is Somalia, so we will take a plane there and bring out some refugees." Another group could say, "We will take a few coaches to eastern Europe and bring refugees back to Dover."

If such people arrive at a port, existing law on asylum allows them entry. The individuals who bussed refugees in from Bosnia have been in touch with the Home Office, and it is sending extra staff to the ports to cope with the situation. Laudable though such actions by do-gooders and members of the chattering classes may be, they have not thought through the consequences if every group having an interest abroad starts to do the same.

With the exception of one child who is likely to be adopted by an eminent ITN reporter, refugees will not be sent to Surrey, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire or Hampshire. Instead, they will stay near their port of entry and move to inner-city areas that already have problems. Local authorities will have to cope and local residents—through direct taxes and the council tax—will have to pay the bill.

Most right hon. and hon. Members have problems with housing waiting lists in their constituencies. I certainly do. When refugees arrive, my constituents say, "Hang on, Mr. Dicks—we have been waiting for years for a transfer or for accommodation. We feel sorry for refugees, but they should be helped nearer their own countries and not be brought to Britain to occupy accommodation meant for

[Mr. Dicks]

us." It may be wonderful to drop refugees off at Dover or Leeds and let someone else take responsibility for them, but all right hon. and hon. Members have an obligation to their constituents. They must always come first and last. I would not mind so much if there were any spare facilities.

As to the churches and vicars who encourage such action, how many of them are using their church halls to accommodate refugees, and how many archbishops have handed over their palaces for that purpose? I shall be surprised and delighted if one of them is accommodating a refugee family. I make this challenge to the Church—before it starts saying all those wonderful words, it should open its doors first and feed and clothe the refugees, and then it will not be denying a citizen of this country his or her right to housing.

We should seriously consider redrafting the 1951 United Nations convention on refugees, because it was never designed to cope with the present situation or with economic refugees from Vietnam and Africa. Neither was it meant to cope with thousands of refugees from the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union. That convention was never meant to put pressure on the developed world. Its wording and the responsibilities that it imparts are out of date. I want the Government to persuade the United Nations to rewrite that convention, to control not just the arrival of refugees but their departure.

Those who, in their unworldly way, encourage refugees to come to this country should also be prohibited by legislation from encouraging people to seek refuge here after travelling through two or three other countries, when there may be safe refuge just outside their own borders. People must be told that they cannot continue to exercise their conscience and make themselves feel good when sitting by the fire at night—not taking anyone in themselves, but expecting everyone else to do so.

We should certainly provide help and support in the countries concerned and just outside their borders. The safe haven concept is best, and we must do all that we can to encourage it. If neighbouring countries want to take in thousands of refugees that is their business, not ours.

The people of Britain have had enough: they have done their share. They are saying, "Hang on—are we going to be a soft touch again?" Everyone else wants to shout about it; as I have said, the chattering classes want to do something. But the working-class chap in the street, who pays his taxes, wonders what the hell is going on in this country. It seems to him that every time there is a problem somewhere and people want to move from that area—for whatever reason—good old Britain is the place for them to go.

My young daughter, her husband and their three children must be pushed down the waiting list because of the stupid Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, and the fact that having to cope with refugees means that newcomers are placed at the top of the list. Old-age pensioners in my constituency could do with a bigger pension, but have had to accept increases in line with inflation; meanwhile people come here from nowhere, and are literally given everything that they require to live a good life. I am not saying that there is not a reason for that, but let it not happen in this part of the world again. Let us be realistic: we have done our share. We are not a soft touch. We are not the dustbin of the world, to which people should come when everything else has gone wrong.

If the Government and the House continue to take the same view, we are likely to see the same dreadful developments that have been seen in Germany. Thank God we have no Le Pen in this country now. Many people are saying that they are sick and tired of being taken for a ride, and, if we continue to allow refugees to enter this country—as I have said, they go to the tough working-class areas around the ports and in the inner cities—we shall experience the civil strife that has taken place in Germany, France and Italy. I do not want that, but the only way to stop it is to control what is happening, rather than saying, "Wonderful Britain must open all the doors and let everyone in."

9.5 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I congratulate the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) and his colleagues on arranging this evening's debate. I am sorry that more debates have not taken place on the issue.

As time is now short, I shall concentrate on the key points. According to the motion, the record of the European Community and the Foreign Office on Yugoslavia has consistently been

"too little and too late".

That is putting it mildly. In my view, the actions of the Foreign Office and the Community in the earlier stages of the crisis contributed significantly to the outbreak of fighting, to its continuation and to the form that it took. People could see what would happen in Bosnia from the moment that trouble started in Knin and around Krajina: it was obvious and predictable. Rather than preventing it, however, we took action that, if anything, encouraged it.

We see the same picture of people sitting back and waiting for the next conflict to erupt when we look at reports of pressure on Muslims in Sandzak, troubles in Kosovo and continuing problems throughout Macedonia. The tinder is there; but, rather than defusing the situation, we seem to be sitting back. I am particularly concerned about Macedonia, which is currently in limbo. We seem to have put it on ice, as it were, so that it can sit and wait until its neighbours are ready to carve it up.

Before war broke out in Bosnia, Milosevic clearly signalled his desire to do a deal with his neighbours to carve up Bosnia. Now he is signalling his desire to do the same with Macedonia. What will we do about that? At present, the Macedonian administration satisfied the normal criteria for recognition, and it is clear that Macedonia would be recognised but for the problems caused by the Greeks. The Greeks had some legitimate concerns, which have been met. What concerns us now is Greek ambition, together with Serb and, perhaps, Bulgarian ambition. We should seriously consider recognising Macedonia; if we are not prepared to do that, we should make it abundantly clear that we will not tolerate any forcible intervention by other parties in Macedonia. We should make our feelings very clear to the Greeks.

We have intervened in Bosnia rather belatedly, and I am concerned about the manner of our intervention. The present intervention strikes me as incoherent. United Nations troops could have been sent in in the normal way to supervise agreed ceasefire lines. At the other end of the scale, we could have intervened to impose our will on the situation by compelling the combatants to move back to the lines that we considered appropriate. We are told, however, that that is not what is happening. It seems that we are intervening somewhere in the middle, but the position is not entirely clear. We are deceiving ourselves if we imagine that our current intervention is, or can be, limited to so-called humanitarian work.

Sieges are taking place everywhere. To supply food to besieged people is intervention on behalf of the besieged persons and will be perceived by the besiegers as the provision of military aid. In some circumstances, food is a weapon. Our intervention, therefore, is effectively on one side. We pretend to ourselves that we are not intervening. That is foolish and is likely to end in greater trouble.

We cannot, however, walk away from the problem. We cannot allow the war to continue, sit back and let the people fight it out among themselves. That might have been okay in 1912 or 1913, but it is not okay in a world where there is the United Nations, and it is not okay in a Europe where there are the various agreements about the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. I suppose that in some way we are trying to vindicate the CSCE.

The debate has concentrated so far on the means of exerting pressure, whether it be diplomatic, economic or limited military involvement. I agree with what was said by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) about not forswearing certain action and making sure that there is a credible military capability available to be used, if only to keep people guessing.

We have to think hard about our objective. I said earlier that the intervention was incoherent. It does not seem to me to have any clear objective in mind. We must start to think about what our objective is and then work back from that to see what are the appropriate means of achieving it. Having a clear objective in this case means having a view about the desired outcome. Through this whole debate, the British Government and the other European Governments seem to have been incredibly coy about the desired outcome. That must be spelt out. We must be clear about it, and then we can look at the ways and means.

9.11 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I welcome the fact that the debate is taking place. I welcome also the way in which it has been conducted—soberly and with considerable reflection. The debate has been distinguished by no rancour having been shown on either side of the House. That is important.

This is an emotional issue. I must declare right away that I support the Government amendment, but the motion reflects the tension and anger that we feel about the slaughter and atrocities in that region. It reflects our awareness of the impending horror of the forthcoming winter and the feeling of total revulsion about the continuation of ethnic cleansing.

At times, however, the House tries to blame the wrong party. It is easy to blame the Government, because they are there. Nevertheless, we bear in mind that the Government have agonised long and hard about how to perform our role in the Balkans. We are very much aware of the Prime Minister's anguish. He was anxious to make his contribution—hence the London peace conference. He made a firm stand by condemning Serbia for the atrocities. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was keen that Lord Carrington should play a role in the European Community peace initiative. He, of course, was followed by Lord Owen. The British Government were anxious to ensure that we provided an honourable deployment of troops.

It is remarkable that this country has contributed 2,600 troops to the area, out of a total force of 6,000. That is a larger share, in proportion to our responsibilities, than has been provided by any other country. That ought to be recognised when anybody suggests that the Government are taking no action, are flaccid and are unwilling to act.

I share everybody's concern about the refugee problem. We must remember that 40,000 refugees have already made their way to this country. I know that passions are aroused over refugees. I have declared in the House on a previous occasion that my mother is Serbian. I remember that after the last war Serbian refugees came to this country, fleeing from oppression and totalitarianism in communist Yugoslavia. So I know how important it is to ensure that we give refugees the right welcome.

I take issue with the Government on one matter: although it is quite honourable and correct to say that we must try to encourage refugees to stay close to their home country, we must recognise that there is no safe place for them to hide. It is foolhardy for us to put our heads in the ground and to imagine that if refugees stay there they will be safe later. It is not an easy problem and I am not offering any simple answers. Indeed, there are no simple answers, and it would be false of the Opposition to suggest that there are. We must show some flexibility.

Mr. Rogers: We are not suggesting that.

Lady Olga Maitland: None the less, that impression was given; forgive me if I got the wrong impression.

Mr. Rogers: I never suggested that there was an easy option. I told the Minister that I agreed entirely that the decisions that needed to be taken were extremely complicated and difficult. The hon. Lady is misrepresenting Labour's position.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank the hon. Gentleman. At least we have been able to clear up the matter to some extent.

I support the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), who was concerned that in deploying our troops we were putting "Options for Change" under strain. I hope that "Options for Change" is not so set in concrete that we cannot take a more flexible view, should the need arise.

I pay tribute to our troops. I have heard wonderful reports of their enthusiasm, professionalism and desire to get up and go and to serve in a humanitarian role, which is a new role for them. Their role is not just to help aid get through to those who are desperate; their mere presence is a comfort to those who are under pressure and it is tempting for them to hope that our troops would open fire on their behalf. It is important that we keep a clear head about what we expect of our troops. We cannot confuse their humanitarian work with what I call their pro-active fighting work: the two do not mix. As hon. Members have said, if our troops were involved in more than self-defence, there would be consequences for the civilians whom they are trying to protect. It is easy to say, "We must do something and fight at all costs", but it is important to

[Lady Olga Maitland]

realise the consequences: for example, the Red Cross could not continue to supply aid, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees would be affected and there would be no one to protect the convoys.

It is important that we get our priorities right. The United Nations is saying, "Let us put lives before guns as we face a cold winter." We must also consider air strikes. What kind of air strikes are we talking about? Air strikes may encourage more fighting.

We definitely have not reached the point where we can say "No, never" to any other course of action. We must monitor the situation and reconsider it in six months. I take the point that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South about the art and meaning of deterrence. History shows that it can work, and it could work again. The message that we must send to the Serbians is that unacceptable damage could be inflicted—I am not saying definitely, because that is the art of deterrence—and that, despite what they think, they may not get away with it so much in the future. That is an international decision, not a United Kingdom decision. We must realise that there are agonies that the whole Community will have to face.

I understand the sense of frustration. I remember that, when the first break-up of the former Yugoslavia began, my mother, who is a Serb and realistic about what is happening, said, "Remember 1914. It will all explode all over again. Somehow we shall have to alert people to the character of the Balkans. The people there are not logical as one would expect people in Europe to be. They have their own culture, their own anger and their own pain. Realise that it is not a problem that will just fade away".

One of the mistakes that we made is that we gave the wrong message to the aggressors in Serbia. We sent a message saying, "Perhaps you can get away with your ill-gotten gains." That is the responsibility of the international community and we now have to live with the consequences.

It is important that we back the new endeavours to impose sanctions. It is important that we ensure that they really work and that the Serbians *feel* the bite and the anger. We must ensure that the people of Yugoslavia realise that their government is at stake. It is important that we ensure that the sanctions work because they have failed so far. The United Nations has become a laughing stock in the sanctions-busting game. To see the Greek oil tankers trundling through is offensive to common decency. I welcome all the endeavours to bring the problem under control.

I conclude on the important point that a political solution is the only solution that will finally work in Yugoslavia. It is, therefore, important that we look hard and clearly at the man who is perpetrating the atrocities and at the man who is the oppressor—Slobodan Milosevic. Milosevic is now under pressure. There will be elections on 20 December. We in the west have a moral duty to back the pro-democracy movement—to back Milan Panic who has so bravely tried to stand up to the man who brought him into power in Yugoslavia.

We should give the pro-democracy movement the moral support it deserves. Representatives from DEPOS —the pro-democracy movement—are coming to London next week. We should be able to say, "Go back to Yugoslavia. You are not forgotten. We back you all the way." There is only one way in which to bring peace in the Balkans. We must ensure that Slobodan Milosevic cannot continue his evil work for the future.

9.22 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I am sorry that the debate has been so short. We have heard some good speeches, but there is so much more to say and so many more questions to ask.

There are four differences between our motion and the Government amendment. The first is a question of emphasis. The Government congratulate themselves. We say that what they have done is too little and too late. The second is the question of military intervention, especially air strikes, to which various hon. Members have referred. The third is the question of air cover for our troops, in which we might include the issue of the so-called blockades or non-blockades in the Adriatic and on the Danube. The fourth is the question of refugees. I will deal with each in turn, taking up points made by hon. Members on the way. I will turn in conclusion to the question of Kosovo and Macedonia.

When we consider not simply the present dreadful position but the history of the European Community's involvement and the attitudes expressed by the British Government at various stages of the Yugoslavian tragedy, we must realise that to say that the House "congratulates" —the amendment says "notably" congratulates—the Government is extraordinary. The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) made a quite excellent speech. In his downbeat way, he said that what the Government had done was really rather inadequate—and that was putting it very mildly.

From the very beginning, when I told the Minister of State in May 1991 that the European Community should perhaps take on a mediation role or even provide a peacekeeping force, the Minister said:

> "I do not think that the European Community should play such a role."—[*Official Report*, 22 May 1991; Vol. 191, c. 919.]

That did not show a great deal of foresight, and it was not very long afterwards that Lord Carrington was appointed.

The British Government also resisted the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia. They suggested that "premature" recognition would worsen the conflict. As Jonathan Eyal, director of studies at the Royal United Services Institute, wrote in *The Independent* today:

> "Croatia and Slovenia are independent only because they were prepared to fight for their freedom."

Let us face it: the Government—and the European Community—would certainly have been prepared to watch them being crushed by the JNA.

I respond badly to the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, who responded to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), talking once more about factions in what was Yugoslavia. That is a denial of what has happened over the past year and a half. The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South put it very clearly. Of course there have been atrocities by the Croats and there have been atrocities by the Muslims. However, there has been no concerted policy. As far as I am aware, there has been no siege of Serbian towns by Muslims or by Croats. As the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) put it extremely effectively, this has by and large been a Serbian war of aggression within Yugoslavia. To try to be even handed about the matter is not to face reality.

The Government amendment significantly does not refer to military intervention one way or the other. However, the Minister of State spoke about it at length. We argued for the use of air power to relieve the siege of Osijek in December 1991. It was clear then where the aggressors were and what they had. The Croats had no heavy guns, tanks or rockets. They were surrounded and were being pounded to pieces, as Vukovar already had been. It would have been possible to use air power then, and if we had used it there would have been no siege of Sarajevo.

Both the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South and the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) said that it was clear very early on to the Serbs that no one was prepared to act to stop them. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East made that point when he intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Rhondda. If one tells an aggressor, "We are not going to do anything to stop you", the aggressor will continue. That is straightforward and simple.

I appeared on one of those ITV "Comment" programmes on 10 June. I said that the situation in Sarajevo had to be stopped and my words echoed those of the hon. Member for Vauxhall. I said:

> "In Sarajevo, people are in the cellars, without electricity, water or food. If you have children, think of what that would be like . . . It is clear that Milosevic only understands force. I think the European Community through the UN now has no alternative but to consider this and most urgently. They should say to Milosevic, 'unless this siege is lifted and the shelling stopped within 48 hours, aircraft from the West will destroy these artillery positions'".

I am not saying that only now; I have said it before. If we had done that then, it would have stopped matters.

Even when we went to the G7 summit in July, only Britain was against even the consideration of military intervention. Mitterrand was in favour, despite the earlier support that the French gave the Serbs, and Kohl was in favour. All right, we know perfectly well that the Germans are excluded by their constitution from external involvement in that way, but they certainly showed in respect of the Gulf that they were prepared to pay, and that is going to change. That constitution was put on them by us, so let us not start blaming them for it.

On the closure of air space, as recently as 15 May the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs wrote to me, saying:

> "I do not think an aerial blockade of Serbia would be right."

That has been the pattern of "too little too late" all along. As has been said, we have, apparently, a holding closure of Bosnian air space. It has not been breached; I do not dispute that. However, we allowed the dropping of cluster bombs by the Bosnian-Serb air force on civilians, and I am sure that we could have prevented it.

Mr. Rogers: That was a point of difference between the Minister and myself. As I understand it, the Minister said that we do not have the capability in the theatre to take such action as is being proposed. The Government should address that matter urgently.

Sir Russell Johnston: I do not think that that is the case, but never mind. Nevertheless, we are now closing air space when that is much less relevant than it was. What is relevant is that, as various hon. Members have pointed out, with the breach of sea space in the Adriatic and up the Danube oil and military hardware have come, and what have we done about that? "Too little, too late" is a fair description. There is certainly no cause for congratulation, far less notable congratulation.

The Government's amendment

> "welcomes Her Majesty's Government's response to the refugee problem".

For a Government who have just introduced a visa system for Bosnia without even the means of getting visas, who have taken in only a comparatively small number and who have not made any direct contribution—although I accept that they have made a contribution through the European Community and refugee organisations to poor countries such as Croatia and Hungary who have taken in an enormous number, or, for that matter, given proper credit to the Federal Republic of Germany for its huge contribution of about 260,000 to 270,000—that is terribly complacent. Not much was said about what else would be done. "Sharing" is what we said. The Federal Republic of Germany, as the Minister knows, has suggested that the European Community, of which we are still the President, should try to work out some allocations.

The hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) said that there are many refugees in many places all over the world. I know that. One cannot do everything, but that does not preclude the fact that we are concerned that people have been burnt out of their houses and are staggering helplessly through the snow. May I tell the hon. Gentleman what happens in the Federal Republic of Germany? He asked, "Where are they going to go? They are going to congregate around London." The Germans have constructed camps all over the federal republic, and they are related to the size of the towns in question so that the burden is not concentrated in one place. Central Government take responsibility rather than offload it on to the Lander Government. So the hon. Gentleman's was not a reasonable argument.

The hon. Member for Rhondda was right: the action that we are taking is not the action of a country which is rightly proud of its civilisation. The 186 people in buses, of which we are letting in six, who have been mentioned sum up how disgraceful this all is. Rightly, the debate has focused on such people, but they are a tiny drop in a great ocean of misery.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East —[HON. MEMBERS: "He is not right hon."] I am anticipating, perhaps. In any event, my hon. and learned Friend spoke of the dangers and challenges that face British troops. Neither he nor I understands why it is not possible to provide combat air cover, operating out of Italy. Not so long ago we were told that we could counteract vast hordes of Russians, pounding through central Europe. Now we cannot produce the aircraft to take out a few tanks. Strange.

I should like to know about the difference between the British role and that of the French. The British role seems to be exclusively to protect humanitarian convoys in dangerous circumstances brought about especially by the recent push by the Serbs. But in the little north-western enclave of Bihac the French are in the business of keeping out the Serbs—they appear to have a combat role there. That is puzzling, since I had thought that the role of all United Nations forces should be the same. I am not arguing against the French action: I just want to know what the difference is.

The siege of the great cities and the ethnic cleansing must be stopped, and if that means air strikes, so be it.

[Sir Russell Johnston]

Europe has been slow and fearful. My right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown)—he is sitting behind me: one should always be concerned if the leader is sitting behind one—and I visited the heights above Sarajevo and saw the gun emplacements. The Minister said that they could be moved. Of course, they could be, but they can also be pinpointed. The guns stand above the vast bowl in which Sarajevo lies, and I still think that action could be taken against them.

It is certainly hypocrisy to go on about the integrity of Bosnia while allowing it to be gutted. That integrity no longer exists—or hardly. The *Evening Standard* tonight says:

> "They were a pitiful sight on the road to Travnik, now the only town between the British base and Serbian positions. They were shelled as they tried to get through Turbe and . . . there were scores of casualties.
>
> Many herded their livestock as they ran. One farmer put a calf, wounded by shrapnel and apparently close to death, on a cart carrying his family."

That is what is happening. Certainly, it is all terribly difficult. There will soon be nothing left of Bosnia—there is little left already. We are already too late to stop many deaths in the besieged enclaves. The scale of the intervention is too limited, but we should still try.

There has been talk at the United Nations of a war crimes tribunal, but that has since disappeared from the agenda. What has happened to it?

The Government should forthwith review their policy on refugees. That means taking more of them than we have hitherto. We are taking proportionately far fewer than Sweden, Luxembourg and many other countries. That means taking more refugees, and producing more money to help, because a massive tragedy is taking place next door to us. The only sensible way forward is a sharing arrangement through the European Community.

Kosovo and Macedonia are certainly the next areas of great danger. In saying that I am not overlooking the difficulties of the Hungarians in Vojvodina. There are real difficulties there, and we recognise that, but we are not able to cover every issue this night.

Lord Owen's stance on Kosovo—which I heard him spell out on 3 October, when he addressed the Council of Europe, and which the Secretary of State subsequently confirmed, in a written answer to me on 19 October, as Government policy—is wrong. The stance is wrong in its practical consequences, and it is morally indefensible. To exclude the right of the 90 per cent. Albanian majority to self-determination if they want it after more than a decade of suppression by 8 per cent. of Serbs is not sustainable.

When I attended the unofficial election held by the Kosovan Albanians on 24 May—and spent an hour in a Serbian police station—I saw an admirable display of peaceful protest. I do not know how long that will hold. I do not think that it will be for long.

When I and my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal Democrats saw President Cosic of the rump Yugoslavia in Belgrade in August, we understood that he would accept United Nations monitors. Many more should be sent, and the Government should do something about that now.

When there is a final conference to resolve the issue, as there will be eventually, it should be made clear that the right of Kosovo to self-determination, if the people so wish, has to be accepted.

Macedonia should be recognised and given economic aid. It has taken the punishment of sanctions more than any of the other countries. It is untenable that Greece should be the country to stop that happening when the United States, at the United Nations meeting in New York last week, pinpointed Greece as massively breaching the oil embargo to Serbia and Montenegro. I am not merely saying this now—I said it in July: the Government are wrong in that.

I have two final, long-term questions; we should remember the long term. First, what is Government thinking on a European or Euro-United Nations peacekeeping force? The Bosnian problem will not be the last that we have to face in that area. The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs told me on 15 May:

> "I do not expect the fighting to end until the factions lose their appetite for war."

If one deals in that sort of futile hand-wringing that is okay, but I think that we should have some ideas about peacekeeping.

Secondly, last year, in the Council of Europe, I argued that its remit should be widened from individual to collective breaches of human rights; in other words, to create obligations in respect of minority groups. I understand that France, Spain and the United Kingdom have been particularly opposed to any moves in that direction. Why?

We shall divide the House tonight, but not because we want to. It is because we do not think that our country has acted as it should in a terrible crisis—it is our country and not merely the Government's, although I notice that they sometimes do not make much distinction—and we want to put on record our deep unhappiness.

9.43 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): This is an important debate which deals with what is probably the greatest tragedy in post-war European history in which about 2,400 British soldiers are now engaged. It is a war in which tens of thousands have been killed, hundreds of thousands displaced, and serious crimes have been committed. We must concede that no early solution is in sight.

As is to be expected with such a motion, the debate has been wide-ranging and I am conscious that I cannot respond to all the points made. However, the debate could be reduced to three main themes: first, the general policy being pursued by the Government and other European Governments from the start of the crisis, when Slovenia and Croatia announced their independence, until now; secondly, the presence of British troops operating in what was Yugoslavia, the circumstances that surround their deployment, and how we can tackle the humanitarian crisis that they and we face; thirdly, how we hope to bring about a political settlement in what was Yugoslavia. In responding to the specific points raised by hon. Members, I shall try to remain within the framework that I have just identified.

I wish to consider the policy that has been pursued from the outbreak of the crisis until now and, in particular, to respond to some of the points made by my hon. and right hon. Friends. I shall deal with two points: first, the role of Serbia; and secondly, the suggestion that we should have used force in a pre-emptive way. My hon. Friend the

Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) and others focused on those points.

It is absolutely clear that Serbia is primarily responsible for what has happened and is now happening in the former Yugoslavia. That is not to say that others have not committed atrocities but I concede that the primary responsibility lies with the Serbians in Serbia and Bosnia. However, we must keep in mind the important proviso that, although I regard Milosevic as a powerful influence behind what is happening in Bosnia, I believe that neither he nor Karadzic have total control over what is happening there. If one needed evidence of that, one could simply remark that the assurances that Milosevic gave regarding the removal of aircraft were not adhered to by General Mladic. Although Milosevic bears a great deal of responsibility and therefore so does Serbia, war lords in Bosnia are pursuing their own policies and objectives.

I do not believe that, by using the kind of military force that has been referred to, we would have stopped or could now stop the conflict. I accept that that could legitimately be disputed, and one can only give one's opinion. That is my opinion, partly because I do not think that Serbia is totally responsible for what is happening in Bosnia—separate leaders have separate policies—partly because the nature of the conflict does not admit of the military action in the middle east two years ago, and partly for the powerful reason that, once the United Nations has used force in that way, it will disqualify itself from the range of other functions that we all deem to be important, notably the supply of humanitarian aid and the brokering role.

Mr. Rogers: If the Minister is ascribing good intentions to Karadzic and Milosevic, the best thing to do is to get them to join us in putting down those warlords who seem to be out of their control.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman misinterprets me. I did not say that Karadzic or Milosevic have good intentions because I do not believe that for a moment. I do not think that they have total control over the warlords in Bosnia, many of whom have even worse intentions. That is a different point.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hogg: No. I should like to deal with the main issue raised by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) and I shall allow an intervention if it is material.

The hon. and learned Gentleman asked many important questions about troop deployment, air cover, exclusion zones, the size of the force and so on. The present force numbers 2,400 and not 2,600 but that is a small point. At present we have no intention of increasing that force and our deployment was for 12 months. We hope that at the end of that time it will be possible to stop the deployment, but we shall have to examine the situation in Bosnia at that time. Therefore, I cannot say whether we shall extend the deployment beyond the initial 12 months.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces dealt with the rules of engagement. Our soldiers will have the ability to defend themselves. They do not have to wait until they are fired upon, nor do they have to return similar fire because they have a range of heavy weapons that are known to the House. They will not have to seek authority up the line. The soldiers on the ground are authorised to use reasonable minimum force to defend themselves and—this answers another of the hon. and learned Gentleman's questions—those for whom they have a direct responsibility at that time.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East asked about air power. Two quite separate issues are involved and they were also mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack). I shall deal first with what I have been calling the air exclusion zone and then with the question whether United Kingdom troops will be able to call for air cover to resist ground attack. United Nations Security Council resolution 786 authorises the no-fly zone and provides for an increase in the United Nations peacekeeping force to monitor the bases. Those forces are being deployed and we have no evidence of any aircraft flying combat missions since 12 October.

What happens if Serbian forces fly combat missions in breach of the resolution? The answer is that we would have to return to the Security Council for an appropriate resolution. I cannot say what would emerge, but I should be rather surprised if the Security Council were not ready to authorise the use of force in those circumstances. The Serbs had better contemplate that for their own good and in the interests of everybody else.

I was asked about air power being available to United Kingdom ground forces. The purpose of the deployment is, of course, to carry out humanitarian functions. The two that I have in mind at the moment are the convoy of humanitarian supplies and, where appropriate, the escorting of refugees. As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State made plain, it is no function of the British forces to fight their way through obstacles. If it becomes too dangerous for British forces to operate, that is to say, if the level of risk is too high with regard to the objectives, they will be pulled back either to defensive positions or absolutely.

We have not provided air cover of the kind to which the hon. and learned Member referred because that is relevant only to the kind of operations on which our troops are not to be asked to embark. If it reaches that level of risk, they will be pulled back. There is another point. Air cover of the kind for which he is calling is appropriate only if it is continuous—that is to say, large numbers of aircraft flying up and down the column. That is not what we are contemplating. Moreover, says I, warming to my theme, the risk that we are facing is mortar fire or rocket attack from within urban areas. I cannot believe that Tornados or other aircraft are an appropriate response to that kind of risk.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Before the right hon. and learned Gentleman burns himself out, will he contemplate the following circumstances, which are not so extravagant as to be unreasonable? Let us imagine British troops engaged in the escort of refugees, as was proposed at the weekend. They are ambushed and encircled. Withdrawal in the terms used both by the right hon. and learned Gentleman and the Minister of State for the Armed Forces is not possible. In such circumstances, why should not the senior commander on the ground have available to him —not flying up and down the column—from nearby NATO air bases, forces from which he can call down air strikes so that he can effect the withdrawal that the Minister postulates?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. and learned Gentleman needs to contemplate another point. We are not in the business of fighting through obstacles. We are in the business of negotiating passage. Anything else is bound to fail because it will run to a war. Therefore, the British troops will have to assess in advance whether what they are contemplating doing can be done with reasonable safety having regard to the forces that are available. If they cannot do it, they will not do it.

Mr. Macdonald: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hogg: No. I cannot give way because I have only four minutes left.

I shall now address one or two specific points, of which perhaps the most important is sanctions. I think that the House misunderstands the position. Much of the sanctions regime has been very successful. Serbian trade is down 40 per cent., industrial production is down 50 per cent., unemployment is up 60 per cent. and inflation is acute. Therefore, the pressure on the Serbian economy is real, but that said, I accept that there has been a greater flow of oil and petrol into Serbia than we would wish. We are seeking to address that, in two ways.

First, and this is the product of the United Kingdom presidency, we are employing sanctions monitors in various adjoining countries. Secondly, and much more important, is the resolution being adopted today, which will deal with transhipment. There are two kinds of transhipment for these purposes—down the Danube, and through Serbia to other countries. Our purpose is to stop both and to enforce the provisions that will be contained in that regime. This will make a considerable difference to the availability of oil and petrol in Serbia. We shall come back to this if we deem it necessary because we must deny oil and petrol to the Serbian Government.

I shall deal now with the visas issue, which has troubled a number of right hon. and hon. Members for reasons that I well understand. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary made the position clear on 5 November. What we have decided is that, in common with all other EC countries of note, a visa regime is justified for the kind of reasons that my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) outlined. But at the same time we have said that there will be a regime for admitting persons to this country who are identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, and the International Committee of the Red Cross, the ICRC.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 37, Noes 166.

Division No. 87] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Ainger, Nick
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomery)*
Cormack, Patrick
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Hall, Mike
Harvey, Nick
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Hutton, John
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
Madden, Max
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Short, Clare
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Trimble, David
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Simon Hughes and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bates, Michael
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger

Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Tim Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the European Community and notably Her Majesty's Government in its capacity as Presidency on its unremitting work for a solution of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia; is appalled by the continuing slaughter in Bosnia-Herzegovina; is deeply concerned about the impact of winter in Sarajevo and other cities and the need to ensure the safe passage of relief supplies to them; expresses its warm support for the work of British troops in providing protective support for relief convoys and is reassured to know that they will have the full right to self-defence; condemns the barbarous policy of ethnic cleansing; calls for the effective policing of the Danube to enforce sanctions; welcomes Her Majesty's Government's response to the refugee problem; is deeply concerned that the conflict may spread to Kosovo and Macedonia; and makes clear its strong support for the work of the international conference on the former Yugoslavia under the leadership of Lord Owen and Mr. Cyrus Vance.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 28th October, be approved.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Question agreed to.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 28th October, be approved.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Question agreed to.

INSURANCE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Insurance Companies (Amendment) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 30th October, be approved.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

CULTURE IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 6224/92 and the supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of National Heritage on 22nd October 1992, relating to Community cultural action; and supports the Government's objective of respecting subsidiarity and focusing Community action in the cultural sector in those areas where there is scope for clearly targeted co-operative action that generates added value at European level and emphasises the richness and diversity of the European cultural heritage both at national and regional levels.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Question agreed to.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ordered,

That Dr. Gavin Strang be discharged from the Science and Technology Committee and Lynne Jones be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Dixon, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

PETITION

Disabled Persons

10.12 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I present a petition signed by my constituent, Maureen Brownbridge, and 240 other residents of York and neighbouring areas. The petition is sponsored by Mencap, and seeks a change in the law to outlaw discrimination on the basis of people's disabilities —in the same way that other legislation prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender or race.

The petition reads as follows:

> To the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament Assembled. The humble petition of York area residents sheweth: That people who are disabled or perceived to be disabled (for whatever reason) are continually having to face widespread unjustifiable discrimination. That legislation is necessary to outlaw this discrimination. Therefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House introduce legislation to outlaw unjustifiable discrimination against people who are disabled or are perceived to be disabled as soon as possible. And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Small Businesses

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

10.13 pm

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I am grateful for the opportunity to talk about the banks' code of practice, and in particular about the speed and extent to which interest rate changes are being passed on to my constituents—especially businesses.

I believe that the policy presented over the past two or three years by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer—a policy of reducing interest rates—represents the best way of stimulating economic activity. It is a welcome move, and has been supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Over the past two years, base rates have fallen from some 15 per cent. to 7 per cent., providing a welcome boost to industry, to small businesses and to the consumer.

Along with many of my hon. Friends—a handsome number of whom are present this evening—I am worried about the findings of a recent survey. The survey shows that, although base rates have fallen by some eight percentage points, the cost of borrowing for small businesses has fallen by only about 2·66 per cent. over the corresponding period. If we take the figure that is being widely used, each reduction of one percentage point in the base rate provides the economy with a £1 billion boost. It is also said that that produces a saving of some £200 million for small business.

Given that the survey is accurate—I have no reason to doubt that; the figures have been confirmed by people who have written to me from many parts of the country, and I am sure that my hon. Friends' mail bags contain the same information—the economy is being short-changed to the tune of some £5·5 billion in terms of interest rate reductions. That is twice the transport budget. Moreover, small business is being short-changed to the tune of some £1 billion. I want to make it clear to the banks and other lending institutions concerned that that apparently widespread practice is unacceptable.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): A small business in my constituency started up in 1990 paying interest at 3 per cent. over base rate in June that year. When it closed down in May 1992 and it looked into its charges a month later, it found that it had been paying up to 9·2 per cent. above base rate, having not been consulted by the banks involved. Much of the confusion involving businesses arises from the fact they simply do not know by how much the interest that they are paying exceeds the base rate. Ought not the banks to include in statements, on a regular basis, the amount of interest that they are charging businesses?

Mr. Bates: My hon. Friend has raised a pertinent point, with which I shall deal later. He speaks with great experience, having been in business himself and become acquainted with the problems encountered by small businesses in their relations with banks.

A constituent of mine, who runs a small business, received a letter from a bank, headed "Interest rate margins". It stated:

> "We are presently taking stock of the markedly adverse economic conditions with which all of the Banks are now having to contend, and we find that all of our major

> competitors have been sharply increasing their interest rate margins across their lending books over the last year or so taking advantage of the fall in . . . rates . . . We . . . have found ourselves increasingly out of step, and belatedly and with a degree of regret we do feel that we now have to increase our lending margins".

When we hear from the bank chiefs, they tell us that that kind of thing does not happen now. They say that we now have banking codes of practice—even on banking charges. We see all that in nice advertisements on television. There is conclusive evidence, however—dating from only two weeks ago—that such activities are happening on an alarming scale. That evidence is backed up by the Federation of Small Business and by the Forum of Private Business, which regularly surveys some 20,000 private businesses up and down the country.

Two particular aspects in that letter cause concern. The first is the practice of applying fixed minimum lending rates—that is, above the minimum lending rate set by the Bank of England and subsequently agreed to by the high street banks. Fixed minimum lending rates can often be in the region of 10 or 11 per cent. today when bank rates should be 7 per cent. That is why many businesses are still paying 16 or 17 per cent. in interest rate charges even though base rates are 7 per cent. That is an extremely heavy burden to put on the backs of small businesses. As I said earlier, it is entirely unacceptable.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): Does my hon. Friend agree that another burden that banks put on small businesses is that they often exercise the right to impose a floating charge on a loan? When businesses experience difficulties, therefore, the banks are able to pick and choose which assets should be liquidated, which results in many businesses that could have overcome their difficulties going bankrupt and having to be wound up.

Mr. Bates: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. She has made a valid point, which I know is the result of a great deal of experience and noble service with the Small Business Bureau.

My second point concerns interest rate differentials, from which we can draw another conclusion. Interest rate differentials are being used, in effect, as an insurance premium. The banks say openly that they assess risks and then increase the margin appropriately. That is a short-sighted view. If a small business borrowed a large amount of money and is therefore overdrawn at the bank, it is highly unlikely that the profitability of that business, or its chances of survival, would be improved by increasing the interest rate burden on it. We ought, surely, to be considering reducing the interest rate burden on that business. That is the best way to ensure that it stands the best chance of survival in our present difficulties and that it will be in existence in a few months' time to repay its loan and pay back some of the interest charges.

I was interested to learn today that one bank has announced that it is to abolish the practice of charging fixed interest rates and minimum lending rates. I am absolutely delighted that at the eleventh hour that bank has decided to do so. Far be it from me to suggest that nothing sobers the mind of a banker so much as the threat of adverse publicity, but if the threat of adverse publicity provokes banks to take positive action, many of my hon. Friends and I are more willing to make many more similar comments and remarks.

I have talked to a bank manager in my constituency who had worked there for 35 years—that was in the days when bank managers looked after businesses, as opposed to being financial services providers. He said that he used interest rate differentials for one purpose only: when there was an increase in the amount of administration in connection with the handling of the account. In relation to risk, he said that there were only two types of lending—good lending and bad lending, that one lends to the good and that one avoids the bad. That seems to me to be a breath of fresh air and a bit of common sense that could well be adopted by many of the banks in their present dealings with small businesses.

Small businesses face considerable problems in their dealings with the banks. In many cases, they are held over a barrel by the bank in question. Their ability to negotiate is severely constrained. Many high street banks behave somewhat like a cartel, in that they will not accept any movement in cases where there is an overdraft or a lending problem. Their ability to move or negotiate is virtually non-existent. It therefore falls upon elected officials, politicians, Ministers and the Government to express disapproval about such action at every opportunity so that the banks are provoked into action.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Does my hon. Friend agree that a further disgrace is that small business men cannot telephone their bank manager or go to see him without being charged for the privilege and incurring an arrangement fee?

Mr. Bates: My hon. Friend makes a valid point about the excessive charges of banks. That takes us back to the point of bank charges not being thoroughly understood by the customer. Much more clarification, certainly for small business, is necessary.

Banks should realise that, by treating small businesses as equals and by entering into partnership with them, they could be of much assistance to those businesses and could help the economy to recover. That would be a welcome sign. Interest rates for credit card purchases are 26 to 30 per cent. What incentive is that to restore confidence in the high street, to bring customers back to high street shops, thereby encouraging and stimulating those necessary businesses?

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): My hon. Friend will agree that the high street banks are flying in the face of Government policy by increasing their margins on loans. Does he agree that they are fuelling the recession by not financing perfectly sound economic proposals, in order to protect themselves, at a time when they should be expanding lending?

Mr. Bates: I agree with my hon. Friend. So many of the high street banks are behaving not like high street banks but like back street money lenders. That does no service to the banks or to their customers.

I ask my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to urge our right hon. Friend the Chancellor to call in the banks again to make their role in the economic recovery abundantly clear and to highlight the problems that have been experienced by small businesses. When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor last called in the banks, there was a flurry of activity, with hastily produced codes of practice and banking charters. I see no reason why we should not see a similar flurry of activity, which not only might benefit

[Mr. Bates]

customers, small business and the economy but would do much to enhance in many people's eyes the tarnished reputation of many high street banks.

10.28 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) on an outstanding speech on a subject that is of much interest to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): This is an extremely important debate that has attracted interest among many Conservative Members, yet if one looks across at the empty Benches opposite one sees that no Labour Member is present and only one Liberal Democrat. That is shameful, because Opposition Members talk about the recession, the pressure on employment and jobs, yet not one is present tonight.

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is right. I was trying to be generous. The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) is a worthy opponent and we are delighted that she is here today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh has tonight proved himself a doughty champion of small businesses. He has spoken for small businesses throughout the country—for the proprietors, for the directors and for the many who work for them. We all know from our constituencies that many of them have been through a tough time in the past couple of years. Many undoubtedly feel aggrieved on occasions about the treatment that they have received from the banks. We know that because people have written to us. My hon. Friend put the case so well this evening that I am sure that the message will go out to all the banks which are, I am sure, following this debate.

It is a sign of his power of persuasion and of the compelling arguments mustered by my hon. Friend that not only am I here, in a minor capacity, to answer the debate, but the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave undertakings to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee today, the Prime Minister has been making a speech on this very subject at the Mansion house tonight and, as my hon. Friend mentioned, a bank has already taken action. That is a remarkable response to my hon. Friend's initiative in obtaining this debate. I congratulate him wholeheartedly.

The interventions by my hon. Friends the Members for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans), for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning), for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) and for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) were also extremely good. They reflected the widespread concern which is evident from the letters I receive as Economic Secretary and which goes well beyond the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh spoke about the economy and about small businesses being short changed. He spoke especially about his concern about the setting of fixed minimum lending rates. He said, rightly, that the banks must be the friends and not the foes of small businesses. He called for the banks to be called in, which is exactly what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced today to the Select Committee.

I know that there has been especial concern in recent weeks about reports that some banks have been failing to pass on to their small business customers the full benefits of the reductions in interest rates. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has already made plain his wish that the banks should pass on the benefit of interest rate cuts, not only to small business customers, but to all clients who borrow money. I am pleased to have the opportunity tonight to reiterate my right hon. Friend's views.

The exercise that the Treasury and the Bank of England conducted last year found that banks do pass on cuts automatically to customers whose borrowings are linked to base rate, although there was clear evidence that banks seek to widen margins if they feel that the risk—to—reward ratio has moved against them, when facilities come up for renewal or when customers seek to increase their loans. That is classic territory for commercial negotiation, and not for Government intervention.

Banks cannot be expected to lend unprofitably, but given that the recession has increased the risks for many small businesses, it is in neither side's interests for the burden on the customer to be increased to unsustainable levels. The price for borrowing must reflect the needs of both banks and customers, and both sides need to recognise that.

There is evidence that that recognition is happening. In the face of some fierce pressure from the media, NatWest and Barclays announced only last week that they were reducing the interest rate floors which they had previously included in lending agreements with small businesses. Although that is not an area in which the Government can take direct action, we take seriously the complaints that are levelled at the banks, even if they concern matters for the market to solve. As my right hon. Friend announced to the Select Committee this afternoon, he will ask the Bank of England to have another look at the area. He intends to go through it again himself with the chairmen of the individual banks. I hope that that satisfies my hon. Friend.

That said, there is evidence that market forces work, as the announcements by NatWest and Barclays show. Those are not the only recent examples.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I hope that the Chancellor, in pressing the point on the banks, will also stress to them that we are increasingly entering a highly competitive European market and that British banks should consider how European banks treat their small business customers.

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend introduces a most important dimension into the debate and I am obliged to him. Incidentally, this is not the only occasion on which my hon. Friend has raised the issue. He has spoken of it on several other occasions and I am grateful for what he has reiterated tonight.

The issue of the banks' treatment of small businesses is not a new one. As part of last year's Treasury and Bank of England investigation into the subject, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor asked the chairmen of the major banks to consider drawing up a code for their small business customers. As my right hon. Friend made clear to the House in July last year, he had told the chairmen that the very least that customers had a right to expect from their banks was adherence to seven basic principles, which were: that the terms and conditions of accounts should be fair and reasonable; that the terms and conditions should be notified to customers in advance—a point made in an intervention this evening; that customers should be given a full written statement of the standard tariffs of charges applicable to their account; that they should be specifically warned in advance about any charges not covered by the standard tariff; that customers should be given a clear explanation of the basis on which interest is to be charged; that terms and conditions of an account—other than the interest rate—should not be altered without adequate prior notice in writing; finally, that customers should be given a clear explanation of how complaints may be made about decisions taken at local level.

The bank chairmen, in response, assured my right hon. Friend that those principles were already reflected in their existing policy, but undertook to see what more could be done. Since then, six banks have produced codes of banking practice for their business customers, and another, the Bank of Scotland, one covering all customers. All of them are clearly written in plain English and reflect the seven principles.

It was not my right hon. Friend's objective when he met the bank chairmen last year to persuade them to produce identical codes. Indeed, many of them are different. Business customers can now look at the services on offer and decide which best meets their needs.

Some of the letters I receive, however, have suggested that the Government should go further and carry out their own review of banks' codes—either because of complaints that particular banks regularly fail to live up to the terms of their codes or because the codes do not go far enough. I do not believe that that is a suitable job for the Government. Our role is to ensure that a framework is in place which encourages open competition and allows small business customers a choice. Having played a major role in encouraging banks to draw up their codes, the Government feel that customers themselves must make it clear to the banks if the codes do not meet their requirements.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-four minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 17 November 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LLANELLI BOROUGH (RIVER LLIEDI) BILL *[Lords]*
Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

Teacher Training Colleges

1. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement indicating Her Majesty's Government's firm proposals for the reform of teacher training colleges.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): There is continuing unease and concern about the quality of some initial teacher training, which centres on whether some of the producers—the universities and colleges responsible for the training—are providing what the consumers—the schools—will need to achieve, which is higher standards. I announced in June a decisive shift to more school-based training for secondary teachers, following advice from the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. My aim now is to make the training of primary teachers more school based and more closely related to the needs of schools and the requirements of the national curriculum.

Mr. Hawkins: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. His steps to make teacher training more school based will be welcomed especially by employers in my constituency and, I am sure, throughout the country. Will he consider going further and ensuring that all potential teachers, as part of their training, spend some time working with employers and finding out what it is like for people who work in personnel departments so as to ensure that they are aware of employers' needs in terms of the quality of products of secondary education?

Mr. Patten: That is a very interesting suggestion and I should like to take it up with members of the Confederation of British Industry and the Institute of Directors, with whom I have not discussed it before. A number of schools and groups of schools have told me that they would like to be put in sole charge of teacher training as they believe that they could do at least as good a job as many teacher training colleges in training young teachers at the chalk face.

Mr. Pickthall: Can the Secretary of State assure the House that a circular on changes to teacher education in the primary sector will be issued in the near future and that the consultation period—unlike that for circular 9/92 on the secondary sector—will be sufficient to allow colleges to plan for a smooth transition and to allow for proper consultation? Will he also assure the House that there will be no dilution of teacher education for the primary sector by reducing the subject content so as to make courses shorter and cheaper?

Mr. Patten: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's last question: I want primary school teacher training to be more rigorous, not less, and everything that we do will be to that end. I was slightly surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman suggest that the consultation period allowed for in the circular on secondary school teacher training was inadequate. That circular was widely welcomed—so widely, indeed, that I rather doubted the wisdom of the decision that I had taken. I shall take a decision on primary education as soon as possible. I am awaiting further advice from the National Curriculum Council and Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools.

European Drug Prevention Week

2. **Mr. Faber:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what rôle his Department will be playing in European Drug Prevention Week.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): We are publishing tomorrow a revised and updated version of the booklet, "Drug Misuse and the Young" to help education professionals to prevent and respond to drug misuse by young people. We are also funding a series of regional conferences for 14 to 19-year-olds to look at approaches and appropriate strategies to counter the harmful effects on health from drug misuse and to focus on healthy life styles.

Mr. Faber: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply and warmly welcome his Department's involvement in European Drug Prevention Week. It is a sad fact nowadays that drugs are increasingly available in schools, in the playground and at the school gate, and that the problem is increasingly affecting rural areas as well as inner cities and, tragically, primary as well as secondary schools. Will my hon. Friend continue to inform teachers of the problems to look out for and the steps to take early on to try to help children to avoid the dreadful scourge of drug abuse?

Mr. Forth: Indeed, and I commend to my hon. Friend and to the House the excellent booklet to be published tomorrow as it does most of what my hon. Friend asks. It is designed to help teachers and those working with young people to stop youngsters misusing drugs in any way possible. It outlines the part that the education service can play in prevention and gives specific advice, for example, on dealing with emergencies. It summarises the laws on drug abuse and provides a short factual account of the main types of drugs and their effects. I believe that it will be widely read and used and will be of great help in dealing with a most difficult and distressing problem.

Mr. Don Foster: Given the excellent work on drugs prevention by the health education co-ordinators, will the Minister reconsider his decision to end their grant from

March 1993? If not, can he say what progress has been made on seeking joint funding with his colleagues at the Department of Health and the Home Office?

Mr. Forth: I have, of course, met representatives of the advisers and had discussions with them about the issue. I have undertaken to look into the very matter that the hon. Gentleman raises. I must stress some important aspects of which the hon. Gentleman will be aware. For instance, the funding of the initiative was always designed to be of limited duration. It was always understood that the responsibility for continuation would eventually come to rest—rightly, in my view—with the local education authorities. Since its inception great changes have taken place, not least that we now have embedded in the curriculum important elements—dealing with drugs, with substance abuse and with healthy life styles—which go a long way to dealing with the problem, so we can look forward to the future with some confidence in dealing with the whole area.

Mr. Rathbone: While welcoming the steps that the Department is taking in support of European Drug Prevention Week, which got off to an extremely good start with a conference this morning, may I add my emphasis to the question asked by the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster). When Home Office and Department of Health initiatives are given initial pump-priming finance, should not Government financial support continue while the troubles continue, as it is unlikely that local authorities will be able to find the funding to which the Minister refers?

My hon. Friend referred to the curriculum, but is he aware that the subject ranks very low in the curriculum and that individual schools will give priority to many other subjects well in advance of what he believes that the whole question of drug prevention should receive?

Mr. Forth: I am well aware of the long-standing, knowledgeable and dedicated interest that my hon. Friend takes in this whole area. He has made my right hon. Friend and me well aware of that frequently in recent months. I assure him that I acknowledge his position on the matter. I must ask him to appreciate, however, that when pump-priming money is provided and there is a clear understanding that at some stage it will have to come to an end and responsibility will have to pass on, it is not unreasonable for a Government Department to look at the matter in exactly that way. I believe that we now have sufficient experience of what has been done in the matter —and we have seen a sufficient change in circumstances and background—to justify the decision that we took, after careful consideration and with great difficulty, some time ago.

I cannot agree with my hon. Friend's view— "denigration" would be too strong a word—that somehow the position of the matter in the curriculum is a lowly one. The subject has an important and focal position in the curriculum and it is a matter to which all involved with the curriculum must give their fullest attention. That will be of great force in the years to come in helping young people in the education process to understand the nature of drugs and to help them to avoid abusing them.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Does the Minister realise that his complacency will be alarming to many parents and teachers who are seriously worried about the drugs problem? Has not his Department stopped the £5 million grant to local authorities which was specifically for drug prevention? Will the Minister reconsider that budget? Unless local authorities are properly funded, the work will not continue and more of our children will fall foul of drug and solvent abuse.

Mr. Forth: I know that you, Madam Speaker, deplore excessive repetition and I should be guilty of that if I answered the hon. Lady in exactly the same way as I answered the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) and my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone). As the hon. Lady asked exactly the same question, however, so as not to be out of order I shall not repeat the reply.

Student Loans

3. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he has regarding the take-up rate of student loans in the current university year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Nigel Forman): As at 13 November, 115,770 students had applied for a loan for the current academic year.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that all independent advice shows that there is a high level of overdrafts and bank loans, in addition to student loans, and real hardship in the student population? Will the Government admit that they have got it wrong on student loans, scrap them and go back to a proper system of grants?

Mr. Forman: The Government have no intention of scrapping student loans. They are a useful additional facility for students. There can be no generalised hardship because in the past four years for which we have figures —including the last academic year—fewer than two fifths of all students took up student loans.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my hon. Friend agree that if student loans were as unpopular as the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) implies, there would be fewer students in advanced education? Will my hon. Friend confirm that the number of students has increased from fewer than 700,000 to substantially more than 1 million and that the figures show that where previously one in eight people in the target group went into advanced education, now one in four does so?

Mr. Forman: My hon. Friend is right. During the period that student loans have been available, student participation in higher education has increased by one fifth. It is still rising and is due to rise by a further 13 per cent. in the next three years.

Mr. Steinberg: Is the Minister aware that student loans have not been taken up because many students are not prepared to put themselves into further debt? Is he further aware that a master at one of the colleges in my constituency told me that he had overhead a conversation between students with rich parents saying that they intended to use a student loan to go on a skiing holiday?

Mr. Forman: It is always unwise to rely on hearsay and overheard conversations. The conditions and terms of student loans through the Student Loans Company are the best deal in town and the most attractive form of finance available to students who wish to take out a loan.

Mr. Batiste: Is my hon. Friend aware that many students have taken out loans when they would not otherwise have wished to do so because a handful of local authorities, mostly Labour controlled, have been appallingly late in delivering their grants to them? Will he monitor the position carefully this year and ensure that there is no repetition of that problem?

Mr. Forman: Indeed, we pay very close attention to such matters. It is regrettable that many local authorities, especially Labour-controlled authorities, are slow in dealing with mandatory awards. We monitor the position carefully and we shall take swift action to deal with any abuses which arise.

Mr. Rooker: Does the Minister accept that for well-off students and families a student loan is a damned sight cheaper than using a credit card for a holiday and that that is an abuse of the system? Will he confirm that the Student Loans Company is seeking the services of debt collection agencies but so far has been unable to find anyone to do the work? Will he assure the House that if debt collection agencies are employed it will be done by competitive tendering and that in the interests of open government a list of agencies prepared to carry out such work will be placed in *Hansard*?

Mr. Forman: I have every confidence in Mr. Young and his team at the Student Loans Company. Their record has been very good. Their administrative costs are low and their record on getting payments in is extremely good.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend accept that those loans are much appreciated by the students of Lancaster university, 825 of whom have taken them up? Moreover, 10 people apply to Lancaster university for every place that is vacant. Could that be because of the wide range of imaginative research carried out there, the latest of which is on how to adapt military technology to civilian purposes in Russia—a project known as "swords into ploughshares"?

Mr. Forman: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for her sterling support of the university of Lancaster. I have visited that university, the records of which show how excellent it is.

National Curriculum

5. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will report on the progress of the implementation of the national curriculum.

Mr. Patten: The final subjects in the national curriculum—art, music and physical education—were introduced on time in September this year. That is in line with the timetable that we set in 1989 and have kept to ever since.

Mr. Robathan: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer. Will he further confirm that he has no intention of stopping the testing of seven-years-olds in our primary schools?

Mr. Patten: I have absolutely no intention whatever of stopping the successful tests of seven-year-olds in our schools. A very few people, harking back to the outdated theories of the 1960s which did so much damage to education in this country, have suggested that we should get rid of tests for seven-year-olds. What do they have to hide or to fear? We shall continue with the tests and we shall continue to see an improvement, for which I am grateful to the many hard-working school teachers. Her Majesty's inspectors of schools have said that last year's tests showed a marked improvement over those of the year before and that teachers had higher expectations of their pupils. The tests are excellent and much appreciated by parents.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Does the Minister agree that the pace of implementation of the national curriculum may depend in part on the Government's decisions about capital expenditure for 1993-94? With its huge problems of schools with basic needs, can we expect a generous settlement for Manchester?

Mr. Patten: On capital expenditure for maintaining schools, following last year's 15 per cent. increase in the amount of money available for schools, this year we have maintained the level of the capital programme. I recognise that implementation of the national curriculum is not always easy for our hard-working teachers, but I am glad that there is at least bipartisan agreement that the national curriculum introduced by the Conservatives is supported by both sides of the House.

Mr. Richards: How much money have local education authorities received in grants to help implement the national curriculum, and has that money been used to good effect?

Mr. Patten: Each year we have been giving several hundred million pounds to local education authorities, both in England and in Wales, my hon. Friend's area, to help implement the national curriculum. The fruits of some of those schools' labours will be clear tomorrow when, for the first time, the Government publish the A-level and GCSE results for every secondary school in the country. That will pinpoint attention where it is needed locally and on standards where they need to be improved. It is the biggest ever public information exercise. Once those new tables are launched, parents will expect them year by year in future, and they will get them year by year —and quite right, too.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Does the Secretary of State not think it remarkable that he has managed to unite everyone in education, from the National Union of Teachers to the Girls' Schools Association in the independent sector, so that all are criticising his handling of the national curriculum and assessment procedures? Is it not about time that the Secretary of State started to listen to those parents and teachers who believe that the national curriculum is overloaded and too prescriptive? Should he not consult the Secretary of State for Scotland, who has just withdrawn proposals for the testing of seven-year-olds, which the right hon. Gentleman has just defended?

Mr. Patten: I meet teachers as I go around schools in this country. With my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools and the Minister of State, Baroness Blatch, we have visited 64 separate schools in the seven months since the general election. I have not visited one school where the head teacher or any classroom teacher has said that he or she does not support the national curriculum. There is a wide measure of agreement on that. I am delighted that the national curriculum is being delivered on time and will lead to improvements in standards. Was it not Matthew Arnold who talked about

"the last enchantments of the Middle Age"?

It is right for many people to debate the national curriculum, and I do not dispute that there will always be lively debates on the subject, but there are faint echoes of the 1960s in what is being said by many people.

Grant-maintained Schools

6. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to change the electoral arrangements in parental ballots for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: We have decided to introduce more flexibility to the electoral arrangements that apply in circumstances where a ballot is declared void and the governing body is required to hold the ballot again. We have therefore included in the Education Bill a provision that will, in certain circumstances, enable the Secretary of State to specify the effective date for determining the electoral roll in a reballot. That will ensure that the ballot can proceed on the basis of an up-to-date electoral roll.

Mr. Lewis: The Minister will be aware that there have been two ballots in my constituency where parents voted not to opt out. He will also know that those two thrusts for opting out were led by the head teacher and a small côterie of ill-motivated governors—*[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State and I have already clashed on the matter; he was wrong then and he would be wrong now. There is absolutely no need to point the finger at those involved with those successful ballots, which were conducted in an orderly and fair manner. The Secretary of State needs to look at the ballots that have been successful in his own terms. He will find that in those ballots the rules were bent, and it is to that fact that he should address his attention.

Mr. Forth: I do not know what the hon. Gentleman is being so sensitive about. He seems to be saying that he welcomes cases where parents have freely expressed in a ballot their desire to make the school grant maintained, but he also seems to say that he regrets those cases and would actively oppose that very procedure. That seems to be bordering on paranoia. The hon. Gentleman should lighten up a bit and accept the opinions of parents up and down the country, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I are happy to do.

Dame Jill Knight: Is my hon. Friend aware of the blatant ballot rigging, harassment and double dealing carried out in Birmingham by some Labour supporters who are trying to ensure that a school in my constituency, Lordswood girls school, does not become grant maintained? May I give him the evidence that I have received from girls, who speak in chorus about what has happened to their homes, and ask him to investigate the matter?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend highlights a disgraceful and distressing trend which has emerged of late and of which we in the Department for Education are obtaining increasing evidence: the deplorable behaviour of people involved in local education authorities up and down the country, and particularly in Birmingham. They use extremely unfair and unacceptable methods to seek to influence parents in the free expression of their view of grant-maintained status through the balloting procedure. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it absolutely clear that he will not accept such conduct and will take all available steps within the existing law to deal with it. We will also look at the Education Bill now in Committee to make sure that every possible step is taken to ensure that all balloting procedures are fair and free.

Mr. Eastham: Further to the Minister's remarks about grant-maintained schools, is he aware of the letter sent by the Department for Education on 3 November to chief education officers? Has he seen the replies to that letter, for instance, from the chief education officer of Manchester? He says that he finds the Department's letter most insulting and intimidating, and that he believes that some of the things that are going on with grant-maintained schools are quite unfair. In fact, we are not getting ballots at all, contrary to what the Minister says and contrary to the lies being told from the Dispatch Box. I shall publish the letter from the chief education officer——

Madam Speaker: Order. Did I understand the hon. Gentleman to use the phrase, "the lies being told from the Dispatch Box"? If so, I know that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw and refrain.

Mr. Eastham: I was talking about lines——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has been in this House a very long time, and he knows what I am getting at. He is an hon. Member, and I am sure that he will address the House correctly.

Mr. Eastham: I apologise, Madam Speaker, if I caused grave offence—none was intended. All I am trying to do is clarify some points which are disbelieved by the general public. Given some of the remarks by Ministers it is my intention, with the approval of the chief education officer of Manchester, to publish his letter.

Mr. Forth: I did not hear the hon. Gentleman withdraw his remarks, Madam Speaker, but that is a matter for you.

I am sure that most chief education officers have nothing to fear in this matter and can regard the letter accordingly. Chief education officers who have something to fear—if people such as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) can bring evidence to the Secretary of State that unacceptable or illegal activities have taken place—will find the full rigour of my Department and of the Secretary of State descending on their shoulders—I can promise the hon. Gentleman that.

Educational Psychology Services

7. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the workings and future of the educational psychology services.

Mr. Forth: Educational psychology services are the responsibility of local education authorities. This will remain the case under the Education Bill. Their services will be provided equally for grant-maintained and LEA-maintained school pupils.

Mr. Steen: I welcome choice and diversity in education, but many parents should be concerned about the erosion of the schools psychology service, in view of the dramatic changes taking place in both the funding and the management of schools.

Is the Minister aware of the recent audit report which states that the schools psychology service is extremely professional, is very well run, and provides good value for money? Will he avoid his officials persuading him otherwise?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend has an intimate knowledge of these matters, despite which I am sure that he will be entirely impartial in his assessment of their value. There can be no doubt in anyone's mind about the essential nature of and value provided by the educational psychology services, both now and under the continuing obligations laid on local education authorities in the Bill now in Committee. I expect educational psychology services to develop and change and to show flexibility as the Bill progresses. The treatment of special educational needs is strengthened under that Bill.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Does the Minister accept that there is real and widespread concern that the schools psychology service and other learning support services for children with special needs are under threat, and that some of those services have already been diminished by the impact of the Education Reform Act 1988? If he is not prepared to accept that from me, will he undertake a survey of local education authorities to find out what has happened to these services since 1988? If they have declined, will he take steps to put that right?

Mr. Forth: I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman says. He does a great disservice to local education authorities and to professionals in educational psychology and other services in making such assertions. Local education authorities' statutory obligations are clear now and will continue to be clear under the Education Bill. It will be for local education authorities to ensure that they discharge their statutory obligations properly. That is what we shall be ensuring and I join the hon. Gentleman in looking to local education authorities to do just that.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my hon. Friend accept that educational psychologists undertake much preventive work which is often overlooked? Much as we all welcome my hon. Friend's important statement that local education authorities will continue to be responsible for educational psychology services, will he confirm that it is crucial to the future of the child statementing process that the psychology service should continue at its present level, if not at a greater level?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend is correct. He will know from the Education Bill now in Committee that we have sought to strengthen the provision for children with special educational needs. The statutory obligations on local education authorities continue, and we are strengthening, speeding up and making more specific the way in which they will work. I am confident that generally, and in terms of the role played by educational psychologists, that can only mean a great improvement in provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Discretionary Awards

8. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about the funding available in the next financial year to finance discretionary awards.

Mr. Forman: It is for each local education authority to determine its own policies and expenditure on discretionary awards in the light of local needs and priorities. In the financial year 1990-91, the latest year for which figures are available, authorities in England spent £216 million on discretionary awards. Details of next year's funding settlement for local authorities will be announced later this year.

Mrs. Jackson: Does the Minister agree that the restrictions on local authorities' resources are making it increasingly difficult for them to offer a proper service on discretionary awards, particularly to mature students? What advice would he give to one of my constituents, a mature working class student, who struggled for five years to obtain an excellent law degree only to find himself without financial resources for the Law Society's final course? Does he agree that, in the light of mounting concern about the white, male, middle-class, Oxbridge-educated, legal profession, it is high time that the Government made the final fourth year of the Law Society's course eligible for a mandatory grant and made available the resources for that?

Mr. Forman: That is heavy dose of special pleading from the hon. Lady. The resources available to local authorities under the education standard spending assessment are generous and will continue to be so. In the past full year for which figures are available, that sum was expanded by 7·4 per cent. and well-run local authorities should be able to finance an adequate level of discretionary awards within that sum.

Mr. Marland: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is also considerable concern in Gloucestershire about the lack of money available for discretionary awards? That is in no small way due to the appalling way in which Liberal councillors in Gloucestershire have managed the county council's finances, not least in trying to buy votes in the Cheltenham area before the last general election. But the more sensible councillors in Gloucestershire county council feel that the standard spending assessment for education may have been slewed against Gloucestershire when compared with those of Oxfordshire and Devon. Will my hon. Friend undertake to keep the matter under review?

Mr. Forman: I shall always keep important matters of that kind under review, especially when they are raised by my hon. Friend who has highlighted a typical example of Liberal mismanagement of local government. I have had direct experience of that in the London borough of Sutton, and I entirely agree with him.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Let me remind the Minister—even if it touches a raw nerve on the Conservative Benches—that those who are not white, male or middle class constitute the majority in this country. It is not "special pleading" to suggest that discretionary grants form a vital part of financial support for many people who would not otherwise have access to education. I hope that the Minister understands that.

Is the Minister aware that nearly two thirds of local authorities have cut or frozen discretionary awards for the current financial year? That means that many people who should be able to take advantage of such awards are unable to do so. What does the Minister intend to do about it? Will the Government provide a proper settlement for local authorities, and ensure that discretionary awards are available?

Mr. Forman: The forthcoming settlement for local authorities in relation to their expenditure on education will form part of the announcement that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will make later this year.

Mr. Nigel Jones: Following the answer that the Minister gave to the hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland), may I ask him whether he realises that Gloucestershire county council is ruled by a Conservative-Labour pact?

Mr. Forman: That just shows how unwise it is to enter into alliances with the Liberal party.

Grant-maintained Schools

9. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools in England have not opted for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: A total of 22,072 maintained schools in England have not had a ballot for grant-maintained status. Of the 701 schools that have balloted for grant-maintained status, only 152 have voted "no".

Mr. Ward: Is that not a good record, given the comments about intimidation that we heard earlier? How will my hon. Friend ensure that the other schools that will be holding ballots—if they know what is good for their children—will hold them in a fair and free manner, without such intimidation?

Mr. Forth: I am glad that my hon. Friend has asked me that. He will be aware that in the Education Bill, which is currently in Committee, we have introduced a number of provisions to streamline the application process, to abolish the requirement for a second governors' resolution before ballots, to provide support for governing bodies for expenses incurred in the promotion of grant-maintained status and to limit LEA expenditure on measures such as my hon. Friend has described. We have taken steps to ensure that a proper, balanced debate takes place before parents make an informed judgment and cast their votes.

I think that my hon. Friend will be encouraged by the information that there has been a sevenfold increase in the number of ballots this October compared with the number last October, and that about 200 schools are balloting in October and November this year alone. That shows that we are on the up and up, and rolling.

Mr. Soley: The Minister's answer was not accurate. A total of 24,500 schools have not balloted, perhaps realising that—as with the ballots under the Housing Act 1988—all those not voting would be counted as having voted yes.

While the Minister is dealing with disinformation, may I ask him why he chose to single out Hammersmith and Fulham for providing what he described as disgraceful material? He has never given any examples of such material. Will he tell me—either now or in writing—what that disgraceful material was? If he cannot do so—and I suspect that he cannot—will he apologise to parents, governors and the local authority?

Mr. Forth: My answer is yes; and it probably will not be necessary.

Mr. William Powell: Is my hon. Friend aware that a great and growing number of schools in my constituency have already achieved grant-maintained status, and that not a single school that has done so has had the slightest cause for regret? Will my hon. Friend suggest to schools that are considering adopting such status that they approach schools in Corby and east Northamptonshire, and learn about the actual experiences of those schools?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend has made an important point, which is worth emphasising. Anyone who is considering adopting grant-maintained status can do no better than go to a school that has been grant maintained for some time and speak to the head teacher, the governors and the parents of pupils. That person will find—as Her Majesty's inspectorate has found—that grant-maintained schools benefit in almost every conceivable way from their new independent status and authority. That is reflected in more popularity, better standards and better treatment of pupils.

My hon. Friend made his point very well. I urge all those who are interested in grant-maintained status for their schools to talk to people who have already adopted it: they will receive a very positive response.

White Paper (Consultation)

10. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will extend the period of consultation on the education White Paper.

Mr. Patten: The consultation period on the White Paper "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools", ended on 25 September. The Government have now introduced the Education Bill into Parliament, to give effect to the proposals in the White Paper. Having had a successful Second Reading, the Bill is now in Committee.

Mr. Llwyd: As the main thrust of the Education Bill apparently is to provide diversity and choice for parents, will the Minister explain how that will be achieved in large rural areas of Wales and England, where primary schools are often 10 or 15 miles apart and secondary schools 25 or 30 miles apart? As such areas are already suffering extreme economic hardship, will he explain how this plan will gel together?

Mr. Patten: Welsh issues are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. On the generality of the hon. Gentleman's open-minded question, we set great store by small rural schools, which we want to support. We also set great store in giving such schools the opportunity to be grant maintained, and the Education Bill will give them the opportunity to do so as part of clusters. That is a very good thing for them.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Heppell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 17 November.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Heppell: Will the Prime Minister inform the House why a trade mission from Nottingham chamber of commerce was allowed to go ahead on 22 June 1990 even though the products of the companies involved would have been useful to Saddam Hussein's war effort? Will he assure the House that the role of such trade missions will be part of the Scott inquiry?

The Prime Minister: I shall certainly examine the hon. Gentleman's point. As he may well know, my office receives about 3,000 letters and innumerable documentation each week so I cannot reply directly, but I will examine the point that he made.

Mr. Lord: Does the Prime Minister agree that the Chancellor's autumn budget contained excellent news for the building industry? Does he further agree that allowing housing associations more resources to buy empty properties and local authorities more discretion to spend their capital receipts will be an excellent boost for the housing market?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I think that my hon. Friend is quite right. There were a number of aspects of my right hon. Friend's statement that were very good news indeed for the housing market. As Abbey National has said, this may prove to be the point at which the housing market turns. That is the view of Abbey National, and I hope that it proves to be correct. My right hon. Friend had a meeting with mortgage lenders yesterday to discuss ways of ensuring that the money is used as effectively as possible to reduce the overhang of empty properties on the market. If it is, it will have a material impact on the housing market and a beneficial one.

Mr. John Smith: Last night, a Downing street spokesman briefed the press that the 1984 guidelines for exports of arms-related equipment to Iraq were changed in 1988. Can the Prime Minister tell why Parliament was not informed of this change?

The Prime Minister: I think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is well aware that we have set out the most wide ranging terms of inquiry possible—far more wide ranging than most people imagined—and that all these matters will be discussed on that occasion. I hope that he will now accept that those terms are so wide ranging and cover so many aspects that nothing will not be fully examined.

Mr. John Smith: Can the Prime Minister tell me, then, why the question whether Parliament was misled is not included in the terms of reference of the inquiry?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is being extremely silly. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: If he reads the terms of inquiry more carefully he will see that they allow the judge to examine all the facts, all the decisions, the basis for those decisions and whether Ministers operated in accordance with the policies of the Government. The judge will have access to all the documentation as well as to individuals. So the right hon. and learned Gentleman's fears are wholly unfounded.

Mr. John Smith: The Prime Minister will recollect that he quoted the terms of reference as being whether Ministers operated in accordance with the policies of Her Majesty's Government. But the allegation which is made, and which I also make, that this Government consistently, over a long period of time, misled Parliament, is not included in these terms of reference. If the Prime Minister and his colleagues have nothing to hide, why not include the misleading of Parliament in the terms of reference of the inquiry?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman should read the terms of reference, when he would see that this is entirely implicit in them. The suggestion that Ministers misled the House is a serious and scurrrilous charge and has no basis whatsoever in fact. It is typical of the charges that have been made by the Labour party before. It is typical of the charges over the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, which were utterly unfounded and which the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his colleagues have never apologised for making.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that despite the ever growing recession in Germany over £360 million worth of property in central London has recently been bought by German investment trusts? Is not this a demonstration, by putting their deutschmarks where their mouths are, of confidence in British economic policy?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, there is a very large amount of inward investment in this country from both within and beyond the European Community. Indeed, in terms of investment in countries within the Community by countries beyond it, by far the lion's share comes to this country, because of this Government's policies over recent years.

Q2. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 17 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Morley: Is the Prime Minister aware of the effects of his economic incompetence on companies such as British Steel in Scunthorpe, and on unemployment? Is he aware, further, that long-term unemployment has risen by 48 per cent., to stand at 302,000? Is it not a matter for regret that of all the things that the Prime Minister mentioned in his speech at the Lord Mayor's banquet unemployment was not one?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman clearly understands even less than I thought he did. He clearly has not read my speech or the press reports. The speech was nearly all about the strategy for growth to provide long-term secure jobs. If the hon. Gentleman does not understand that, he does not understand anything.

Mrs. Roe: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the Chancellor of the Exchequer—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House will settle down. Let us have some order. Front-Bench Members are bawling and shouting. Order.

Mrs. Roe: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the Chancellor of the Exchequer on his autumn statement, which did so much to preserve the Government's capital programmes: programmes for new roads, new railways, new hospitals and new schools? Does he agree that this will not only help modernise Britain's infrastructure but create new jobs in our construction industry?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about that. It is, of course, in sharp contrast to what happened under the last Labour Government, when they would always cut capital as the first and easiest cut, while avoiding the difficult decisions on current account. We have taken the difficult decisions on current account precisely to preserve capital, build up our future, create jobs and build up prosperity.

Q3. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 17 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Hoey: Is the Prime Minister aware of the revulsion in the country caused by his Government's inhumane, shameful and sickening policy on Bosnian refugees? Why was the Prime Minister so ready to provide a safe haven and air support for the Kurds when they were running from Iraqi aggression when he is not ready to provide a similar safe haven or air support for women and children fleeing from Serbian aggression in central Europe?

The Prime Minister: Let me say to the hon. Lady that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will deal with this at greater length in a few moments. Let me say to her now that we have welcomed more than 40,000 visitors from Yugoslavia this year of whom more than 4,000 have applied for asylum, and we have agreed to work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and with the International Red Cross to take the priority refugees they want us to take under the 1951 Geneva convention. With the best will in the world we simply cannot take everyone who, for understandable reasons, wants to leave Yugoslavia and, in this case, the group concerned were warned in advance that they should not go ahead with their mission to Yugoslavia.

Q4. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 17 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Luff: Is my right hon. Friend aware that his determination to bring a successful outcome to the current GATT round will bring enormous benefits not only to Britain and Europe, but to the countries of the third world whose interests the Government so clearly protected last week in the welcome and substantial increase in our overseas aid budget?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right about the importance of the GATT round to the third world. It is entirely unreasonable for the west to say to the third world, on one hand, here is some aid to help with your difficulties and, on the other hand, close our markets, which are of even greater benefit to them. It is imperative that we have the GATT round for the industrialised world, but it is no less imperative for the non-industrialised world.

Q5. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 17 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Could the Prime Minister spare a few moments at 3.30 pm to go downstairs to the Grand Committee Room and explain to a lobby of several hundred people from residential drug and alcohol projects why the Government have gone back on a clear commitment to ring-fence their funding with effect from 1 April next year? Is he aware that the decision will result in several of the projects closing, with obvious human consequences? It would be especially appropriate during European Drug Prevention Week for the Prime Minister to do a U-turn on the matter.

The Prime Minister: The Government recognise that there are special circumstances for alcohol and drug misusers and we have met the specialist service providers. We will be encouraging fast-track assessment procedures, encouraging good practice in identifying who is responsible for each client and setting up special monitoring arrangements for those services for the first three months following implementation. That is in addition to the action we have already announced to ensure that the community care grant is spent on services that reflect people's wishes and causes minimum turbulence and disturbance to them. The hon. Gentleman should be more accurate about our proposals.

Q6. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 17 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Adley: I am sorry that I am in the wrong place, Madam Speaker, but these young whipper-snappers show no respect to us old fogies.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the retention of a national timetable is an essential element in changes that are made to railway policy? Is he aware that this morning, Select Committee on Transport members visited Crewe? Incidentally, we got back eight minutes early and were back here in time for lunch. We went to the national timetable centre and were somewhat dismayed to find that not only Ministers, but officials from the Department of Transport had not been there. Will my right hon. Friend encourage the civil servants responsible for the documentation to do a little more homework please?

The Prime Minister: I suspect that my hon. Friend has just done that, and in the most effective way possible.

Q7. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 17 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Loyden: Given the Matrix Churchill debacle of the past few weeks and the Government's obvious inadequacy in dealing with that matter—giving rise to questions regarding the very accountability of the Government—will the Prime Minister now accept that the only way to overcome such difficulties is to introduce a freedom of information Bill so that such situations can be avoided in future?

The Prime Minister: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman on that point, and, on the substantive matter that he mentioned, I have already said to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) that there will be a full and wide-ranging inquiry to which every Minister concerned will give evidence, all papers will be available and all civil servants will make themselves available. There will be a full and total disclosure of all those events.

Q8. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 17 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister say what further steps he can and will take to press banks to lower their interest rates in line with reduced bank rates so that businesses can profit and, more particularly, so that young home owners and mortgage payers in my constituency and throughout the country can benefit?

The Prime Minister: Clearly, lower interest rates should benefit businesses and consumers alike and thus help the economy. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has made clear, he will be taking the matter up with the individual clearing banks, and the Bank of England will be reviewing current practice by the banks.

Madam Speaker: Time's up.

Bosnian Refugees

3.30 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the decision to refuse entry to 180 Bosnian refugees.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): On 5 November I made a statement to the House about the offer that we were making to the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to receive from Bosnia people with special humanitarian needs who the international organisations judged should be evacuated from detention camps and elsewhere.

I said that we would be discussing numbers and timing with the UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross. We have informed the UNHCR that we are ready to receive in the first instance 150 former detainees and their dependants, probably making 600 in all. At the same time, I announced the imposition of visas on certain nationals of the former Yugoslavia, making it clear that such action was needed to enable us to target our humanitarian assistance where it was most needed.

The Leeds European Refugees Trust—ALERT—was advised the following day, 6 November, by my officials that the group that it intended to bring to the United Kingdom could not be exempted from the visa regime to be imposed from midnight on that day. That information and advice was repeatedly given to ALERT before its coaches left the United Kingdom on 9 November—four days after my statement. Despite that clear advice, ALERT proceeded with its plans and then used its coaches to move the group from more comfortable conditions in the safe city of Ljubljana to the equally peaceful but colder mountainous region on the Austrian border.

The ALERT group then lodged applications at the British embassy in Vienna which were referred to the Home Office asylum division on 13 November.

I decided yesterday that visas may be authorised for six members of the group who have existing close family ties with the United Kingdom. They will be free to travel here to lodge applications for asylum, in accordance with normal policy, as the United Kingdom is the most suitable country of refuge in their cases.

I also decided that another 180 members of the group should be refused visas because they have insubstantial or no links to the United Kingdom. Their cases are indistinguishable from the plight of about 2 million people displaced in former Yugoslavia. They are more fortunate than those likely to be referred to the Government by the UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross in that the ALERT group are housed in hotels and hospitals far away from the fighting.

Eight other cases, two with medical conditions, and their relatives remain under active consideration and are the subject of further inquiries. These inquiries include the need to establish that it is necessary for them to have medical treatment in the United Kingdom rather than in the hospitals where they are at present in Slovenia. It would also be necessary to ensure that the national health service could provide treatment for the patients if that case could be made.

The Government have repeatedly made clear their willingness to make a humanitarian contribution to solving the problems in the former Yugoslavia by helping to take the cases which the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross judge to be the most needy. As I have already stated, we have agreed to accept an initial group of about 600 people in all from both international bodies. Numbers and timing are being urgently considered with the UNHCR and ICRC and, of course, we stand ready to consider numbers beyond the 600 I have mentioned.

We did not implement the new visa regime without thought for transitional cases. Groups similar to ALERT who were caught by my statement on 5 November and had already then started their journeys were, in fact, exempted from visa requirements; 187 individuals were admitted to the United Kingdom on 7 and 8 November, two and three days after my statement, without visas on the basis that they had already started their journeys. ALERT, however, was fully warned of the position before even starting the journey with its coaches from this country, and at no time did it have any basis for raising the hopes of the unfortunate people concerned.

Mr. Blair: I thank the right hon. and learned Gentleman for his statement, but will he agree that the people to whom he is refusing help today are beyond doubt victims of war, some from concentration camps and all in a desperate situation? Although for the past two days since the affair broke they have been in hotels and hospitals, previously they were sleeping on buses in the freezing cold. If no asylum is given, they will go back to the refugee camps from which they have come, or in some cases to Bosnia itself.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman has criticised the ALERT organisation. Some organisations may be well meaning but irresponsible, but will he confirm the following: that ALERT has wide experience in the refugee crisis; that this was the sixth such mission it had made and the first on which there were any problems; that it had recently been commended by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for the responsibility of its conduct; and that it had secured places for all 180 people in this country before setting off?

Following the initial conversations with the Home Office, ALERT had got for the Home Office a letter from the head of the International Red Cross in Ljublijana on behalf of the Red Cross, backing up the Slovenian Red Cross, and saying that these people were victims of war with desperate need. Since the Minister is now saying, apparently, that the letter is invalid because it is from the Red Cross on the ground and not the Red Cross in Geneva, why was the first that any of the refugee bodies knew that there might be a doubt about the certification of the Red Cross when they heard the Minister on the radio this morning? How does he explain that?

Although everyone accepts that there must be proper regulation of the flow of refugees, in this case of clear suffering—involving mothers and children, where accommodation in Britain has been agreed and where the Red Cross on the ground has recommended help—would not the Minister command more support in the country if, instead of every day placing new barriers in the way of help, the Government were to show the same spark of humanitarian concern as has been shown by the British people?

Mr. Clarke: There are at the best estimate 2 million people displaced by warfare in former Yugoslavia. They are all distressed; many are homeless and many are obviously in need of as much assistance as we can give. This country is in the forefront of the international community in giving humanitarian assistance inside Yugoslavia to those people. We have joined in, making our offer to take a share of those referred to us by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The hon. Gentleman gives no indication as to whether he would refuse any of those 2 million if they presented themselves to come to this country [Hon. Members: "Oh!"] It is quite true. I have faced the hon. Gentleman for several days. He shares my instincts; he shares my values. He believes that we should make an offer in this country, but he refuses to face the responsibility of saying that we in this country should decline to take anybody who is offered to us to come to this country. He also declines to take any notice of what I have already explained to him about the policy that we have been following.

I made a clear statement on 5 November about the basis on which we were proceeding and the introduction of the visa regime. Those people who had already started their journeys were allowed here without visas. ALERT, the organisation whose cause the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) has taken up, sent the coaches from this country on 9 November after being advised for three days that it was sending out coaches to fetch people who did not qualify under the visa regime that we had introduced.

ALERT now appears to have persuaded the hon. Gentleman that somehow it had the authorisation of the Red Cross by producing to him a letter from Ljubljana with the Red Cross symbol on it. The body that we are negotiating with, the body that will send and identify for us the first 600 or so people from the detention camps, is the International Committee of the Red Cross—a large international organisation based in Geneva with many people active on the ground in the areas affected by the fighting in the former Yugoslavia.

There is a perfectly reputable body. The Ljublijana branch of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies—[An hon. Member: "It is exactly the same body."] It is not exactly the same body. It is a Ljublijana branch of a federation between Red Cross and Red Crescent organisations of people based in Slovenia. That federation has sent a letter today from its headquarters—a different headquarters—from the head of the Europe department about the letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) stating:

> "The letter was drafted in good faith by the Head of Delegation on basis of information which he could not verify at the time of writing. It does not reflect the view of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies."

The Ljublijana branch did not have the authority of its headquarters, of that organisation, for the letter that it gave.

In any event, that organisation is quite different from the International Committee of the Red Cross, with which we are working. The ICRC and the UNHCR are running detention centres very close to the fighting. They have accepted our offer to move to us about 600 people of those at the moment in the heart of the fighting who need to be evacuated because they have been traumatised by their experience. They will be added to the 68 wounded whom we have already taken from the area at the request of the Red Cross and who are being treated in national health service hospitals. Of course, we already have 40,000 people from the former Yugoslavia here as visitors, 4,000 of whom have already applied for asylum and most of whom are not returning.

We are targeting our effort on those identified to us by the international organisation. The people we are talking about today are housed in hotels and hospitals in a peaceful part of former Yugoslavia far removed from the fighting. They have been moved there from Ljublijana for some reason by an organisation which took coaches there for that purpose some days after my announcement.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield must accept that there is a sensible case for saying no to some of those 2 million. Britain will take its share in making a humanitarian contribution to the most needy.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware, because he has just quoted it, that I have become involved in the issue through many of my constituents who work for Leeds European Refugees Trust. They are constituents of great Christian motive and they are highly effective in what they have been doing to date.

My right hon. and learned Friend will also be aware that they sought the information and I agree with him that they were given strong advice that they should not move on Monday the 9th. Equally, my right hon. and learned Friend will now know, because he quoted it, that the information from the Ljublijana branch of the International Red Cross was of such a character that it was quite impossible for me or for ALERT to say that it was not a step towards the visa requirement so clearly set out in my right hon. and learned Friend's statement the previous Thursday.

I apologise unreservedly to my right hon. and learned Friend for being a nuisance in this matter, and unreservedly also if I have unwisely passed on advice to ALERT. My considered view was that the letter was meaningful, and it is only now that little meaning has been attached to it. Based on that encouragement, I suspect that ALERT allowed the buses to leave. They contained important medical supplies and other material which would have been received in the area concerned in any case. I hope that in considering the flexibility of the system, at a short distance, my right hon. and learned Friend will consider the humanitarian aspect of assessment.

Mr. Clarke: First, my hon. Friend has no need to apologise to me or to anyone else. He has quite properly taken an interest in a distressing and difficult decision. I accept that it is plainly the case that the 180 people who are waiting on the border of Slovenia and Austria had appalling experiences. They are displaced and they are among literally millions of people who are suffering innocently and directly from the consequences of the warfare. My hon. Friend knows of the advice given to ALERT not to go there and select people to bring back from among those millions. He has been helpful throughout, and letters to him have finally been clarified

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by the letter that I just quoted from the European headquarters of the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

We considered the case of each person on those British coaches. Visa forms were taken to them from Vienna, flown back to London and given priority over all the other incoming applications for refugee status and asylum. The forms were worked on over the weekend. When going through those cases, in the interests of making the most effective contribution, I had to decide that only six had any sensible case for choosing Britain as the place to which they should go from their current safe haven in the far reaches of Slovenia. Were we to take many more, or to admit more to our hospitals, we would reduce our capacity to take the people whom we have promised to take from the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. He and I have been wrestling with an impenetrable tangle and have both been aware of the important humanitarian issues which lie behind it.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Before we go further down this road, with long statements and not very brief answers, I remind the House that this is a private notice question and requires to be dealt with in a particular way—by direct single questions and brief answers.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Is the Home Secretary aware that his voice sounds like that of his predecessor, Sir Samuel Hoare, who bundled Jewish refugees back on to planes to Germany in 1939? When he speaks of allowing 150 people in desperate straits into the country on the one hand and of 2 million refugees on the other, he does less than justice to our international role as a humanitarian country and simply deposits the problem in the lap of the German people. Does he think that that is an appropriate response for this great country?

Mr. Clarke: I respect the hon. Gentleman's passionate sincerity on the matter, so I shall not bridle with indignation at his outrageous allegation. I have been getting used to outrageous allegations about my conduct in recent weeks. On calm reflection, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will not find any comparison between the returning of Jews to a regime which was systematically killing them in the gas chambers and my refusal to allow people into this country from hotels and hospitals on the peaceful mountainsides of Slovenia where they are far removed from the fighting, having escaped from it, and where I trust that no one will attempt to pursue or to kill them.

There are a large number of displaced persons and all international organisations and European countries have agreed that the best policy is to keep as many of them as possible as near to their homes as possible, so that they can return when peace comes. We shall take our share of the people who are most traumatised. The International Committee of the Red Cross and UNHCR are best placed to tell us who those people should be.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Would my right hon. and learned Friend agree, in view of his last answer, that the urgent need is massive extra aid to countries such as Slovenia so that refugees can be kept in safety not far from their homes? Up to now, the support given to new republics and other countries surrounding the former Yugoslavia has been insufficient. Does he agree that our resources, and policy for the future, should be channeled in that direction?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. I remind the House that the British contribution so far has been £70 million worth of humanitarian aid made directly and indirectly. Sums of money have been spent on medical supplies and assistance given to maintain health and water services in the worst affected area. I have mentioned the 40,000 people who have been allowed here as visitors and the 68 wounded who are being treated in our national health service hospitals. We have 2,300 troops on the ground running humanitarian convoys, we have run about 200 mercy flights taking in aid so far, and we have provided winter shelter for about 20,000 people in the worst affected areas. The British contribution to what is being done in Yugoslavia is one of the most formidable from western Europe. Combined with that, we are offering to take our share of people.

We could give help to Slovenia. Indeed, there is a case for giving help to Slovenia in relation to Austria. The Germans must really decide for themselves what they intend to do about the flow of people going to that country. It is not a model but a warning—what we must avoid—if we do not control what happens now. We are making our contribution, and matters are not helped by Opposition Members who are not prepared to say that we should be in any way selective when a group of 180 people turn up who they think should stay here.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): As there is so much conflict about what advice and assurances were given, may I ask the Home Secretary to invite the president of the Immigration Appeals Tribunal to review the applications for visit visas made by the members of the group on the basis of support, maintenance and accommodation to be arranged by ALERT?

Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman recognise that if that reasonable request for an independent review is not met, he and his officials and his Department will stand accused of duplicity and deceit and another nail will have been driven into Britain's reputation as a civilised, compassionate and caring country?

Mr. Clarke: There is no dispute or doubt about the advice that was given. I have stated the position factually and clearly. In another part of the House, we are discussing the way to unclog the appeals system in this country, which is overburdened with huge arrears of serious cases—people waiting to have their fate decided as to whether they will be allowed to settle here. We cannot start introducing a new appeals procedure to hear about applications from Slovenia in respect of people who have never set foot in this country when we have looked at their visa applications and it is plain that they do not comply with our requirements.

The hon. Gentleman winds up with his usual outburst about outrageous behaviour. Frankly, he is either gullible in believing every version he hears from various groups or he is simply out to be mischievous throughout the whole episode. I leave it to people outside to decide into which category he falls.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): There are three aspects on which my right hon. and learned Friend might have broad support. The first is recognition that the members of ALERT did not have dishonourable motives in trying to help people whom they were encouraged to believe were in distress. The second is that it would be sending the wrong signal to well-meaning groups in Britain if they were led to believe that they could just go in buses and pick up people there and bring them back here. That is not the way to help the victims of civil war.

Thirdly, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the real answer is to move as quickly as possible to take into this country people recommended by the United Nations and the Red Cross so that other well-meaning groups realise that the situation is being coped with?

Mr. Clarke: I accept what my hon. Friend says, and what has been said by Opposition Members, about the motives of those involved. I have no reason to doubt that those involved with ALERT have acted in what they believe to be a humanitarian cause and that they desperately believe that they must get the people concerned to this country. In campaigning from the border, they have made many misleading statements to try to get people here. I imagine that they regard those misleading statements as justified by the higher aim that they are pursuing. I am sorry to disappoint them but, as my hon. Friend said, many other groups would otherwise do the same.

Every international traveller knows the difficulty of going to a third world country or a country where there is trouble. It is easy to go there and see people whom one would like to bring back here for national health service treatment, for housing, and for the better conditions that they would enjoy in the United Kingdom. We cannot have that in respect of the former Yugoslavia. We have already stated to the international organisations our readiness to take in the first 600 or so of those whom we want to help. We are prepared: we could take them tomorrow. In the heart of the fighting, however—as opposed to the peaceful mountains of Slovenia—it is difficult to organise bringing people out. The British Government stand ready to play their part as soon as the 600 people can be brought here by the organisations who are trying to bring them out of the camps.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is it possible for the Home Secretary to understand the heartbreak of those involved, especially the women and children, bearing in mind what is happening in the former Yugoslavia? Whoever was responsible for making them believe it, they believed that they would be able to get to the safe haven of the United Kingdom, at least for a temporary period. Is the Home Secretary aware that in all the interviews that he gave he seemed to lack compassion and understanding for the people involved? It is not a matter of accepting all who wish to come here. The Opposition as well as the Government accept that only relatively small numbers can come. In view of the hopes that were built up in the people whom we are now discussing, however, I believe that the Home Secretary has reached a wrong decision and one of which he should be thoroughly ashamed.

Mr. Clarke: I understand absolutely the plight of Yugoslavia—a country which I know reasonably well—and I can visualise the distress of every displaced family in the former Yugoslavia. There are many people who are more distressed than those at present accommodated through the arrangements made by ALERT in the part of Yugoslavia to which they have been transported by that organisation.

I say again that compassion in this case does not mean simply agreeing that every application which happens to be before us should be permitted on exceptional grounds. The time has come to target our effort, and we shall do so: we stand ready and waiting to take the next 600 refugees referred to us by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that among the people of Britain there is genuine concern about the refugees, and a considerable desire to help on a greater scale? I, too, have been approached by constituents who want to help. What advice would he give? What is the correct procedure that people should follow? Whatever that procedure is, can we please speed it up?

Mr. Clarke: The British Refugee Council will help us to receive and accommodate the refugees referred to us by the UNHCR and then to disperse them in Britain and settle them with people, voluntary organisations and local authorities able to offer them help. I advise my hon. Friend and others to approach the council if they want to make positive offers of help, or offers to receive people from Yugoslavia and take part in the process. I am sure that the British people want to take part in helping people whom the Red Cross and UNHCR ask us to take.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Will the Home Secretary accept that his attempt to blame ALERT cheapens his reputation and that of his office as Home Secretary? It stands in sharp contrast to the altruistic, charitable and Christian motives of the ALERT organisation. Does he further accept that in his reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), in which he accused ALERT of making misleading statements from the border between Slovenia and Austria, he virtually accused ALERT of lying?

I suggest that it would be appropriate from a man who holds the office of Home Secretary to apologise to the House and to the people who work for ALERT. Does the Home Secretary recognise that it is likely that the 180 people involved will be sent back to refugee camps or possibly to the war zone? In the name of humanity, I ask the Home Secretary to reconsider the decision that he has made—or does he want to take the risk and the consequences of that decision?

Mr. Clarke: As I have already said, ALERT sent out the coaches from Britain several days after it had been repeatedly advised that it would not be able to bring people back into Britain under the new visa regime. ALERT moved the people from Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia—a country not at war—to the place where they are now. The organisation appears to have found accommodation and treatment for them there. I see no reason why the people should be taken back to the war zones. I do not believe that anyone is standing ready to transport them back there. I do not believe that that is the case. Other groups want to continue to fetch people from Yugoslavia, to bypass the visa regime and bring them here. We must tell all those groups, as I already have, "We respect your motives but, frankly, this is impractical". The

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British Government must concentrate on acting at the request of the Red Cross and the United Nations, which are more active at the heart of the conflict in Yugoslavia than those groups are.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware of the group in my constituency called Haven, which has successfully brought a number of people from erstwhile Yugoslavia into Melton Mowbray where, incidentally, they have been housed at little cost to the social services. Having found itself in exactly the same position as ALERT, following my right hon. and learned Friend's statement, the group phoned me and I in turn phoned my right hon. and learned Friend's office. I was given a quick clarification of how the rules would apply and told that no dispensation was permitted. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that Haven's behaviour has been exemplary, that he is to be congratulated on making himself available for the quick clarification of the rules, and that those who thwart the rules deserve no special dispensation?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Most organisations like Haven—there are quite a number of them—welcome the Government's stepping in to start to organise what is done in this country. I hope that those organisations, including ALERT, will continue their efforts by contacting the British Refugee Council and helping it to organise reception arrangements for those who will now enter this country at public expense, organised by the Government at the request of the Red Cross and the United Nations.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does the Home Secretary recognise that the basic problem is that he made a cruel and callous decision 10 days ago to introduce a visa regime? The decision was never debated in the House and its consequences are that people at great risk will be debarred from entering this country. We need a proper United Nations sponsored programme so that every country can take its share of responsibility for the people suffering in former Yugoslavia and grant them a safe haven in western Europe. Is not the Secretary of State's policy slamming the door in the faces of people who are fleeing for their very lives?

Mr. Clarke: It is not slamming a door to make an offer to the international organisations to pay for and receive 600 people whom they have identified as the worst sufferers from the present conflict. The rule changes will be laid before the House and can be debated if anyone so wishes. If they are debated, we shall defend them as an obvious and common-sense response to the pressure that we are under and we shall have the support of the vast majority of people in this country, who want us to make an organised response to the problems of the people in Yugoslavia.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for the speed with which his Department and the Foreign Office acted last week to grant a visa to one of the people on that convoy so that he can soon rejoin his wife and small child in my constituency, in a hostel run by ALERT. Does he agree that one of the high priorities which he should now adopt in assessing how the remaining visas should be allocated is to reunite families who have been sadly separated by that horrid war in the former Yugoslav territories?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pressing that case on me. When we went through all the cases, that was one of the priorities which emerged. The six visas that I have granted are largely for people who have become separated from wives, husbands or children in the course of the conflict. It seems obvious that we should reunite those people and it happens that a few of them were on the convoy organised by ALERT.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Does the Home Secretary realise that, every time he has spoken about the Government making a contribution to resolving the problem, he has spoken in terms of the minimum possible number of people being granted refugee status? Against that background, and given the fact that 2 million people have been displaced, will he give the House a categorical assurance that he has not set a maximum number and that every judgment will be made on compassionate grounds? Otherwise, we shall stand accused, as we did in the 1930s, of turning our backs on ethnic cleansing which in that case turned into a holocaust.

Mr. Clarke: I said on 5 November, and I have said throughout, that the numbers that we shall take through the United Nations and the Red Cross are, in the first instance, 150 people plus their dependants. We stand ready to take more and shall discuss numbers with the international organisations. Obviously, the aim of the discussions between me and my opposite numbers in other parts of western Europe is that we should share the burden.

We shall continue to take more people, but at the request of the international organisations and after discussion with them about the numbers that we can take. Comparisons of numbers are usually extremely wild. The comparison usually made is with all those citizens of former Yugoslavia who have made their way to Germany. I repeat that I understand the great problems faced by the German Government. The position in Germany is not a model of what should happen. Most people in Germany realise that they are facing potential disaster due to the flood into Germany of hundreds of thousands of people largely because their families were among the pre-existing large Yugoslav population. I assure the hon. Lady that the German Government are in the forefront of those pressing their European partners to begin to organise more carefully what happens in relation to Yugoslavia.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I take points of order after statements. If the hon. Gentleman will have a little patience, I will look his way later.

Water and Sewerage (Scotland)

4.7 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): With permission, I would like to make a statement about the restructuring of the water and sewerage industry in Scotland.

The forthcoming reform of local government in Scotland makes it necessary to review the way in which water and sewerage services are to be provided. A consultation paper on other aspects of local government reform has already been published, but I considered that water and sewerage should be addressed separately.

I told the House on 8 July that the Government had not yet decided on the future structure of those services, and that I intended first to commission a consultants' study into the technical aspects of alternative forms of organisation to assist me in drawing up a range of options, including ways in which the private sector might contribute enterprise and investment. I said that thereafter I intended to consult on the options. I am issuing today a consultation paper that fulfils that undertaking. Copies are available in the Vote Office.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I have to take points of order after statements. Cannot the hon. Gentleman hear the Secretary of State?

Mr. Wilson: My point of order is in connection with the availability of the document in question, which is not—contrary to what the Secretary of State said—available in the Vote Office.

Mr. Lang: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I checked immediately before the statement and was told that the document was available.

The paper sets out——

Mr. Wilson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. This is what comes of taking points of order during a statement. Points of order will be taken after the statement.

Mr. Lang: The paper sets out the background to the water and sewerage services in Scotland and lists a number of different structures for the industry on which I am inviting comment.

There are eight options set out in the paper, ranging from the re-establishment of a structure similar to the present arrangements to full privatisation. Other options include the grouping of publicly owned authorities and various types of franchise operation. Given the very high level of investment that the services will require in the next 10 to 15 years and the need to manage resources in line with best commercial practice, all those options merit close consideration. The paper sets out in an even-handed way and raises a number of issues on which answers are sought. The Government will take a final decision in the light of the response to the consultation paper.

Water and sewerage are important, indeed vital, services. They take up an appreciable amount of our resources and will require substantial investment in the years ahead to ensure that the high standards that we have set are fully maintained. The challenge for everyone who responds to the consultation paper is to identify the best means of securing that investment. The public will have to continue to pay for those services whether they are in the public sector or the private sector; and it is clear that in either case costs are likely to continue to rise. It is all the more important, therefore, that a structure is put in place that will deliver high standards with maximum value for money and at the lowest attainable cost to the consumer, and which will ensure that the wider environmental interests are also protected. Identifying that structure is what this consultation paper seeks to do.

Several hon. Members: On a point of order, Madam Speaker——

Madam Speaker: Order. Mr. Tom Clarke.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): May I be allowed to put a serious point of order first, Madam Speaker? It is clear that the documents are not in the Vote Office and that hon. Members cannot obtain them. May I invite your ruling on that matter?

Madam Speaker: It is not—*[Interruption.]* Order. As a matter of fact, it is not out of order for a statement of this nature to be made when the documents are not available. The Secretary of State has given the House an undertaking that the document is available in the Vote Office, but I understand that hon. Members have been to the Vote Office and found that it is not available. It is, of course, up to the Government to make documents available in the Vote Office.

Mr. Lang: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I have asked my parliamentary private secretary to check and recheck, and on both occasions he has assured me that the Vote Office has the documents and is willing to release them the moment I sit down. I understand that that is the usual procedure.

Madam Speaker: That is in fact the usual procedure.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Secretary of State agree that his statement—and the document, when hon. Members can read it—flies in the face of the majority of Scots, who are utterly opposed to privatisation in any form? Where is the evidence that the services for water and sewerage are seriously failing, that local authorities are not delivering, or that the public are unhappy with existing structures? Why were not these options put to the Scottish people at the general election, as recently as April? Why was there nothing about this in the Scottish Tory manifesto?

If the options are for real and the right hon. Gentleman's consultation is meaningful, will he give us an unqualified assurance here and now that, if a majority of those who respond are in favour of local government retaining control, he will accept their view?

On the Quayle Munro report, will the Secretary of State tell the House what the £50,000 remit was exactly? Will he even now place that report in the Library? If not, why not?

Is not this charade really about the Government finding ways of taking water and sewerage out of the public expenditure arena and dodging their responsibilities on matters as important as health and the environment, affecting every household in Scotland?

Why is the Secretary of State so concerned about controlling the level of investment when investment in the public sector and the private sector is increasingly paid for by the consumer and decreasingly paid for by the

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Treasury? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, in England and Wales, we have seen the future and it does not work?

The prospect of introducing to Scotland the highest ever bills as a reward to shareholders, record disconnections, even greater poverty among the nation's families and children, and lower standards of hygiene and environmental awareness is wholly repugnant to the Scottish people.

Finally, is it not time the Secretary of State met interested parties in Scotland genuinely to discuss with them investment in our water and sewerage industries instead of wasting the time of the House on a document that goes nowhere towards meeting Scotland's needs? Plainly, the Government have not yet put the practical needs of investment above the political concerns of ownership. That is why our campaign against water privatisation will go on.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman asked about evidence of the services failing. It is not a matter of evidence of the services failing: on the contrary, because of this Government's investment in the water and sewerage industries in Scotland, standards are rising. It is our purpose and intention that they shall continue to rise. The important issue is where the resources are to come from to fund that investment in future.

The hon. Gentleman asks why the options were not put to the public, and suggests that the matter should have been included in our manifesto. The matter arises from the reform of local government which was mentioned in our manifesto. In the light of the proposal to reform local government, it is inescapable and unavoidable that a new structure for the water and sewerage industries has to be achieved because the organisations responsible for them will no longer exist in their present form.

However, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the first consultation paper on the reform of the structure of local government published in June 1991, paragraph 23 of which says:

> "In addition, the provision of water and sewerage services might best be handled by organisations separate from the new unitary authorities."

That is clearly marked out in the consultation paper, which he has had the opportunity to study.

The hon. Gentleman asks about the Government's response to the majority who respond. Her Majesty's Opposition should treat such issues with more seriousness than to pretend that they can be decided on the basis of some kind of trivial opinion poll. These are important issues. We have a practical problem, to which we must find a practical solution.

I invite people to consider the issues, to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of the range of eight options, six of them in the public sector, which I have set out in the consultation paper, and to let me have their reasoned responses so that we can secure the best future for the water and sewerage industries in Scotland.

The hon. Gentleman asks about the publication of the Quayle Munro report. That report was commissioned on a confidential basis because of the commercial sensitivity of the issues involved, but, in view of the presentation of the options in the consultation paper, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the Quayle Munro report's findings were concerned with assessing the feasibility of a number of options and made a number of assumptions about their potential viability.

With regard to taking expenditure on the water and sewerage industries out of the public sector arena and, as the hon. Gentleman says, dodging the issues of health, he fails to understand the central point. It is because we need about £5 billion of investment in the industry during the next 10 to 15 years that we have to find the best solution so that that sum is not denied to schools, houses, hospitals, roads and the environment. That is the issue that Opposition Members must address. I hope that they will take a more serious and responsible attitude during the consultation period than is suggested by the hon. Gentleman's questions.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated on presenting a discussion paper which is so wide-ranging and which gives everyone the opportunity to make their views known. Can he confirm that, because of the substantial sums required to bring the industry into line with European requirements, he and the Government recognise that, with a public sector borrowing requirement approaching £40,000 million, it is nonsense for anyone on the Opposition Benches or elsewhere to suggest that we should not be looking at other ways of funding? At the end of the day, only the consumer can pay. There is no one else who can pay, because the consumer is also the taxpayer, and taxpayers are the people who pay. We need to find the money in a manner that will not overheat the public sector borrowing requirement when it is required for health and other resources.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. He addresses the central issue, which is where the money for future investment is to come from. The Opposition think that we can rely safely on the public sector to find that investment, yet when they were in power, between 1976 and 1979, they cut capital investment in the water industry in Scotland by one third and in the sewerage industry by a half. That is the kind of disadvantage that the industry is placed at when it relies on public sector funding. We must find a way in which the funds can be made secure and available and without prejudice to other services, and that is what I invite the Opposition to address.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the Secretary of State confirm that he and his officials have placed restrictions on local authorities over recent years which have given inadequate consents for investment in water and sewerage services? Can he give any good economic reason why it should be easier to raise equity for private finance than to raise loan funding for Scottish water authorities which remain in the public sector with public accountability?

Finally, will the Secretary of State confirm that, if people cannot pay their water bills, the sanction of disconnection will not be one of the options with which he has presented the House and the public today?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman suggested that the industry had somehow been starved of capital investment. He may wish to know that capital investment has just about doubled in Scotland over the past four or five years. He also asked about the continuing reliability of public expenditure. Let me point out to him that, in the 20 years between 1969 and 1989—when expenditure was entirely in the public sector—investment throughout the United Kingdom was under £6 billion. Between 1989 and 1999, investment in likely to be closer to £30 billion—as a result of the privatisation of the water and sewerage industry in England, and taking account of Scottish needs as well. That is five times as much investment in half the time, and it shows that investment is available if we are prepared to view the circumstances imaginatively. The consultation paper presents a range of options that will enable that to be done.

Disconnections are not legal in Scotland; they have been legal in England before and after privatisation. We shall address Scottish circumstances in accordance with Scottish needs.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): I welcome the report, which looks in detail at the intricacies of the water system. Opposition Members may not experience problems in their constituencies, but believe me, there are problems with sewage in the Clyde, and it is about time that they were addressed.

The report offers a wide range of options. It is a consultation document—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I am well aware that it is a consultation document; what I need from the hon. Gentleman is a question—very briefly—that the Secretary of State can answer.

Mr. Gallie: This is a consultation document. When my right hon. Friend considers the consultations, will he ensure that he looks for quality rather than quantity?

Mr. Lang: I am happy to give my hon. Friend that assurance. He is absolutely right. He is also right to recognise the heavy investment needs that lie ahead. Under the EC urban waste water treatment directive, we are required to reduce and abolish sludge dumping at sea by 1998; currently, we dump 75 per cent. of the total. That requirement is bound to create enormous demands for new investment in the sewerage industry.

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): Will the Secretary of State pay heed to the way in which English water authorities have suffered? Ofwat has received 10,000 complaints about water. In the first year—1991-92—21,000 people had their water cut off, and there was a 20 per cent. increase overall in the 10 English water authorities.

Let me deliver a message to the Secretary of State—a message not from the Labour heartlands, but from the Tory heartland represented by the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). In Clarkston, Newton Mearns, Busby and Gifnock, 15,000 people signed a petition saying that they wanted nothing to do with the privatisation of the water industry. Is that not a clear message from the Secretary of State's own party?

Mr. Lang: Let me draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the Muirdykes water treatment works, which serves the Paisley area. New capital works amounting to £15 million were completed there in the last financial year. Where does the hon. Gentleman think that such investment will come from in the future if public expenditure constraints are imposed on the industry? I hope that he will look at the options presented in the consultation paper, and will let me have an answer to my question.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the near-hysterical rantings that we are hearing from the Opposition in no way enhance the debate and the consultation exercise on which we are now embarking? Does he, like me, hope—probably in vain—that, over the next few weeks, the argument will become more rational, more constructive and much more responsible?

Mr. Lang: I fear that my hon. Friend is right, not least because the Opposition made up their minds before we had even published the consultation paper. I hope that they will read it, and will observe that we have laid out a range of options in an even-handed way. We invite responses, and we also invite those who read the paper to answer 12 questions, giving reasons for their answers, so that we can consider this important issue sensibly. Water and sewerage are vital services in Scotland, and we have a responsibility to our constituents to achieve the best.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): Why is the Secretary of State covering up, in a kind of Scottish Watergate, the Quayle Munro report, on which the taxpayer has spent £50,000? Is it because, if we were to see that report from Quayles, which has extremely dubious connections with the water privatisation industry, we would see that it is about how, not whether, Scotland's water, given by God in abundance to the Scottish people, should be sold off to the speculators and second-hand car salesmen who will queue to buy it?

Did not the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) put his finger on the nub of the question: that, because his Government have a £40,000 million deficit in the public sector borrowing requirement, they need to sell off the last of the family silver, irrespective of the effect on the health and well-being of the Scottish people, to whom the Conservative party lied, by omission, in the election when they failed to say what they intended to do with this precious natural resource?

On 12 December——

Madam Speaker: Order. I must have a question from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Galloway: Is the Secretary of State aware that, on 12 December, tens of thousands of Scottish people will make their objections known in the demonstration at the Euro-summit in Edinburgh, and that that will be only the beginning of the labour movement's campaign to stop this theft in its tracks?

Mr. Lang: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will read the consultation paper, because he will then see that it is an even-handed paper that lays out the options. I am surprised that he should complain about our publishing a consultation paper and making today's announcement, because on 16 July—this was reported in the *Daily Record* the next day under the heading "House of Chaos"—the hon. Gentleman behaved in an extraordinary and unparliamentary way in the Chamber, complaining because we had not made a statement on the future of the water industry. He really should make up his mind.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): I join my hon. Friends in complimenting the Secretary of State on the consultation paper. Will he emphasise to Labour Members that, if they wish best to serve Scotland's needs, they should embark on a proper debate on how best to

[Mr. George Kynoch]

fund water in the next 10 or 15 years and how best to manage it? It is likely that Labour will carry on in its normal way and reach a judgment before it considers the matter.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The cost of water has risen by about 60 per cent. in the past four years, and sewerage by slightly less. It will continue to rise in the future, regardless of the structure that we set up, because we need a dramatic increase in investment in the next 10 or 15 years. It is all the more important, therefore, that we secure the structure that minimises the cost to the public and the consumer, who pays on average more than £100 per household, and maximises the quality of water.

Mrs. Irene Adams (Paisley, North): The Secretary of State refused to accept the result of the greatest consultation—the general election in Scotland, where his party polled only 25 per cent. of the votes cast—and took charge of Scotland's business. Why should we believe that he will accept the results of the consultation on water? What will be the extent of that consultation? How will he reach the vast majority of people in Scotland, and why should we believe that he will accept the findings of a genuine consultation?

Mr. Lang: Of course I will accept the findings of a general consultation, but I shall assess the strengths and merits of the arguments that are advanced. [Hon. Members: "Ah."] Does the Labour party think that we should ignore the argument and have a simple poll? On an issue of this importance to their constituents, who need, deserve and, under this Government, will have high-quality water at the minimum cost, Labour Members really should behave more responsibly and in a more serious-minded way.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Can the Secretary of State explain to the House why, in the course of a £20,000 promotional video on the restructuring of local government, water and sewerage are not mentioned as local government services, despite all the other services being listed? Is that not an indication that this consultation exercise is the same sham, bogus exercise as the Secretary of State carried out on hospital opt-outs? Can he tell the House why, if it is possible to write off £6,000 million of capital debt for English private water, it is not possible to write off hundreds of millions of pounds of capital debt for Scottish public water to allow the required investment to be made? Finally, if he regards Scottish public opinion as "trivial", can he estimate what percentage of the Scottish population support any Tory attempt to steal Scotland's water?

Mr. Lang: On the question of writing off debt, the hon. Gentleman knows that that is an issue that would arise only if it were decided to privatise—[Hon. Members: "Why?"] Because the debt would be converted into equity on the restructuring of the companies for privatisation. I have not reached that stage of consideration, because I am laying out a consultation paper with a range of options on it. The hon. Gentleman suggests that the consultation is some kind of charade. That is precisely what it would be reduced to if I were to listen to Labour party advice. I want people to address the issue seriously and to give their considered responses so that we can make sure that we have the best kind of delivery of water and sewerage services in the future.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Instead of offering a primary 1 lesson on "how we get rain", would not the Secretary of State advance the argument, consultation and discussion better if he were to publish the report of the consultation which he commissioned? What has he got to hide? Why can we not have those facts in order that there may be a real discussion, so that we can see what the facts are? It would advance the case for looking at the issue in a properly objective way if we could do that. There can be nothing commercially sensitive about the finances of what is currently a publicly owned water industry.

Mr. Lang: There are commercially sensitive matters in the report. It was commissioned on the basis of commercial confidentiality, and I am not prepared to breach that undertaking.

Mr. Wilson: I brook correction by the Secretary of State, but as far as I can see, on brief acquaintance with the document, the word "disconnections" is not used anywhere in it. Will he confirm that there is no legal right to disconnect in Scotland at the present time? Will he confirm, further, that no private ownership of water could operate without the sanction of disconnection, as in England?

Will the right hon. Gentleman therefore take into account the fact that it is totally morally repugnant to everyone in Scotland, with very few exceptions, that, in the last decade of the 20th century, in a society that has previously managed very well without the sanction of disconnecting domestic water supplies, such an option should even be considered? Will he thus accept that, if the logic is that it is not to be considered, the whole scheme falls? Will he say now that beyond doubt there will be no domestic water disconnections in Scotland, because, if he will not say it, millions of people in Scotland will say it for him?

Mr. Lang: I understand that the number of disconnections, which rose in the early days of the privatised arrangements in England, has now fallen by 40 per cent., and that three quarters of disconnections are reconnected within two days. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was not present in the Chamber when I answered this question earlier. There is no legal consent available to disconnect water in Scotland. I have no plans to make any change in that. I shall be considering the range of options in the light of the submissions in the consultation paper, but at present that does not arise.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Will the Secretary of State explain to the people on the lowest incomes, who are struggling to pay their bills without any rebate help whatsoever, how it will benefit them, how it will help them to pay their bills, if they have to pay not only for the cost of the water and the investment but also for the profits of rapacious speculators?

Mr. Lang: I can understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about the cost of water and sewerage, because Western Isles has an average cost of £167 per household, which is double that in the lowest authority in Scotland and well above the Scottish average. It is precisely because the continuing needs for new investment in the industry in Scotland mean that the figures will continue to rise that we must ensure that the rise is minimised, and that we have the best and most efficient delivery mechanism for the service in the future. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will submit a constructive and positive input into the consultation process.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What is the considered, professional advice of Professor Kendell and the other medical advisers in response to the horrendous, but true, stories from England of lavatory pans being left to fill up, understandably for financial reasons, in water-metered households?

Mr. Lang: I have no information on those stories. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that his point is relevant to the future structure of the water and sewerage industry in Scotland, he will, I am sure, make a submission in response to the consultation paper.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): The Secretary of State has offered eight options in his paper. Does he consider all eight options to be valid? Does he accept that those whom he consults should make the decision rather than a Government who are motivated by prejudice in favour of privatisation? Will he give an undertaking that, should the people of Scotland, through their local authorities, community councils and public bodies, clearly show that they favour the local authority option advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), that option will be the one that the Government select?

Mr. Lang: I assure the hon. Gentleman that all options in the consultation paper are valid. It was to establish their validity that we commissioned work from Quayle Munro. I can give an undertaking to the hon. Gentleman that all eight are open to consideration. If the hon. Member for Monklands, West puts forward a reasoned and argued case for one option, it will be considered. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will put forward such a case as well.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Does the Secretary of State accept that, in the Borders region, the Tweed basin is a natural water area with one of the cleanest discharges into the North sea in the United Kingdom? Will he also accept that, if anything goes wrong with water or with sewerage, the people have recourse to the officials or councillors who are responsible to them? That would not be the case with the board of directors of a Scottish company, of an English company or, worse still, of a French company, to which my constituents' compatriots south of the Tweed have to go at greater expense. Will the Secretary of State leave well alone?

Mr. Lang: The right hon. Gentleman has advanced no suggestion about what should happen to the structure of the water industry and of the sewerage industry when local government is reformed. One option that we have laid out or something close to one of them will have to be adopted. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will make a submission. We cannot "leave well alone" when the authority under which the water industry operates at present will no longer exist.

I hope and believe that water in the Borders region is in good condition. It may be that the Innerleithen water supply improvements costing £1·4 million being undertaken at the moment will continue with that work. We need constantly to upgrade the quality of the drainage and water delivery systems throughout the country to ensure that we comply not only with EC directives, but with the high standards we set ourselves.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): Is the Secretary of State prepared for the derision that he is likely to get when his document is passed around in Scotland? It does not compare favourably with material put forward by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, which has a far more factual base in the running of water authorities than even the right hon. Gentleman's private consultants have.

Will the Secretary of State add to the information that he is giving about the cost of water to people in the privatised regions of England? The cost for a one-apartment flat in which I live is £109, which is twice what I pay for a four-apartment house in Central region in Scotland.

If the Secretary of State allows the people of Scotland to choose and their choice is for the industry to be financed through local authority investment—and they are willing to pay for it through local taxation—will he accept their wishes?

Mr. Lang: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has managed to read the consultation paper so quickly as to enable him to pass such an authoritative verdict on it. I hope that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities will address the questions laid out in the consultation paper and will let me have its answers. Its views will also be important so that we can secure the best system for the future.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The Secretary of State has repeatedly referred to the fact that it is against the law in Scotland to disconnect domestic consumers from the water supply, except for technical reasons. Will he now guarantee that, whatever happens, and even if full privatisation goes ahead, that law will remain unchanged and that Scotland will never have to experience the barbarism of people being cut off from the water supply because they cannot afford to pay for it?

Mr. Lang: I have already said that I have no plans for disconnection but, clearly, the future structure of the water industry must be decided and, in due course, when one of the eight options—or one of the variants of those options—laid down in the consultation paper has been decided upon, the other factors relevant to that option will also have to be decided. That is a matter for later.

Mr. Brian Donohoe (Cunninghame, South): Will the Secretary of State give us a categorical assurance that, if the vast majority of people say no, he will respect that response—something that he did not do in connection with the consultation on the South Ayrshire general hospital trust and no doubt will not do in connection with the North Ayrshire trust?

Mr. Lang: As with the hospital trust consultation period, I will assess the arguments advanced and reach a decision with my colleagues on the basis of those arguments. It will be a bad day for parliamentary democracy if we ever abandon that process.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Is the Secretary of State aware that what appeared to be a well-rehearsed

[Mr. John Maxton]

leak on Scottish radio this morning suggested that his own preferred option was water franchising? If that is true, it is because he is now so frightened of the political consequences of a direct sell-off of water that he is going for a botched-up compromise instead. Would it not be better to drop both local government reform and any proposals for water privatisation and let us keep the status quo?

Mr. Lang: I am happy to assure the hon. Gentleman that that allegation is untrue. I have expressed no preference and am awaiting the outcome of the consultation process.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Does the Secretary of State seriously expect private investors to invest in water supply services if they are to have no sanctions against those who cannot or will not for any reason pay for such supplies? As the answer to that question must be obvious, does the Secretary of State accept that the only way in which the privatisation of water services in Scotland can possibly work is if powers to disconnect domestic premises are introduced?

Mr. Lang: That is not an issue that I have yet addressed. The time at which to address it will be the time at which we decide on a particular option that might make it necessary. I would point out to the hon. Gentleman that, in England, the number of disconnections has fallen sharply in the past few months.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Secretary of State accept that his response has been entirely unconvincing? That will be the reaction in Scotland as well as in the House.

In particular, does the Secretary of State accept that the House is not persuaded by his assertion that, because he decided that the Quayle Munro report was confidential, that necessarily follows? We shall pursue that point.

Does the Secretary of State accept that people will be gravely concerned that, despite four or five opportunities, he gave no guarantee that there would not be disconnections in Scotland, and that that is entirely unacceptable? Does the right hon. Gentleman further accept that, in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg), he refused to give an assurance that he would accept the views of the majority of the people whom he says he will consult? What sort of consultation will it be, given that the right hon. Gentleman has clearly decided what to do in advance of the consultation period?

In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray), the right hon. Gentleman gave examples of investment that is taking place under the existing local government structure. Why does not the right hon. Gentleman meet local authority representatives to discuss investment and come up with the answers? Why does not he forget the whole charade of privatisation, which remains repugnant to the majority of Scottish people?

Mr. Lang: I find it depressing that the hon. Gentleman still has not grasped the fact that we are publishing a consultation paper which will lay out a series of eight options, one of which—or a variant thereof—will need to be adopted for the future of the water and sewerage industry in Scotland.

This is a serious matter, and I had hoped that the Opposition would rise to the level of events. Instead, they have paraded naked blind prejudice and unthinking atavistic resistance to any kind of progress that might improve the quality and delivery of services to their constituents. They have given no answers at all. I hope that they will reflect and soon produce an answer to the question of how the £5 billion that we shall need in Scotland over the next ten or 15 years can be found without jeopardising investment in schools, roads, hospitals, housing and a whole range of other developments, which both they and I regard as important.

The Opposition have until the end of January to reflect and consider how to fulfil and discharge their responsibility in a sensible way for the benefit of the people of Scotland. I hope that they will be more serious and responsible than they have been so far.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: We shall now move on.

Several hon. Members: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Mr. Bermingham first.

Points of Order

4.45 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Earlier today, you expressed your desire for shorter questions, and perhaps shorter answers. Would it not be an idea if you used your inimitable tact and charm and let it be known that those who ask long questions or give long-winded answers will not catch your eye? Then the rest of us humble Back Benchers might have some chance of doing so.

Madam Speaker: That is a common-sense suggestion, and I wish that I could take it up. I try to note those hon. Members who make comments and statements rather than asking questions and to bring them to order. If all hon. Members asked questions, I could call many more Back Benchers than I can at present. The hon. Gentleman has made an important suggestion, and I hope that our exchange will be read in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am bitterly disappointed that I was not called to speak in questions on the statement. I have been here since Prayers, and I agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) says about Back Benchers.

I should like to ask you, Madam Speaker, whether this is to be the end of our debate on the privatisation of water in Scotland. We do not feel that we have had a debate on the matter. It is surely out of order that such a very short time should have been devoted to the document. Can you guarantee that we shall discuss this subject more fully in the near future?

Madam Speaker: I understand the anxiety of hon. Members whom I was not able to call. I cannot call all hon. Members on a short statement such as this. As has repeatedly been said, however, we are talking about a consultation document to which we shall return on many occasions; I shall try to remember the hon. Gentleman when we do.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish to seek a ruling from you, and your guidance. This morning, the leaders of local authorities in England received a letter from the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment effectively terminating the urban programme from April next year. That serious policy change will affect many thousands of people in our most deprived inner-city communities. The House has not heard a statement on that matter or had the chance to ask Ministers questions about it.

The matter could have been referred to in the autumn statement last Thursday, but it was not. Instead, a letter has gone out to local authority leaders. Is that a proper way for the Government to make such a policy change, and, given that such a change has now been made on an issue of importance and concern, will you use your good offices to arrange for a statement to be made at the earliest possible opportunity?

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman will realise, we are to have a two-day debate on the autumn statement, and he may be able to catch my eye on that occasion.

On the other matter that the hon. Gentleman raised, I have no control over documents or letters sent by the Government, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will find an opportunity during business questions or the debate on the autumn statement to probe Ministers on that question.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Bermingham: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I have just heard a point of order from the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham).

Mr. Bermingham: It is further to a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr. McKelvey: I have not raised a point of order yet.

Madam Speaker: I cannot take all points of order at once. The hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) will have to wait a moment. I shall first hear the point of order that is further to an earlier point of order.

Mr. Bermingham: Was it not said many times in the previous Parliament that it was courteous to the House to announce policy changes here rather than by way of letters? Will you, Madam Speaker, make your feelings felt on that matter, too?

Madam Speaker: I have not seen the letter so I have no idea to what degree it entails a change of policy. I take the view, however, that all major changes of policy should be announced to the House first.

Mr. McKelvey: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Could you advise a Back Bencher who is somewhat concerned? My constituents feel that Kilmarnock and Loudoun are being disfranchised. Over the last five statements and at several Question Times, I have been jumping up and down trying to catch your eye. My constituents can see that on television, and neither they nor I can understand why I fail to catch your eye. If it is something I have done, perhaps you will tell me; if I am dressed wrongly, perhaps you can advise me; or if I have been overlooked, perhaps something will happen in the near future.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may be a little short in stature, but he has a great deal of personality, and I do notice him. Perhaps he will report to his constituents that, if some of his colleagues were to ask shorter questions, he might be one of the lucky ones who would be called.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Minister said that documents would be available in the Vote Office, but when we arrived at the Vote Office, they were locked in a secure place and were released only well after the Minister had sat down and a telephone call was made, I assume, to a security centre to authorise their release. The statement was not available. Could you use your good offices to make sure that, when someone says that a document will be available —I think the word "now" was used—it is available at that time?

Madam Speaker: Documents are available in the Vote Office at the moment a Minister sits down. That is the

[Madam Speaker]

usual procedure. On this occasion there was a hiccup. If the documents were locked up, perhaps the key could not be found immediately.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): May I ask with what I hope is my customary politeness towards you, Madam Speaker, why I was not called on the statement made by the Secretary of State for Scotland?

Madam Speaker: A number of Members were not called on the statement, as often happens on statements and business questions. It is not possible to call every hon. Member on a statement or a private notice question. I have also to keep in mind the business of the House. May I also remind the hon. Gentleman of what I said earlier—that this is merely a consultation document and that we shall be coming back to it on many other occasions? I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will not go unnoticed then.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Another point of order? The hon. Gentleman had not been rising earlier.

Mr. Foulkes: It has nothing to do with Scottish statements; that is why I was not rising earlier. Madam Speaker, you will be aware that often Ministers, when asked direct questions, fail to answer them. May I put it on record that, in a written answer yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), who had asked the date of the bringing into effect of the full arms embargo against Iraq, the Prime Minister volunteered additional information and gave all the terms of reference of the inquiry of Lord Justice Scott?

That must be a unique occasion, when an hon. Member gets information that he did not even ask for. It is interesting that the Prime Minister gave the information before the Leader of the Opposition could raise it today. I think it should be put on record; it is a unique occasion.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the whole House will be enlightened and we will all have had our knowledge increased as a result of what the hon. Gentleman has just said.

BILL PRESENTED

IMMUNITY CERTIFICATES

Mr. David Winnick presented a Bill to remove from Ministers the power to claim immunity in respect of documents relevant to court proceedings; to reserve to the trial judge the discretion to decide upon the introduction of such documents; and for connected purposes: And the same was read a First time, and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December; and to be printed. [Bill 85.]

Employment (Age Limits)

4.52 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prohibit the use of age limits in job appointments, training schemes, promotion, retirement and advertising of jobs; to make other provision relating to employment; and for connected purposes.

I was brought up to believe that only young men liked young wine and young women, but unfortunately that immaturity seems to be spreading. One of its more unhappy aspects is that it seems to have spread increasingly to those who seek to employ others.

Each of us who knows the destabilising effect on our constituents of unemployment knows that one of the utterly depressing and often degrading aspects of the search for work is rejection because of highly subjective criteria which are not always clear.

In the past two years, it has become increasingly plain to me that many of my constituents are facing a new and far more subtle barrier than the forms of discrimination that they have met before. Many of them find that there are not only advertised age barriers but that, if they send in their curriculum vitae without their age on the document, they are not even shortlisted, irrespective of the qualities that they might bring to the job.

That is not only an enormous waste of tremendous talent and ability: it is totally uncalled for. When unemployment is high, we understand that employers will want the best person, male or female, but if artificial barriers are raised such as a spurious attempt to suggest that people of a certain age are not capable of doing an efficient task, whole groups of people will be discarded from the employment list without even having the opportunity to present themselves for interview.

Some of the examples are extraordinary. It should be unlawful to specify an upper age in job advertisements. Mrs. V. of Essex, who was in her early 50s and was an experienced clerical assistant, offered to do any office job, for which she had considerable qualifications. She learned not to apply for jobs in companies which described themselves as having "a lively, young office". The only job offers that she has had are as office cleaner or canteen cook, for neither of which she has any experience.

Mr. W. of London, who is in his very early 50s and is a senior corporate executive with international experience, has been applying for posts for over a year, with no success to date. Several prospective employers told him that they were looking for younger members for the management team.

The one example which struck me particularly was that of Mrs. Y. of Manchester, in her 50s, who was a secretary with word processing, shorthand and all the other office skills. Finding it difficult to get any job at the same level, she pointed out that she had worked for the personnel departments of several large companies where job advertisements were drawn up, stating arbitrary age limits. She told Age Concern:

> **"I've worked in offices where job adverts are drafted, and I know for a fact that age limits are plucked out of the air, and that they are based on sheer prejudice alone, amid such remarks as 'we don't want any wrinklies here spoiling our fun'."**

That would be laughable if it were not so devastating for the people concerned.

In my constituency, we have lost over 2,000 jobs in the last two years, and the result has been appalling for those involved. It was frightening when men in their 50s in engineering and women in their 40s in the rag trade were told that they were too old to take alternative employment. Now, even people of 38, with full apprenticeships and over 20 years' work in the same firm, are told that they are not of an appropriate age to apply for alternative jobs. Executives in their late 40s, with 20 years' experience in car leasing, are being told by other branches of their own firms that it is better to have a young, inexperienced person of 20 in the job.

The position is not only alarming but self-defeating. As a nation, we are not training young people, and we are rapidly creaming off those in their 30s, 40s and 50s who have experience and who are capable of contributing to our affluence. Where will we end up if we continue in that way?

Baroness Phillips of Fulham, who introduced the Bill in another place, said that she had never had an idea or project where she had not been told that it was too difficult or that there were too many problems. She believed that such discrimination should not be allowed to continue. Baroness Phillips explained exactly what she wanted. I must stress that, as she was in her 82nd year, she was not thinking of herself. She thought that it was important that it should be unlawful to refuse a job on the grounds of age, and that it should be totally unlawful to include an upper age limit in conditions for eligibility for promotion or to refuse promotion on the grounds of age alone.

Once upon a time, older Members in the House were regarded as valued members of the establishment and as having something to offer. Perhaps we should understand that experience and maturity are not always qualifications that should be ignored.

Unfortunately, such problems are now appearing in the public sector. Nurses in their late 40s with 21 years' clinical experience in specialties are being replaced by people well down the scale, but not because they are incapable or because they do not have something to contribute: they are being told that they are being replaced because there should be a "turnover"—for which read, untrained nursing assistants who are cheap labour. "Cheap labour" will be the cry of many of those people.

The House should seriously consider the implications of such attacks on those who most need our support. Such a short-sighted policy will cost our economy dear, and it is a policy that we cannot afford to sustain. I ask the House seriously to grant me leave to bring in the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, Mrs. Linn Golding, Mr. Norman Hogg, Mrs. Barbara Roche, Mr. Robert N. Wareing, Mr. Barry Jones and Mr. David Winnick.

EMPLOYMENT (AGE LIMITS)

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody accordingly presented a Bill to prohibit the use of age limits in job applications, training schemes, promotion, retirement and advertising of jobs; to make other provision relating to employment; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 84.]

Orders of the Day

Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I must inform the House that, because of the number of right hon. and hon. Members who wish to speak in the debate, Madam Speaker has decided that there will be a 10 minute limit on speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm.

5.2 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This is almost exactly the anniversary of the Second Reading debate—13 years ago—on the first of this Government's Employment Bills, introduced by my distinguished predecessor, Lord Prior. It is salutary now to remember how pessimistic many people then were, against the background of the winter of discontent, about the prospects of any legislation to reform industrial relations. To many people at that time, the problems of British industrial relations—strikes, restrictive practices, violence and intimidation on the picket line—seemed insoluble. They believed that the law was powerless to deal with those problems.

We know now that the pessimists and the sceptics were wrong. The changes that we have made in the law since 1979—for example, to end the closed shop and to introduce strike ballots—have not only proved effective, they are also now accepted by trade unions and employers alike as irreversible. The role of the law in industrial relations is no longer in question.

This is a wide-ranging Bill. It gives effect to a number of the Government's manifesto commitments. It represents the conclusion of extensive consultations. It will implement a number of EC obligations. Above all, it marks a further, important stage in the programme of trade union reform on which this Government embarked in 1979—a programme which has now been endorsed by the British people at four successive general elections.

The Bill has two main objectives: first, to strengthen and extend the rights of the individual—both individual employees and individual trade union members; secondly, to increase the competitiveness of the economy and remove obstacles to the creation of new jobs. In the first place, the Bill provides a range of important new rights for employees—rights which they have not enjoyed before in this country.

We promised in our election manifesto to provide all women in employment with the right to 14 weeks maternity leave and with protection against being dismissed because of pregnancy. The Bill honours both those undertakings. In future, every employee who becomes pregnant will be entitled to 14 weeks leave regardless of her length of service or the number of hours that she works. The existing right to return to employment after a maximum of 40 weeks—the longest period of maternity absence in the whole of the European Community—will, of course, be maintained for women who have been employed for more than two years and the

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Bill makes it unfair to dismiss any employee on the grounds of pregnancy, again regardless of her length of service and the number of hours she works.

Those are important new rights for women in employment. They give effect to the requirements of the EC directive on the rights of pregnant workers which was adopted as recently as 19 October.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): Am I right in thinking that one of the major arguments surrounding the EC directive was the issue of maternity pay to accompany maternity leave? If that is so, if we combine the right to extend maternity leave—something that is welcomed on the Opposition Benches—with the abolition of wages councils, more women will be taken below the lower earnings limit. Although those women may be entitled to maternity leave, their right to maternity pay will immediately be taken away. Are not the Government taking away with one hand what they are giving with the other?

Mrs. Shephard: No, I refute the hon. Gentleman's allegation. In the first instance, the proposals extend new rights to all pregnant women at work and I am glad that he and his colleagues welcome that. I will refer to wages councils in a moment. However, the Bill is concerned with employment law, maternity leave and protection against dismissal. Matters of maternity pay were in doubt because the directive was adopted only on 19 October. That was the main area of dissension between Italy and the Commission and the other member states. That matter is not dealt with in the Bill. It is under consideration by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security who will certainly make an announcement in due course.

The difficult negotiations upon which I just touched in my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) were brought to a successful conclusion under the presidency of the United Kingdom at the 11th hour. As a result, women in employment throughout the Community have gained new rights, which will safeguard their health and safety when they become pregnant.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): While the right hon. Lady is on the question of employment rights, does she believe that every worker should have the right to be represented by a trade union if he or she so wishes?

Mrs. Shephard: That is entirely a matter between employers and their employees. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is thinking of Government Communications Headquarters, Cheltenham, which is a special case.

Because of the directive, women in France and Spain will, for the first time, have the right to paid time off for ante-natal examinations—a right that women in this country have had since the first Employment Act 1980 became law.

Secondly, the Bill meets our manifesto commitment to give every employee who works for more than eight hours a week a right to a written statement, setting out their main terms and conditions of employment. Employees are entitled to an individual statement, which tells them clearly and simply how much they earn, how many hours they are expected to work and how many holidays they are entitled to. Those provisions meet the requirements of the European directive on employment contracts.

The Bill will also protect employees who have health and safety responsibilities from dismissal or action short of dismissal for carrying out their duties. It gives employees the same protection if they have to leave their work to safeguard their health and safety in the face of serious and imminent danger. Those rights will apply regardless of length of service or hours of work.

Finally, the Bill provides for an important extension of the jurisdiction of industrial tribunals. In future, they will not be limited to hearing cases that arise from the statutory rights of employees, but will also be able to hear most breach-of-employment-contract claims on termination of employment. That will bring to an end the inconvenience, delay and costs caused to applicants and employers when contractual claims have to be pursued in the county courts while others are taken to a tribunal.

All those proposals will extend and strengthen the rights of employees, and I believe that they will be welcomed on both sides of the House.

On the rights of trade union members, let us never forget that this Government ended the tyranny of the closed shop. In the 1970s, as a direct result of the legislation of the last Labour Government, more than 5 million jobs were barred to anyone who was not a member of a trade union. Hundreds of people were sacked from their jobs simply because they refused to become union members. As a result of the closed shop imposed on British Rail by the union which sponsors the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), the legislation of the last Labour Government was found by the European Court of Human Rights to be in breach of the European convention on human rights. That was a shameful episode in our industrial relations history. The legislation that the Government have put on the statute book ensures that it will not happen again. No one can be lawfully denied a job simply because he or she does not have a union card.

Mr. Terry Rooney (Bradford, North): Will the Secretary of State advise the House what the European Court of Human Rights said on the question of the rights of employees at the Government Communications Headquarters who choose to remain in a union?

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman must know that GCHQ is a separate case and a special issue. The Government attach fundamental importance to safeguarding the security and continuity of essential operations at GCHQ even if Opposition Members do not and I note with interest that they still defend the closed shop.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): It is interesting to hear the Secretary of State say that Opposition Members do not have due regard for the security of the country. Can the right hon. Lady give an example of a trade unionist who has given away the country's secrets? Is it not true that all the people who have given away secrets have been from Eton, Harrow and the privileged parts of our society?

Mrs. Shephard: It is good to know that the Labour party is alive, well and living over there. The fact is—and I feel certain that the hon. Gentleman must accept it—that GCHQ is a separate and special issue. If Opposition Members do not feel strongly about protecting the security of our country, which is of fundamental importance, it is a great pity.

The Government believe that the time has come to extend the rights of employees further and to get rid of another outdated and undemocratic restriction on their freedom of choice. People should be free to take jobs regardless of whether they are union members and they should have the freedom to choose which union they join.

As a result of the Trades Union Congress's so-called——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak) *rose*——

Mrs. Shephard: I shall make some progress and then I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Lady.

As a result of the TUC's so-called Bridlington rules, many people have been denied that freedom. They were introduced as long ago as 1939, as a means of resolving conflicts between unions over membership rights, and they have always had a fundamental flaw—they make no provision for union members to be consulted or for their wishes to be taken into account. The operation of the Bridlington rules has come under increasing strain as a result. They no longer meet their original purpose of avoiding conflicts between unions, as anyone who has followed the recent history of the electricians' union will acknowledge. It is generally considered that they are undemocratic and unworkable.

Mr. Skinner: Is it not a fact that in the Nottinghamshire coalfield people who chose to belong to the National Union of Mineworkers have not had any negotiating rights with British Coal for several years, despite the fact that the right hon. Lady is making those assurances? They do not meet with the coal board to discuss health and safety matters and many other issues. As for the security of the country and GCHQ being a special case, the truth is that it was not union membership which put the nation's future in peril, but the fact that the Government were negotiating with Saddam to sell him munitions despite the fact that GCHQ intelligence told them that it was unsafe to do so.

Mrs. Shephard: That is very ingenious of the hon. Gentleman. The question of British Coal and the NUM is for British Coal.

Dr. Lynne Jones: If the Secretary of State is concerned about workers' rights, will she introduce the right for the union that they wish to join to be recognised? I cite the case of workers at Burnsalls, at 10 Downing street in Smethwick, where 26 of the 29 members of the work force voted to join the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union, yet the employer, who is paying the atrocious wage of £2·30 an hour with compulsory overtime, has refused to accept their wishes. Will she comment on the rights of those employees?

Mrs. Shephard: Trade union recognition and bargaining rights are different from membership.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Will the Secretary of State confirm that if an employee of Nissan—where there is a single-union agreement—who is a member of the AWEU decides that he wants to leave the union under the terms of the Bill and to join the Transport and General Workers Union, he would have the right to be represented in negotiations with Nissan by the TGWU?

Mrs. Shephard: As I have already said, that is a separate issue. Trade union recognition and bargaining arrangements are completely different from trade union membership. People join trade unions for many different reasons and not simply for pay bargaining. I am not stating simply my opinion when I say that the Bridlington rules no longer apply. I am repeating the publicly expressed views of the leaders of the two largest unions. The general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, Mr. Bill Morris, said of the Bridlington rules in May 1991:

> "Today, when we are about choice and opportunity for the individual, there is no choice or opportunity within them".

The general secretary of the engineering union, Mr. Gavin Laird, in an article in *The Sunday Times* on 6 September of this year, described the Bridlington rules as

> "outdated and irrelevant to modern industrial relations."

He wrote:

> "Employees must have the freedom to join a union of their choice: unions cannot be exempt from people's freedom of choice."

That is what the Bill will guarantee.

The measure provides other important new rights for trade union members. It provides new rights in relation to the election of trade union leaders to prevent the sort of fraud and abuse which occurred in the executive elections of 1990 in the Transport and General Workers Union, when the discovery of 10,000 forged voting papers led to the re-running of the ballot.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mrs. Shephard: I will give way shortly.

The Bill will give every union member the right to a postal ballot before he or she is called out on strike and the right to have that ballot independently scrutinised. It provides new rights to information——

Ms. Angela Eagle (Wallasey) *rose*——

Mrs. Shephard: I have given way several times. I wish to make some progress. I promise to give way to the hon. Lady later.

The Bill provides new rights to information about how union leaders spend the money which their members provide through their subscriptions, not least, information about the salaries that their leaders are paid. The House will recall how difficult it was for members of the National Union of Teachers to discover how much their general secretary was paid and how surprised they were to find that he had been given a 46 per cent. pay rise—*[Interruption.]*—taking his salary to £63,000 a year, at a time when the NUT was £1·4 million in the red. The Bill provides a new right for trade union members to be able in future to scrutinise such matters.

Ms. Eagle: The turnout in postal ballots for industrial action is much lower than occurs in workplace ballots. Does the right hon. Lady suggest that a postal ballot, with a probably much lower turnout, is democratic?

Mrs. Shephard: Regardless of the turnout, it is important for union members to feel that they can express their views in private and with the protection of a postal ballot.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): The Secretary of State is making great play of the need for union members to have knowledge of exactly how much are the salaries of the president, general secretary and executive of unions, and

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nobody disagrees with trade union members having that right. Why will the right hon. Lady not include in the legislation a provision to enable us to know the salaries of executives and members of private companies?

For example, is she aware that when public money is being spent in Scotland, in an area for which she as well as the Secretary of State for Scotland is responsible—the local enterprise companies and the training enterprise councils—the Comptroller and Auditor General said that he could not say whether the LECs in Scotland were being run properly because he did not have access to their accounts?

Mrs. Shephard: TECs and LECs are subject to close audit. The law has always provided for trade unions to be treated as the very special organisations that they are, and there are tremendous differences between trade unions and private companies, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mrs. Shephard: Perhaps I may be allowed to make a little progress, having given way a number of times.

The Bill also provides a new right for trade union members to decide for themselves how they pay their union subscriptions. As the law now stands, an employer and a trade union can agree that union subscriptions will be deducted automatically from a union member's pay packet. The union member has no say in the matter. Such so-called check-off arrangements can be imposed without consent or consultation. If union members object to paying their subscriptions in that way, the law gives them no remedy. Their only recourse is to resign from the union, and that is not acceptable.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): The Secretary of State has explained how clause 12 will give ordinary employees and union members the right to opt out of the check-off system. Will she give an undertaking to keep in mind for the future the option of an opting in system for automatic deductions if unions abuse their position in regard to opting out?

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East) *rose*——

Mrs. Shephard: We are discussing the arrangements as they will apply under this legislation, but we always keep such issues under review, and safeguards are being introduced for union members—*[Interruption.]*

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mrs. Shephard: I have given way about 10 times.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Is it not a fact that it is a crime for an employer to deduct from the pay of a worker any sum of money unless that worker has previously consented to the deduction?

Mrs. Shephard: I think the hon. Gentleman is mistaken. Perhaps he has been reading too carefully the briefing documents supplied by the TUC, which have helpfully also been supplied to me. I believe that there is a genuine misunderstanding on the part of the TUC. It is right that there must be an agreement between the employer and the union, but that right is not specifically extended to the individual. That is what the Bill does. It will ensure that no employee will have money deducted from his or her wages to pay union subscriptions unless consent has been given in writing.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mrs. Shephard: I will not give way for a little longer, having already given way 11 times.

Mr. Dobson: I do not want to continue a host of interruptions of the right hon. Lady's speech, but setting aside anything to do with the law concerning trade unions, is it not the case, and has it not been the case throughout the 20th century, that it is unlawful for an employer to deduct from an employee's wages any sum to which the employee has not previously consented?

Mrs. Shephard: Perhaps I can clarify the matter for the hon. Gentleman. Union members covered by a collective agreement may have deductions made from their wages under the check-off arrangement, even if they have not given their individual consent—*[Interruption.]*—and the Bill addresses that matter.

The TUC has said that it supports

"a requirement for individual written consent"

to the check-off. It claims that there is already such a requirement. That is not correct. The law does not provide such a requirement, though the Bill does, so it should have the TUC's support as well as the support of Opposition Members.

The Bill does not make the check-off unlawful—as it is, for example, in France—and if union members want to pay their subscriptions by means of deductions from their pay, nothing in the Bill will prevent that arrangement from continuing.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does the right hon. Lady accept—at least, according to the Library briefing based on the consultation document submitted to her—that the British Institute of Management, the Engineering Employers Federation and other employers' organisations said that they were clear that the Wages Act 1986 made it a criminal offence to deduct dues without such deductions being provided for in the contract or expressly agreed with the worker in question? In other words, is it not a fact that the proposed new legislation is not necessary because the existing law is adequate?

Mrs. Shephard: I will try again to clarify the matter. A collective agreement can be taken as consent. The Bill ensures that individual consent is given. People, including the general secretary of the TUC, who argue that it will reduce the income of trade unions to allow union members to decide for themselves how they pay their subscriptions should consider carefully the implications of their argument. If trade union members are happy to have union subscriptions deducted from their pay, nothing will change as a result of the Bill. The new rights will make no difference unless money is being deducted now from employees' pay without their knowledge or agreement. I wonder whether that is what the general secretary fears. He cannot have it both ways.

If this change in the law is unnecessary, as the general secretary claims, it will make no difference. If it makes a difference, it will be only because union subscriptions are currently deducted from employees' pay packets without their knowledge or consent. Once again, as with the introduction of strike ballots and ballots for union elections, those who oppose the new rights in the Bill must believe that trade union members should not be trusted to decide such matters for themselves but only if they are covered by a collective agreement. We reject that philosophy utterly.

Mr. Bill Olner (Nuneaton): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mrs. Shephard: No. I must make some progress. I have already given way 13 or 14 times.

Before I deal with the other provisions of the Bill, I must mention another important new right that it will provide. This is the right which was first announced in the citizens charter White Paper in July 1991. The White Paper said that the general public usually have no legal remedy against unlawful industrial action, even when they are its victims and in some cases its deliberate target. Companies with contracts which are broken as a result of an unlawful strike have always been able to seek the protection of the law. Increasingly, they have been ready to use the remedies that the law provides and that is one of the reasons why our strike record has improved so dramatically. But the customer who, for example, relies on a train or a bus to get to work every day is defenceless in the face of unlawful industrial action. The Bill will, for the first time, give the individual citizen the right to go to court to get an order requiring an unlawful strike to be called off.

The Bill contains another measure to safeguard the economy and employment from the damaging consequences of industrial action. It provides for seven days notice of strikes to enable employers to take the measures necessary to protect their businesses and the jobs of their employees from the threat of industrial action. The measure has been widely welcomed.

There is no clearer evidence of the transformation in industrial relations since 1979 than the record of strikes. In the 1970s, an average of 13 million working days were lost each year because of strikes. In the past 12 months the figure was 0·5 million—the lowest figure since records began. We are proud of that record. We need to make sure that we keep it.

Nothing has done more to convince investors in other countries to put their money into the United Kingdom and to create new jobs in this country than the improvement in our strike record. Rather than opposing investment from abroad on the ground that foreigners are "aliens", the trade unions should realise why this country has been so successful in attracting foreign investment. There cannot be anyone in this House who believes that this country would have become what Jacques Delors has called a "paradise for foreign investment" if the United Kingdom was still synonymous with strikes and restrictive practices. Nor does anyone—apart from perhaps a few Opposition Members—doubt the crucial role which our legislation has played in bringing about the transformation of our industrial relations in the past decade.

Now more than ever we need to make sure that the progress that we have made in reducing the level of strikes is maintained in the future. Without investment we shall not have the new jobs that we want to see. But without continuing industrial peace there will be no investment. Nothing could be more damaging to the prospects of employment growth than a return to the strike-happy ways of the 1970s.

Mr. Olner: Will the Secretary of State explain why so many jobs have been lost during this relatively strike-free period? I suggest that more days are lost through short-time working and through members in manufacturing industry being made redundant than were ever lost in the dark days which she so delightedly describes.

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman has clearly forgotten Britain's job creation record in the 1980s. Job creation was faster and more effective than in any other country in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

The dramatic fall in the number of strikes is not the only evidence of a transformation in industrial relations. Less than half the work force is now covered, directly or indirectly, by collective bargaining. Barely a third of the work force is now covered by national collective agreements. More and more companies negotiate pay on an individual basis with their employees in ways which take account of individual skills and performance.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mrs. Shephard: No, I should like to make a little progress.

Even where collective bargaining persists, pay determination has become increasingly decentralised to local level. These are all healthy and necessary changes, if the British economy is to be competitive and obstacles to the creation of new jobs are to be removed. *[Interruption.]* Given the ringing endorsement of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner), I give way to him.

Mr. Turner: Will the Secretary of State give a couple of moments thought to workers' rights? In the past few years a growing number of workers in Britain have found that they have hardly any rights whatever. They have no rights to redundancy payments, sickness benefit or unemployment benefit. People are dismissed on a Friday and re-engaged on a Monday. That is the society that the Secretary of State has created. It is based on fear. That is the answer to many of the questions that Conservative Members ask about the fall in the number of strikes. People are cowed by fear. That is the environment that the Government have created. People go without basic rights as a result of the Government's legislation.

Mrs. Shephard: I do not condone bad employment practices, wherever they occur. The hon. Gentleman and I are in agreement on that.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): The Secretary of State mentioned that many individuals have negotiated pay with their employers. So why are the Government removing from more than 2 million workers the right to negotiate a pay rise of more than 1·5 per cent?

Mrs. Shephard: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made clear in his autumn statement the necessity for people who are in work to make a little sacrifice to help those who are out of work. That was expanded by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. If the measure helps employment, most people will be ready to go along with it.

The wages councils are an example of the damaging and outdated methods of deciding pay from which most sectors of the British economy have now moved away.

[Mrs. Shephard]

Wages councils fix rates of pay for their industries on a national basis without any regard for regional variations in levels of pay or labour market conditions.

Two thirds of employees covered by wages councils are paid well above the statutory minimum rates laid down by the councils. For some of them, the councils are simply an irrelevant and bureaucratic burden. But in many cases the effect of statutory minimum rates is to push up the rates of pay of those earning above that level, with results which are damaging both for competitiveness and for jobs. To quote from a recent letter from the British Hospitality Association:

> "Wages Councils inhibit the ability of organisations to construct pay systems which are sufficiently flexible to reward skills and merit and at the same time take account of geographical variations."

That is why the Government have always said that wages councils have no permanent place in British industrial relations. They were first established in 1909 when there were no statutory employment rights, no general health and safety statutory protection and virtually no social security provision. At that time, there was a justifiable case for arguing that statutory minimum rates of pay would provide a safety net against poverty. That is why the wages councils were established in 1909.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): The Secretary of State mentioned earlier the possibility of the Conservative party manifesto including a number of items in the Bill. Will she elucidate by telling the House on what page in the Conservative manifesto the abolition of wages councils was included?

Mrs. Shephard: The Government have always made it clear that we see no permanent place for wages councils in the labour market. We have undertaken extensive consultation on wages councils and that has been the Government's view since 1988.

The justification for the establishment of wages councils no longer applies in the conditions of the 1990s. Wages councils are not a safety net against poverty when 80 per cent. of the employees whom they cover live in households with two or more incomes. Low pay and poverty are not necessarily synonymous.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): When Winston Churchill introduced the Bill, did he not stress that it was to protect those whose livelihood depended on the industry and wage concerned? Does not the change outlined by my right hon. Friend show that those circumstances have completely changed?

Mrs. Shephard: Indeed, he did make that point and I have already spoken about the conditions pertaining at the time. I believe that Winston Churchill was a Liberal at the time.

Nor is there any reason to believe that removing statutory minimum rates of pay leads to lower levels of earnings. On the contrary, since young people were removed from the scope of wages councils in 1986, average full-time earnings for people under 21 have grown in real terms in all the main industries and occupations concerned.

In any case, wages councils have never provided anything approaching comprehensive protection against low pay. The number of employees covered by wages councils has been declining since the 1950s. Wages councils now cover only 10 per cent. of the work force. I might add that 10 wages councils were abolished by the last Labour Government between 1974 and 1979.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mrs. Shephard: I must make progress as I have now given way 16 times.

The wages councils they abolished included Industrial Canteens, which covered 218,000 employees and Road Haulage, which covered 210,000 employees. Between 1974 and 1979, a total of nearly 600,000 employees were removed from the scope of wages councils—that is nearly a quarter of the present total. If the Opposition are going to argue that the wages councils are some sort of safety net, they will have to acknowledge that they made some pretty big holes in it when they were last in power.

Mr. Dobson: Will the right hon. Lady confirm that those abolitions were carried out at the request of people working in the industries concerned and that Labour Ministers insisted on deferring some of them for far longer than people in the industries wanted?

Mrs. Shephard: A very good try, but the fact remains that it is the principle that counts in this matter. As for the Opposition's attitude, they must acknowledge that they are on shaky ground.

Sir Harold Walker (Doncaster, Central) *rose*——

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Shephard: I shall give way to my hon. Friend later.

Sir Harold Walker (Doncaster, Central): As the Minister involved in the procedures leading to the abolition of the Road Haulage wages council, may I remind the right hon. Lady that it was because of pressure from employers and trade unions in the industry, who felt that the development of collective bargaining was being impeded by the existence of the wages council and that collective bargaining had advanced to a stage where they no longer needed that wages council. In any case, we could fall back on the road haulage wages legislation, which we introduced and the Conservatives abolished subsequently. As my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said, we sought to keep the wages councils for longer than those involved wanted. The important point is that, in this Bill as in others, the Government are deliberately turning their backs on collective bargaining and seeking to undermine it.

Mrs. Shephard: I respect the right hon. Gentleman for his detailed knowledge of those matters and I thank him for reminding the House of what happened, but I am still confused about whether he was guided by principle or union pressure.

Mr. Ian Bruce: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and for the intervention by the right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central (Sir H. Walker). Has not every wages council that has been removed, including the recent removal of the wages councils' so-called protection for workers under 21, resulted in the average wages rising higher for that group of workers than for those left within the wages council?

Mrs. Shephard: Yes, my hon. Friend is correct. I made that point in respect of those wages councils covering young people under 21.

As the industrial and occupational structure of the labour force has changed so the coverage of wages councils has become increasingly arbitrary. For example, over the last 30 years the number of employees covered by the Fur wages council has declined from 9,000 to 800. The Ostrich, Fancy Feather and Artificial Flower council covers a total of 500 employees and the Coffin and Cerement Making council only 200.

The whole structure is shot through with anomalies and anachronisms. For example, the Laundry wages council's regulations do not generally apply to self-service launderettes but to those where the employees do the washing for the customers. The Clothing council's scope still assumes that the industry's products are made from woven materials such as cotton and wool. So workers engaged on the same processes using knitted fabrics are excluded. The Catering councils cover managers in restaurants but not managers in pubs. Selling cooked meat is covered by a wages council but not selling raw meat; the sale of radios is covered but the sale of tape recorders is not. Anomalies of this kind make nonsense of the argument that wages councils provide a general safety net of any kind, and dealing with them causes practical difficulties for employers.

The real argument between the Government and the Opposition is not about the survival of the remaining wages councils. The argument between us is about whether all employers should be obliged to pay all their employees above a single minimum rate which would be decided not by negotiation, not by the needs of the economy or of the labour market, not by the ability of companies to pay, and not with regard to individual performance and skills, but by the Government alone.

The Opposition want a national minimum wage, which would raise labour costs right across the whole economy as workers fought to preserve their differentials. Nothing could be more disastrous for competitiveness—or for jobs. That is the real difference between us: we believe in creating a flexible labour market, which can create and sustain jobs; they believe in a national minimum wage, which would cost up to 2 million jobs.

Finally, the Bill will implement changes in the management of the careers service, which were announced in the Government's White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century" in 1991.

A professional system of careers guidance is fundamental to the removal of barriers to jobs. With the benefit of expert advice, young people can maximise their potential and use their talents to their own best advantage and that of the community as a whole. The Bill will, for the first time, enable the Government to contract with a range of different organisations to provide a careers service that is more flexible and more responsive to the needs of local people and local employers. The new careers service will not be restricted to helping young people. There will also be scope to assist unemployed adults, people faced with redundancy or those seeking a career change.

There will be a general welcome for the new rights for employees that I described at the outset. I hope that that part of the Bill will not be controversial. Many of the other changes in the law proposed in the Bill and which I have not had time to mention respond to the needs and wishes of many individuals and organisations. Other parts of the Bill will be vigorously debated.

The Labour party remains wholly committed to the principle of a national minimum wage, regardless of its consequences for the economy and for jobs. On that issue there is a gulf between the Government and the Opposition that cannot be breached. But the new rights for trade union members contained in the Bill—the latest stage in our programme of trade union reform—are a different matter.

At the last election the Labour party claimed that, if elected, it would keep the trade union legislation of the 1980s—despite the fact that it had voted against every trade union bill that we have introduced since 1979. Some people doubted whether the Labour party's conversion to the cause of trade union reform was entirely genuine. Today, we shall see.

I am prepared to keep an open mind until I hear the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras speak. I hope that he will bear in mind the assurances that his predecessor, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), gave about keeping the trade union legislation of the 1980s. I hope that he will not take the line of all his predecessors and attack every clause and every line of the Bill while it is going through Parliament—only to admit in three to four years' time that the new rights that It provides for trade union members cannot be repealed. If he opposes the rights for trade union members in the Bill, he will be making the same mistake that his predecessors made when they opposed the ending of the closed shop and the introduction of strike ballots. By the attitude that it takes to this Bill, the Labour party has the chance to break out of the cycle of unthinking opposition, followed in due course, as the next election gets nearer, by embarrassed and half-hearted acceptance. It has the chance today to demonstrate to the British people that its attitude to trade union law has really changed.

I put it to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras what is unreasonable about allowing trade union members freedom to choose which union they join? What is unreasonable about giving trade union members a right to a postal ballot before they are called out on strike? What is wrong with allowing union members to decide for themselves how they pay their subscriptions? And what is wrong with giving the citizens of this country the protection of the law if they are the victims of an unlawful strike?

Conservative Members have always believed that the law must define both the rights and the obligations of trade unions, and that it must set limits to the destructive power of industrial action. We have always believed that the law has a legitimate and necessary role to play in guaranteeing the democratic rights of trade union members, as well as in protecting the individual and the community as a whole against the abuse of industrial power. I believe that the argument about the role of the law in industrial relations has now been finally settled. I believe that when the history of the 1980s comes to be written, that will be seen to be one of the most important and lasting achievements of the decade. By strengthening the law, the Bill will strengthen industrial relations in this country. That is why I believe that it deserves the support of the whole House.

5.53 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I start by declaring an interest: I am sponsored as a Labour candidate by the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, which used to be the National Union of Railwaymen. I am proud of my connections with the union that represents the interests of railway workers, including hundreds of those who work at St. Pancras, Euston, King's Cross and 14 other stations in my constituency. It is the union of which my father and grandfather were members, and it has a proud record of promoting the interests of its members and their families, both through its industrial activities and through political involvement with the Labour party.

Our task today is to judge whether the Bill introduced by the Secretary of State deals with the most pressing problems of employment and unemployment which now face the people of our country. The Bill fails that simple test. When we look at the state of the nation after more than 13 years of Tory rule we are confronted by the following facts. Almost 3 million people are officially out of work, more than 4 million are really out of work, 30 unemployed people are chasing every job vacancy and 6 million women are on low pay.

Britain has the widest gap in the European Community between men's pay and women's pay. More than 2·5 million people who are in work are not paid a living wage, with the result that many of them have to fall back on means-tested benefits paid for by the taxpayer. Fewer than 4·5 million people in Britain are now employed in manufacturing.

Government training schemes do not lead to jobs. Pay, hours and working conditions in Britain are falling further behind those of our European partners. Employers are exploiting the fear of unemployment to worsen the working conditions of their staff. As the Secretary of State recently admitted, every person out of work for a year costs the taxpayer £9,000.

The Bill does not address those problems. It is not that it does not give them top priority—it gives them no priority. Instead, it reveals that when faced with the misery and concern about unemployment, poor training, low pay and exploitation, the Secretary of State gives top priority to fouling up the check-off of union subscriptions, privatising the schools careers service and abolishing wages councils, which provide a safety net for some of the poorest paid workers in the land. The Secretary of State cannot seriously believe that most of the matters covered by the Bill are Britain's top employment priorities in 1992.

The Bill includes some limited improvements which we welcome, but credit for most of those improvements must go to the institutions of the European Community which instigated them—it certainly cannot be claimed by the British Tory Government who delayed and obstructed them, and watered them down.

The legal position of Britain's trade unions is already the weakest in the European Community, but the Bill includes further mean-minded measures designed to make it even more difficult for trade unions to devote time and resources to promoting their members' interests. Under the Government, deregulation for business has been matched by over-regulation for trade unions. However, some of the proposals in the Bill seem likely to cause as much trouble for employers as for unions. For years, the Tories trumpeted the merits of single-union agreements and claimed that they attracted inward investment, but the Bill gives unions a legal power and incentive to poach members from one another. What will foreign investors think of that?

The bureaucratic burden of other proposals will fall on employers and unions alike. The proposal to permit the removal of lay members from industrial tribunals and leave them entirely in the hands of lawyers seems odd, coming from a Secretary of State who regularly assails the idea of the tyranny of the closed shop. There is no shop more closed than the lawyers' closed shop.

In the time available, it is impossible to deal with all the issues covered by this rag-bag of a Bill, so I shall concentrate on four topics: the abolition of wages councils, maternity rights for women, the privatisation of the schools careers service, and the check-off of union subscriptions.

The nastiest part of the Bill contains the Government's proposal to abolish wages councils. Nothing illustrates better the moral degradation of the current Tory party than that decision. Wages councils, which protect the worst off, were founded by Winston Churchill, strengthened by Clem Attlee and retained by Margaret Thatcher, only to be abolished by John Major—so much for a nation at ease with itself and a classless society. As the right hon. Lady said, wages councils are far from perfect—and we think that they should be improved—but they provide a safety net for 2·5 million of the worst paid workers in the land. Most of those workers are employed in shops, hotels, the catering industry, the clothing trade, and hairdressing. Wages councils are important in every part of Britain, especially in low-wage areas such as Northern Ireland. Basic wage rates range from £2·58 an hour to £3·10 an hour.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): The hon. Gentleman criticises the Government for doing nothing in the Bill to promote employment. Does he accept that all the evidence in this country and in Europe suggests that the setting of a minimum wage, either nationally as recommended by Labour or in a particular industry, destroys jobs?

Mr. Dobson: In brief, no.

Almost 2 million of the people covered by wages councils are women. The Secretary of State has Cabinet responsibility for promoting equal opportunities for women. If this proposal goes through, she will give 2 million badly paid women an equal opportunity to be paid even less. That is not the usual meaning of equal opportunity.

Mr. Heald: Throughout the 1960s, the 1970s and the early 1980s, the Transport and General Workers Union favoured abolition of wages councils. It said:

> "Wages Councils do not represent an effective means of raising the standards of lower paid workers and they should be abolished".

Why have Labour Members and that union changed their tune?

Mr. Dobson: Like any other institution in the world, the TGWU is not always right.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in due course. On second thoughts, having recognised him, I shall not give way to him, so he need not stand up any more.

Who is in favour of abolishing wages councils? The Government have refused to disclose who has made representations in favour of abolition. Apparently it is the lobby which dare not speak its name. We know that only half the employers' organisations involved in wages council industries favour abolition. The other employers fear that they will be undermined by bad employers.

The Institute of Directors favours abolition; it and the Government claim that abolition would be good for the workers concerned. What can they mean? Wages councils set a minimum wage. They do not stop employers paying more than a minimum. Under present arrangements, employers can pay as much as they like, but not as little as they like. In setting up the wages councils, Winston Churchill recognised that market forces do not always work, that employers often have the whip hand and individual employees are weak. When employees cannot get a fair bargain for their work, Parliament decided that the law has a role in protecting them and in promoting fair trade. Churchill argued—at the time even the Tories agreed—that anyone whose bargaining position is so weak that he cannot get a living wage should be helped by the law; otherwise, the worst off would be forced to accept poverty pay, the bad employer would undercut the good, and the bad would be undercut by the worst.

That is all still true, whatever the Secretary of State may claim about times having changed. Apart from the law, there is still nothing to protect a Bengali woman who depends on a job in a sweatshop in the east end of London, or an unemployed Cornish youth desperate for a summer job pulling pints in Falmouth, or a jobless young west midlands woman begging for work with a hairdresser, or the widow in Yorkshire going back to work in a shop after her husband has died.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: I have already made it clear that I will not.

In one respect, the situation has changed—but for the worse. At the time when the wages councils were being set up, Parliament also took action to protect children who were exploited by being paid children's wages for doing adults' work. The current Tory Government have undermined the laws protecting children so that adults now have to compete with children for low-paid jobs.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Given that most of the occupations controlled by wages councils are universally acknowledged to have relatively low rates of pay, does the hon. Gentleman agree that the conspiracy between the unions and some of the employers to depress wages needs to be broken? In occupations not covered by wages councils, almost all women do much better—as witness teachers, nurses and women office workers.

Mr. Dobson: I accept that wages councils pay a lower minimum basic rate than Labour's proposed national minimum wage, which is why I favour a national minimum wage.

Mr. Nicholls *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman, and that is that.

The Equal Opportunities Commission has argued against abolition. The citizens advice bureaux are against abolition——

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has made it clear that he is not giving way.

Mr. Dobson: All those who have registered their objections to the abilition of wages councils can demonstrate a long history of genuine concern for the low paid. By contrast, the people in favour of abolition are a case study in cant and hypocrisy—and they are all Tories.

I have already mentioned the Institute of Directors. Then there is the Grand Metropolitan company, the boss of which is Sir Allen Sheppard. He was the man who orchestrated the letter to *The Times* before the election in which it was claimed that a Labour Government would threaten "the spirit of enterprise". To be fair, Sir Allen is an enterprising fellow—so much so that last year he paid himself the enterprising sum of £713,000. He is in favour of abolishing wages councils because he wants to pay his staff in pubs, hotels and restaurants less than current minimum rates. So Allen Sheppard gets £433 an hour while his staff get less than £3 an hour. No wonder the Tories asked him to be their party treasurer.

Mrs. Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham): Is the hon. Gentleman telling the House that if—God forbid—there were a Labour Government he would bring back all the wages councils?

Mr. Dobson: Labour is committed to establishing a statutory national minimum wage, which would be better than that.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): On the point about Labour's statutory minimum wage, which was an issue at the last general election, is the hon. Gentleman aware of the comments of the shadow spokesman for transport, who said on "Walden" that if a statutory minimum wage were introduced there would be some shake-out of jobs and that any silly fool would know that?

Mr. Dobson: My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was telling the truth. When there are changes there will be some sort of shake-out, but we believe that all the evidence suggests an ultimate increase in jobs for everyone as a result of people being paid better.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth): I apologise for interrupting the hon. Gentleman's speech, but is the hon. Gentleman saying that it is Labour party policy not to restore the wages councils because Labour would have a minimum wage instead? Is he saying that he would not bring back wages councils if the Government abolished them?

Mr. Dobson: The Labour party will introduce a statutory national minimum wage. We shall then need to consider whether any other special protection should be offered people in what are called the sweated trades—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] Right, let us analyse the problem. Two and a half million of our fellow citizens are paid £3·10 an hour or less under wages councils. We would introduce a national minimum wage which would be in excess of that. If, having consulted the people who work in the industries concerned, and possibly

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even the employers in them, we thought that some additional protection was needed for the worst off, we would consider that. No doubt we shall enter into such consultations before the general election—there is a long time to go.

Ms. Eagle: Does my hon. Friend agree with the Equal Opportunities Commission and the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, which have estimated that the abolition of the wages councils will lead directly to 25,000 job losses in the initial period simply because of the withdrawal of spending power from the economy which the depressed wages will cause?

Mr. Dobson: That is the other side of the coin of the benefits which would flow from people being paid higher wages as a result of a national minimum wage.

The nub of the issue is why the Government, post-Thatcher, are abolishing wages councils. I believe that it is part of the pay-off to the companies which provided the Tory party with its funds.

Firms such as Whitbread, whose top-paid director receives £330,000 a year, and which paid the Tories £60,000 last year, are in favour of getting rid of wages councils. Trusthouse Forte contributed £86,000 to the Tory party last year. Its best-paid director gets by on £250,000 a year, but he thinks that the company's staff should take a pay cut—I saw him on television saying so. Allied Lyons, another in the catering trade, pays its top director £370,000 a year and contributed £80,000 to the Tories. Scottish and Newcastle, whose best-paid director receives £271,000 a year, is another company which will benefit from this kick-back in exchange for the £70,000 contribution that it made to the Tories. They are all rich Tory business people who favour lower pay for everyone except themselves.

The Low Pay Unit has calculated that the cuts in pay which will follow abolition could cost the lower paid as much as £3 billion a year once the full impact is felt. Some of that reduction in their less-than-living wage will be made up: more people will become entitled to family credit, or to more family credit; others will become entitled to income support, or to more income support; others will be entitled to housing benefit and poll tax rebates or more of both or either of those. Therefore, not all the burden of this bonanza for the employers will fall on the worst off and their families. Some of it will fall on the taxpayer instead, so those Tory employers will be lining their pockets at the expense of their work force and the taxpayer.

Mr. Miller: The largest single back-dated wages council award to an individual of which I am aware was in respect of a late employee of a BTR company owned by the noble Lord Hanson. That illustrates the point well.

Mr. Dobson: I make no further comment; my hon. Friend has made the point.

The Secretary of State has tried to say that abolition does not matter because so many of the workers involved are women working part time who are not the only source of family income. Yet when I asked her how many women covered by wages councils were the principal bread winner for their family, she said that her Department did not know. She could surely have found out before she decided to change the law, but she did not—preferring to augment Tory prejudice with ministerial ignorance. In any case, it is surely a matter of principle that women should receive equal pay for work of equal value whatever they do with the money. The Secretary of State for Health and the right hon. Lady are just as entitled to their Cabinet Minister's pay as any male Cabinet member. That is a principle which should apply to everyone.

That brings me to the maternity rights part of the Bill. We welcome the proposal as far as it goes. Without the stalwart commitment of Christine Crawley, the British Labour party chair of the European Parliament committee on women's rights, backed up by the TUC acting through the European TUC, the pregnancy directive from which this proposal springs would have been quietly smothered by the Government.

The Bill will rightly prevent a woman from being dismissed because she is pregnant. That is a step forward. It provides some cover from suspension on health and safety grounds. That, too, is a step forward. It also provides a new minimum entitlement to 14 weeks continuous maternity leave, irrespective of length of service or hours of work. That is a great step forward. We welcome these proposals, but they do not go far enough.

Why should women be protected from dismissal because of pregnancy whatever their length of service and hours of work but not have the same degree of employment protection when they are not pregnant? At the Tory conference the Secretary of State for Social Security was mouthing on about young women getting pregnant so that they could jump the queue for a house. If the proposal goes through in its present form, there is a real danger that he will be back at the Tory conference next year claiming that young women are getting pregnant to avoid getting the sack.

Mention of the Secretary of State for Social Security leads to the next point. We have been told that during their 14 weeks maternity leave women will receive 14 weeks sick pay from the Department of Social Security. The right hon. Lady mentioned that, but we look forward to the legislation being introduced and we still challenge why it is based on sick pay.

The Secretary of State claimed a lot of credit for the measure, but the House should remember that, as originally proposed by the European Commission and the European Parliament, the maternity leave entitlement would have given every pregnant woman the right to 14 weeks maternity leave on full pay. That would have benefited 350,000 women. As a result of the wrecking activities of the British Government, it is likely that the number of women who will benefit in full from the maternity pay provision will be 16,000 or 17,000. The pregnancy directive and the Bill gave the British Government the chance to catch up with the best maternity provision in the EC, but they have not taken that chance. In other words, the welcome improvements in maternity rights are largely to the credit of Brussels and Strasbourg; the weaknesses are due to the prejudices of the Tory Government.

The next item is the proposal to privatise the schools careers service. Why? Are people clamouring to say that it is not doing a good job. Is there evidence that it is failing young people? Does the track record of previous Department of Employment privatisations suggest that the careers service will do a better job in the private sector? The answer to all those questions is clearly no. The careers service should be helped to get on with its job. Instead, it is to be cast into months or years of turmoil, turned inside out and upside down and then flogged off, no doubt to some friends of the Tory party.

Many people are concerned that the careers service will no longer give top priority to serving the interests of children and young people. They fear that profit-seeking owners will give top priority to their profits. After all, that is their legal duty. Will the new owners give impartial advice and help, or will it be a racket? People also fear that equal opportunities will be denied to people with disabilities or learning difficulties and to others on grounds of race or sex. I believe that the threat is even more fundamental than that: if the careers service is privatised, there is every chance that it will disappear altogether.

Let us just look at what has happened with previous Department of Employment privatisations. First, the Professional and Executive Register was sold off—the outfit whose job was to help employers to recruit from the white collar workless. It operated a chain of 32 offices and was in direct weekly contact with 100,000 job seekers. In September 1988 that organisation, with a revenue of more than £9 million a year, was sold for just £6 million by the then Secretary of State for Employment, now chairman of the Tory party. Speaking of the buyers, he said:

> "There is no doubt they have the expertise and commitment to give the company the start in the private sector that we want for it."

He said that it was

> "a business which I believe has an exciting future. The company will have the opportunity to realise its commercial potential, free from the restrictions under which it operated as part of the Government."

The purchaser in which the Secretary of State had so much confidence was Robert Maxwell and the company ceased trading in December last year. There is now no special service for the record number of white collar workers who are jobless.

The Department of Employment's sell-off shambles did not stop there. It sold or, to be more precise, in some cases gave away the Skills Training Agency and 51 of Britain's skill centres. In February 1990, TICC was given £2 million to take over four skill centres in Cumbria, east Lancashire, St. Helens and Ipswich. By August 1991 the company was in liquidation. METEL, which was given the Liverpool training centre, went out of business this summer. Now ASTRA, the company which was given taxpayers' money to run 45 centres, is in severe trouble. It has already closed eight centres, and has made 1,200 staff redundant. It is now in desperate financial straits, demanding further redundancies and 15 per cent. pay cuts. It could well go down, taking the remaining skill centres with it.

No assurances from the Secretary of State about the future of a privatised careers service can possibly be accepted when we consider the assurances given by her predecessor, the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), who now presides over the council tax as he previously presided over the poll tax. Welcoming the privatisation of skill centres in what he called

> "the first successful management buy-out bid in the Civil Service",

the right hon. and learned Gentleman claimed that he had

> "achieved a deal which is excellent for the taxpayer and for those who want to continue to receive training from the Skillcentres"—

provided, of course, that they do not live in any of the dozen towns where skill centres have already disappeared.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Conservative Members look a bit embarrassed.

Mr. Dobson: They have every right to look embarrassed. With such a track record, the Secretary of State really has a cheek to come to the House and ask for the power to privatise the schools careers service when it is doing a good job in the public sector. The House should not give her that power until she has got the skill centres and the professional and executive register up and running again, and helping people who are in desperate need.

We in the trade unions welcome new rules which are intended to protect members' subscriptions, and to guarantee that members are sent full financial details of their union funds and of officials' pay and perks. Many unions do that already, using cheaper, quicker and more efficient methods than those proposed by the Government. We expect the Government in due course to bring the law on company directors' pay and perks into line with best trade union practice.

That brings me to the Government's proposals to require—yet again—that employers have the written consent of each employee before checking off union subscriptions from wages. We believe that the law requires that already, and nothing said by the Secretary of State today undermines our confidence. It is theft for an employer to take money from an employee's wages without the employee's consent.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I think that a misunderstanding may have arisen about what is stated in the Wages Act 1986. The Act clearly provides that an employer may make a deduction from a worker's wages in only three circumstances, one of which is where the deduction is

> "required or authorised . . . by virtue of . . . any relevant provision of the worker's contract".

The point is that, when a collective agreement provides for the deduction of trade union dues, the deduction can be made without a worker's individual consent. The Bill provides for that consent to be required.

Mr. Dobson: The Minister should go back to the Box and get a better brief. Even in a negotiated contract of that kind, the worker must signify his agreement or consent to the contract in writing.

Mr. John Evans: Most of what the Minister said applies to deductions relating to, for instance, social and sports clubs. It is interesting to note that the Government have given the workers a new so-called right in relation to trade union subscriptions, but have pointedly omitted to give them the same right in relation to deductions for social or sports clubs—or, indeed, in relation to deductions for charitable purposes under the Government's own scheme.

Mr. Dobson: As ever, my hon. Friend is quite right.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I do not think that the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) is right about deductions for charitable giving. Surely, however, the differences between my hon. Friend the Minister and the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) relates to whether consent is direct or indirect. Ending that difference would probably bridge the gap.

Mr. Dobson: A contract is not a contract until the parties to it signify their consent.

In propounding this change, the Government referred to

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"allegations that some employees who are not union members have nevertheless had union subscriptions deducted from their pay".

When I asked whether the Government had investigated those allegations, the Secretary of State said:

"The Department doesn't investigate allegations of this kind."

What double standards: the Government come to the House proposing to change the law because of unsubstantiated allegations about trade unions, but they have still done nothing to change the law to protect pensions from the demonstrable theft that has been going on in the City. In any event, as I have said before, if money is checked off without an employee's consent, it is the employer who commits the offence, not the union.

On top of that, the Government are now demanding that such consent be obtained every three years. What a burden that will be for businesses which are trying to keep their costs down. Why cannot union subscription check-offs be treated like other check-offs—or, for that matter, like direct debit for paying the poll tax? Why should there be a special rule for trade unions? We all know why. It is because the Government hope that they can change the unions into an ogre, to distract attention from what is going on in Britain. They hope to make it harder for unions to collect subscriptions and maintain their finances. They hope that, ultimately, such a change will undermine union help for the Labour party by reducing the donations that unions can make. What a cheek that is when the Tory party receives millions, in secret, from Greek fascists, Hong Kong insider dealers and foreign fraudsters who are given an easy ride in Britain; now those self-same Tories are trying to challenge the legitimacy of funds fairly and openly given to the Labour party by nurses, fire fighters, coal miners, dinner ladies and doctors.

As I have said before, the Bill is largely irrelevant to Britain's current employment problems. If the Government persist with it, we shall try to strengthen the better clauses and expose the spite and hypocrisy which lie behind the worst. But it would be better if the Secretary of State took the Bill away and came back with an improvement.

I ask the Secretary of State to think again. She says, as every Cabinet Minister does, that her party believes in choice. She and I are of an age. I remind her of the choice that was available to us, but is denied to the generation now leaving school and college. We both graduated in the early 1960s. When I applied for jobs I received offers from several employers, and I had a choice of jobs, pay and location. I am sure that the Secretary of State had as wide a choice as I had, or an even wider choice. That choice is no longer available.

For every person who was out of work when the Secretary of State graduated in 1961, 14 people are out of work today. In that year, the number of people seeking jobs scarcely exceeded the number of vacancies. Today, 30 people are chasing every vacancy. Choice has not widened for those leaving school and college—it has narrowed, and many have no choice and no job. They feel let down, and they have been let down.

The Secretary of State and I, with others of our generation, were the principal beneficiaries of full employment, and of the commitment by Governments all over the developed world to the belief that full employment was good for the world economy, good for growth and, above all, good for people. They were right. What we want now is not the introduction of petty measures like these; we need the vision of a better world, and a long-term ambition to return to full employment with all our people at work. We need the political commitment for that to be brought about. Full employment was good for the Secretary of State, for me and for our generation, and it is the least that we can offer to our children and grandchildren.

6.28 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): In a written answer given on 29 October, when asked for the Secretary of State's estimate of the number of new jobs that would be created following the abolition of wages councils and for sight of the evidence on which that evidence was based, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State ended his answer with the words:

"We do not have the information to quantify the number of jobs that are inhibited by statutory minimum rates; and attempts to do so are not likely to be successful."—[*Official Report*, 29 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. *825*.]

That, I think, was a proper answer; certainly a large amount of research evidence is not conclusive in any direction.

I intend to return to the subject of clause 28. First, however, I wish to say something about trade unions and their links with the Labour party. Half the members of trades unions do not belong to unions that are unions affiliated to the Labour party or that operate a political levy. It would have been better if more trades unions had dropped the political levy.

It is disgraceful to see public sector unions tying themselves to one political party. Although the National Association of Local Government Officers is not affiliated to the Labour party, it is disgraceful to see it spending its money in such a way that it appears to have swallowed all of Labour's propaganda.

I am a member of the Transport and General Workers Union, but I do not pay the levy. It supports a political party that has lost the past four general elections. I do not believe that the Labour party will treat trade union issues in a fair-minded way as long as it relies so much on trade union affiliations. The Tory party will not consider employment issues in the unbiased way that we should as long as so many trade unions are affiliated to our political opposition.

I was president of the Conservative Trades Unionists in 1979. Part of my discussions with Harvey Thomas may have led to his brilliant organisation of the trade union members' rally on the last Sunday of the campaign at Wembley. It helped to deal with the issue of whether Conservatives in government could deal with trades union issues.

Evidence of the past 13 years has shown that we have better understanding of trade union leaders and have received as much support from trade union members and their families as we do from many other groups. We still have the capacity to get things wrong—or, to put it more positively, there are normally ways of improving our trade union legislation.

On Report, I intend to vote against clause 28, because I believe that we have made a mistake. I have been trying to advance my view since I was a Minister in the

Department of Employment between 1984 and 1986. I have tried to take up the matter with Ministers, and I am grateful for my recent meeting. I was part of the 1985 review of wages councils, but was not at the Department when conclusions were reached. I can, however, refer the House to what appeared to be the best summary of the consultation. The reply of my right hon. Friend the Member for Northavon (Sir John Cope) in column 557 of *Hansard* on 21 March 1989 showed that, from the number of responses to the consultative document on wages councils, there was little evidence that people particularly wanted to abolish them. I am not aware of any significant consultation since then.

On leaving the Department of Employment, I joined the Department of Transport and spent much time with what might be called the hospitality industries—working men's clubs, non-profit-making clubs, licensed victuallers and publicans. Unfortunately, I saw little of the British Hospitality Association, which is normally quoted as an opponent of the wages council system. Working co-operatively with many people across a broad spectrum in the alcohol trade—health and safety inspectors and trade union members—I encountered few employers who found the wages councils' minimum rates a burden.

I do not want to pretend that those rates have not been effective. I should not want to argue that they have not eliminated job opportunities, because at the margin they clearly have, especially on the fringes of employment opportunities, where people face a choice between work or no work, and also in areas where there are normally job choices, except in the depths of recession, but where exploitation or lack of skill in the labour market has meant that people have taken jobs despite being grossly exploited.

Mr. Nicholls: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Bottomley: In a moment. If I may say so, I think that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) unfairly discriminated against my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) by not allowing him to intervene.

Mr. Nicholls: How does my hon. Friend square the point that he is now making about voting against clause 28? I have reminded myself of the evidence on the point, because I subsequently had the same responsibility as my hon. Friend. I have a quotation, chosen almost at random, that the hon. Gentleman gave in a written reply:

> "There is general agreement that the abolition of wages councils would slow down pay increases resulting in an increase in employment for both young people and adults."—[*Official Report*, 11 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 399.]

I fully accept that collective responsibility binds us to curious things sometimes, but I should have thought that the speech that my hon. Friend is now making would have read well as a resignation speech; what I do not understand is how it came to be made in the House today.

Mr. Bottomley: If my hon. Friend—I shall refer to him as that rather than as the hon. Gentleman, which is how he referred to me—were to pay me the courtesy of listening with his ears rather than his mouth, he would discover that I have said that I am willing to concede that without wages councils some more people—*[Interruption.]* I said it with a smile—might have work, and other hon. Members will have heard me say that. That is consistent with the answer that my hon. Friend quoted from 1985.

My views have not changed, but I believe that my party's have. If it had indicated its intention to abolish wages councils, I would have expected to see some reference to it in the Green Paper on industrial relations and explicit reference in the election manifesto. Unless I have misread the manifesto or overlooked something in the Green Paper, I do not think that it was there.

I apologise for the way in which I responded to my hon. Friend, but he asked for it.

Mr. Nicholls: Would the hon. Gentleman like to talk about some of the other things that he has said over the years, because that was not an isolated example? Numerous examples appear in *Hansard* of the hon. Gentleman throwing his weight and authority behind the proposition that wages councils were bad for the lower paid. Unless my hon. Friend is going to try to say that this is an isolated example—I have done my homework, and it is not—he must say what is now different, apart from the fact that he and I are now sitting on the Back Benches rather than on the Treasury Bench. The truth is not that moveable.

Mr. Bottomley: The House would become rather bored if we continued this interchange too long. My hon. Friend said that he could give further examples of my comments on wages councils. I should be happy to consider all the points, but I doubt whether they will be inconsistent with what I am saying now or with what I was saying before he intervened.

I was talking about areas where there are normally good employment opportunities, yet where people can still be grossly exploited. There have been 14 prosecutions for illegal underpayment in the past year—twice as high as the year before—and there was some reason for them. More than £1 million was recovered for 12,000 workers, the majority of whom were part-time workers working fewer than 37 or 40 hours a week.

There was a reason why those employees were willing for wages inspectors to seek repayment of the wages of which they had been cheated and unlawfully denied. In many cases, workers do not make such requests because they fear losing their job, but if three times out of four employees are willing to have their wages chased up we cannot argue that they are frightened of losing their jobs. Such people want the protection of the law.

I suspect that the Department of Employment could have organised a survey of workers in wages councils industries. In fact, it would have been proper for the Department to have conducted a survey of employers in industries employing 100,000 workers or more. I think that many employers would have expressed some inhibition. I have seen, for example, a letter from a member of the British Hospitality Association saying that he would prefer more freedom, which I can understand.

I can also understand people who argue that pay restraint in the public sector should be copied by more people in the private sector. If a wages council suggested a pay increase of 4 per cent. when many people were receiving increases of 1·5 per cent. or nothing, that would be destabilising.

If that is the problem that the Government think they are facing, and if it is the change between the Green Paper and the manifesto, they could say that wages councils cannot recommend increases in the next year or that council rates should be dropped by 10 per cent. or 15 per

[Mr. Bottomley]

cent., if that becomes an important issue. My guess is that the Government are trying to crawl into an area of logical extremism. The Labour party, with its statutory minimum rate, sometimes defined as an hourly rate and sometimes as a weekly income, is at one extreme. That did not find a great deal of favour during the general election and was not supported by many of the trade unions for much of the time that I have been involved in industrial relations.

As a fellow of the Institute of Personnel Management, I sometimes see some of the representative comments made by bodies, with some of which I agree and some of which I disagree. My trade union, the TGWU, opposed the statutory minimum pay rate for some time, and the Trades Union Congress opposed it until the National Union of Public Employees and the Confederation of Health Service Employees managed to generate enthusiasm for it.

I believe that there is a middle way between going for a statutory minimum rate for everyone and what some people, including, I expect, my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge, who succeeded me at the Department of Employment, would argue for: a total free market.

I have never quite understood why those who believe in a total free market bother to come into Parliament. They do not need Parliament to intervene. I think that there are good arguments for Parliament to intervene in some cases, and here I make a passing reference to clause 24, which means that people, no matter how short their employment, cannot be dismissed for taking up the health and safety at work issue. That is an issue which I and many other hon. Members on both sides of the House were raising a year ago in relation to offshore oil industries and work on the mainland of Britain as well. Those are the sorts of areas in which I think it is perfectly reasonable to interfere with the free market. It cannot be said that all things are the same in this respect.

I do not believe, further, that in the depths of a recession it is right to take away all existing protection for those who are often on low pay, when there are clearly pressures for their rates of pay to be reduced even further without necessarily a significant change in employment levels.

My hon. Friend the Member for Teignmouth, together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, made reference to the change in the rates of pay for people under the age of 21. That was a change in the wages council system that I would support now, had it not already happened.

Reference was also made in some written material to the fact that the numbers employed had also changed after 1986. From 1986 to about 1989—probably the latest available figures—we were at the top of the boom; we were towards the end of eight years of consistent economic growth.

Those were the circumstances in which we were most likely to see an increase in both pay and employment opportunities, especially when a growing number of people under the age of 21 were going into further and higher education and so withdrawing from the labour market. So there are all kinds of consistent reasons why that does not necessarily support an argument that the abolition of wages councils in itself has a significant effect on either the rate of pay or the numbers under the age of 21 employed.

My argument is that, especially at this time, it would be wrong to withdraw all the existing minimum pay arrangements for 2·5 million people, even if only one in four are directly affected because they are at or around the minimum pay rate. It is not the right time to do it and it is not the right way to do it.

I hope that the Government will look upon this argument in a rational way and ask themselves what kind of Government they want to be. I was brought up with the idea that those with broader shoulders should carry the greatest weight when times are rough. I do not believe that everything that helps to make pay rates higher should be abolished.

I make the point not just to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State but to the Government generally that I have seen them agreeing pay rates for people under 21 when Government do not employ many people under the age of 21. They quite cheerfully agreed with trade unions that the rate of pay for 16-, 17- and 18-year-olds should continue to go up when the number of people in those categories employed in the various Departments is probably less than 100.

The effect of trade unions in negotiation with Government or private employers is that rates of pay are agreed which are way above the market clearing rate; they are the result of free negotiation, a balance of arguments, trying to deal with retention and with recruitment issues, not just in the depth of recession but throughout the economic cycle.

I hope that in Committee, or, if not then, at Report stage, whatever the other merits of this Bill, clause 28 will be examined not just by those who oppose it, but by those who think that they support it. I hope that they will look at their reasons and at the effects and ask themselves whether straight abolition of the minimum pay system for 2·5 million people, no matter whether they are mainly part-time or mainly female, just on the ground of free market consistency is right.

6.45 pm

Sir Harold Walker (Doncaster, Central): The Secretary of State reminded us that it was almost exactly 13 years ago that the then Secretary of State for Employment, now Lord Prior, introduced a Bill with the statement that Conservative party policy in industrial relations was a "step by step" approach. On that occasion I said to the House from the Dispatch Box that that statement was not an off-the-cuff piece of rhetoric but a declaration of war on the trade unions—the salami tactic of cutting union power down slice by slice. The Bill before the House today is yet another step in that continuous, unabated process, handed down from Minister to Minister like some sacred Chingford principle, in pursuit of Lord Tebbit's once declared aim of "neutering" the unions.

The Secretary of State suggested that the great improvement in industrial relations as measured by the fall in the incidence of days lost owing to industrial disputes was testimony to the effectiveness of the law that had been passed. I suggest to her that, as has been suggested by some of my hon. Friends, the reality is that the enormous growth in unemployment has been the chastening discipline. If she wants to bandy figures, she said that in

1979 a total of 13 million days' production were lost due to industrial disputes. I ask her to set against that the fact that this year there will be at least 100 million days' production lost due to unemployment.

Mr. Dobson: I think that my hon. Friend may be underestimating; it is, after all, 4 million a day.

Sir Harold Walker: My hon. Friend is right to correct my arithmetic and I am grateful to him.

We welcome some of the clauses in the Bill: the provisions applying to pregnant women at work, the written statement of terms and conditions of employment, the health and safety provisions and the transfer of undertakings provisions. I thought that the Secretary of State was less than generous, however, when she said that these were all measures being introduced for the first time. It was the Employment Protection Act 1975 which made the first provision for maternity pay and maternity leave and which first introduced the obligation on employers to provide a written statement of the terms and conditions of employment. The present Bill, in a very welcome way, extends those provisions to other groups.

I am astonished that nothing has been said about clause 26, relating to the application to the public sector of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations, made under the acquired rights directive. I read that, following publication of the Bill and as a result of court action being pursued against the Government by the European Commission, legal experts believe that the compulsory competitive tendering system is on the edge of collapse. Apparently the European Commission has petitioned the European court to rule that the United Kingdom Government have been wrong to exclude the public sector from the Transfer of Undertakings Regulations. That is reflected in the Bill before us today. The Commission is also pursuing action, as I understand it, to determine that the directive applies prior to the introduction of the Bill in the House—that is, retrospectively.

Until those matters are resolved, the policy of compulsory competitive tendering seems to be in total disarray. Apparently, the Department of the Environment says that for the time being it is for each local authority to decide in each case whether its proposals amount to a transfer under TUPE, but how can they do that in the absence of firm, clear guidelines? In the event of their decision being proved later to have been a wrong judgment, who picks up the tab for compensation claims?

The Government will be aware that a recent decision of the European court found that where a member state had failed to implement a directive it was for that Government to recompense individuals who had lost out. I wonder just how many workers have lost their jobs or had their terms and conditions of employment significantly worsened because of compulsory competitive tendering. Presumably, if the Commission wins its case, there will be retrospection at least to the beginning of compulsory competitive tendering. As one legal expert put it in *The Independent* last Friday, the Commission appears to have driven a coach and horses through compulsory competitive tendering.

As has been said, clause 11 appears to give a qualified right for any individual to join any trade union of his choice. I wonder whether the Secretary of State thought that through. I thought that if there was one point in the industrial relations controversy on which there was some consensus, it was the structure of the trade union movement. I thought that there was general agreement in the House that it would be for the benefit of industrial relations if there were fewer unions—not fewer trade unionists because I am in favour of more trade unionists. Many of the union mergers in recent years have been welcomed, not least by employers.

The Government now seem to be going in the contrary direction because the proposals will inevitably encourage the formation of small, breakaway unions with a consequent proliferation of the inter-union conflict which so harmed industrial relations in the past. I thought that we had seen the last of that.

Furthermore, the proposals will lead to an unwelcome fragmentation of collective bargaining. The Government are not concerned about that because they do not believe in collective bargaining. It seems that the word "collective" has acquired unfavourable connotations, like the word "society". Things are good if they are done by one person. It is like the quotation from "Animal Farm":

> "Four legs good, two legs bad."

The Government seem to say, "individual good, collective bad." The Government are against collective bargaining, so they will not worry too much about the fragmentation.

It has been said that trade union membership is effective only in so far as it is accompanied by recognition for bargaining purposes by the employer. The question has been asked and deserves an answer: to what extent will employers be obliged to recognise the union of the employees' free choice? Throughout my experience in industry, people could join any union they wanted. The problem was always in getting recognition by the employer.

Clause 19 invites any Tom, Dick or Harry to take legal action if he feels that he is being affected by a dispute, no matter how remote his interests might be. Industrial disputes are difficult enough to resolve in most cases without third-party intervention or the deliberations of the courts. The proposal is an open invitation to the frivolous litigant and it is a potential disaster for those who have to manage industrial relations.

I will respect the obligation to keep to the time limit for those who are to follow. I join those who have made comments on the wages councils and I link those comments with my comments on collective bargaining. I note in passing the comment of the British Institute of Management, which said:

> "In the middle of a recession the Government surely has higher priorities than abolition of Wages Councils and new union curbs."

It is not only the wages councils which have been the subject of attack over the years. Since 1979, the Conservative party has sought to destroy anything that provided any protection for the weakest, most vulnerable and most poorly paid in our society. The fair wages resolutions were scrapped. Section 8 of the Terms and Conditions of Employment Act 1959 was scrapped. Schedule 11 to the Employment Protection Act 1975 was swept away. The Road Haulage Wages Act 1938 was swept away. We sought to declare war on low pay, but the Conservatives are making war on the low paid. The Government have renounced International Labour Organisation convention No. 94 which required Governments and their contractors to behave like good employers.

[Sir Harold Walker]

I make it clear, if I have not done so in my earlier intervention, that I am not in the ranks of those who seek to preserve into perpetuity every wages council. I believe that the best way to improve the terms and conditions of employment is through collective bargaining conducted by strong trade unions with responsible employers and organisations.

The Government are hostile to collective bargaining, as they have made clear by deliberately filleting from the terms of reference of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service anything which applies to collective bargaining. When ACAS was established, having been proposed by Michael Foot, it was intended that it should be a conciliation and arbitration service—full stop. I persuaded him that it should have a wider role than the previous Commission for Industrial Relations had had. I suggested that it should look more widely at matters concerned with collective bargaining so that it could facilitate the development of good industrial relations through collective bargaining. Now the Government are sweeping all of that aside.

The Government may not stop at wages councils because there is yet another step to be taken—the abolition of the agricultural wages boards. The Secretary of State has kept silent about that. Will she give us an assurance that those boards and the millions who are protected by them will not be sacrificed as all the other protections have been?

There may be occasions when individual wages councils are an impediment to the growth of collective bargaining and to effective trade union roles. The existing statutory framework allows for that and makes provision for it. The provisions in the Bill are unnecessary. In circumstances in which the Government have deliberately impeded the development of alternative protection, the wholesale abolition of the councils can only be regarded as the action of people who are callously indifferent to the evil consequences of their actions.

Like much else in the Bill, clause 28 is yet another step in the sustained and deliberately cynical policy of attacking the hard-won rights of working people, weakening their trade unions and undermining collective bargaining. I look forward to the day when a Labour Government will sweep away the odious elements in a succession of anti-trade union laws introduced by the Conservative party and replace them with fair and equitable provisions which will not only encourage good industrial relations but will enhance the working lives of millions of our people.

6.55 pm

Sir Michael Neubert (Romford): The right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central (Sir H. Walker), whose authority in these matters I readily recognise, may not agree that trade union reform has been the single most effective and least disputed achievement of the Conservative Government since 1979. There have been many other remarkable and radical changes in those years, each attracting its passionate advocates and equally vociferous opponents. Some of the developments have been tarnished by the passage of time, whereas others take on a different aspect in changing circumstances. All are open to question by thrusting revisionists, writers of political memoirs and my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden). Hon. Members should read *The Daily Telegraph* today.

There is no question but that for the majority of people, not least members of trade unions, the reform of the unions has been seen as an unqualified success. Conservative candidates in the recent general election were able to campaign on the issue confident in the knowledge that in 1991 we saw the lowest number of days lost due to strikes since records began one hundred years earlier. The significance of that fact was not lost on the British people, and it was a major factor [illegible] their decision to re-elect the Conservative Government.

That fact was also a major factor in the decision of so many foreign companies to invest in our country. It is not simply a matter of getting a foot in the door of the European Community. There are 11 other countries in which such a door could be found. The significant fact is not only that we are members of the European Community, but that we have a good industrial climate in which new enterprises can prosper. I give many thanks to the Conservative Government for that and for the Bill.

Despite the massive advances in the past 13 years, reform of the unions remains unfinished business. Because of the extent to which the proposals will have an impact on industry generally, I must declare an interest as an adviser to the Federation of Master Builders.

I welcome the Bill, which I see as a further step in the right direction and I congratulate my colleagues in the Government on bringing it forward so soon after our return from the summer recess. The Bill introduces what I see as new safeguards. It contains safeguards for the community. Labour Members do not talk much about the general public except in passing references to Tom, Dick and Harry—a masculine view of the public. To me, the proposal to require notice of seven days before a strike is undertaken is of immense value. I welcomed the proposal the day it was announced, especially as Londoners have suffered more than most from such strikes, especially on their railways and other transport systems.

London is our capital city. It has a complex commercial and industrial society, so it needs protection. For some years I advocated that essential services should be required not to undertake strike action and that such an undertaking should be a condition of the contract of employment. If that is not to be, the Bill gives at least some protection against the hazard of strikes called without notice which can disrupt the lives of so many innocent parties. At least there will now be one week's notice.

I do not want to comment too much on an individual strike. However, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), the Opposition spokesman, is a member of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers. London again faces a tube strike. We have forgotten what it is like to face such disruption to our everyday lives. Such a strike would be a very real prospect if it had not been for previous legislation. The fact that the Bill will strengthen the legislation is very welcome.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that, as a member of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, I am following the London Transport saga with some interest. If the hon. Gentleman casts his mind back to 1972, when a Conservative Government first insisted on ballots being held before industrial action could take place, he will recollect that the railwaymen, including the then National Union of Railwaymen, were the first to be balloted on industrial action and that the result was that the vast majority of railway workers were hardened in their view that a strike was necessary.

If the hon. Gentleman is not careful, he will fall into the trap of overlooking the fact that, in the current dispute with London Transport, once a ballot has taken place, it will be extremely difficult to get people back to work—despite agreements reached by their leaders. The hon. Gentleman should not regard a ballot as a panacea or think that it will solve the current industrial problems in London.

Sir Michael Neubert: As a representative of parliamentary democracy, I have nothing against ballots: I welcome them because they reflect people's free democratic choice, even if it is a mistaken choice. That is important, in strikes as in anything else.

I welcome the creation of a commissioner for protection against unlawful industrial action—although the phrase does not exactly trip off the tongue. Something more succinct such as "ombudsman" might have been more helpful. I am interested to know how his office—I assume that the commissioner will be a man, although that may not be so—will be funded. How will the work be publicised, and how easy will it be for the individual citizen to take advantage of the commissioner's services? Under the control of pollution legislation, we have an "aggrieved citizen" procedure. It is there in law, but how many individuals are able and confident enough to use it? I shall be interested to know how the commissioner's office will work, what financial assistance will be given, and whether advice on proceeding to the court to seek the necessary injunction to stop the action will be included.

The Bill also contains safeguards for union members. I fully approve of a fully postal ballot, independently scrutinised, before every strike. That is a welcome advance. I naturally support protection against fraud and abuse in trade union elections. Presumably no Opposition Member will oppose that. I welcome the protection of individual union members against the mismanagement of their union's finances. That is another important consideration. I also welcome people's freedom to choose the union of their choice. Why should not trade unionists, like other members of the public, have choice extended in matters which are so important to them?

In April, the Conservative party enjoyed its fourth successive election victory. To find a precedent for a fourth successive general election victory, we have to go back as far as 1826. The general strike of 1926—100 years later—provides another landmark in politics, and a legacy on which attention is focusing again today. The year after the general strike—this, perhaps, explains some of the Opposition's sensitivity regarding what are apparently innocuous proposals—the Tory Government introduced contracting in, whereby workers had to make a positive decision to join a union and pay its dues. Union funds suffered a sharp decrease in consequence. I am sure that that anxiety lies behind many of the comments and much of the controversy that we have heard today.

After the war, the triumphant Labour Government returned to contracting out. The resultant boost to union membership and finances has directly and indirectly been a source of great strength to the Labour party ever since. Few workers had either the initiative or the inclination to drop out or deliberately to withdraw from union membership. It took character and courage to set oneself apart from one's fellow workers on the shop floor; most, very reasonably, thought that union dues were a small price to pay for a quiet life.

Let us acknowledge it: the Conservative party also found the issue too hot to handle, and confined itself to campaigns to persuade trade unionists to contract out through the established procedures. It had little success. More important, however, when it came to general elections, increasing numbers of unionists started to vote Tory and have stayed Tory. This growing support amongst unionists, nominally affiliated to the Labour party and included in the block votes brandished by trade union leaders at the Labour party conference, gave legitimacy and authority to Conservative proposals for reform. It was a vital element in the public acceptance of these proposals. Unions were seen as Militant-dominated and politically motivated, and the closed shop as a denial of liberty.

The proposal in the Bill that has caused a frisson to run through the Labour party and the trade union movement is that workers will be protected against the unauthorised deduction of subscriptions from their salaries or wages. I thought it significant that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras spent so much time on that apparently minor matter. Under a system called "check-off", which would not mean much to most people—it might be confused with a well-known Russian playwright—union dues can be deducted without a worker's knowledge or consent. In future, that will not be permissible unless the worker has authorised such deductions in writing within the previous three years——

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Sir Michael Neubert: We have had enough interventions on that point and can forgo yet another.

In future, it will not be permissible to deduct dues unless the worker has authorised such deductions in writing within the previous three years and has not subsequently withdrawn the authority, which can be done at any time.

That is not, of course, a return to the full-blooded contracting in of 65 years ago, but for Labour's paymasters it is too close for comfort. They see that the new freedom could make significant inroads into union membership and funding. At a time when union membership—especially in manufacturing, and as a result of unemployment—has fallen well below its peak, that could be a further and, in some cases, fatal blow. The Labour party for its part—anxious, for political reasons, to present itself as independent of the unions, yet heavily dependent on them for its income, individual membership being next to negligible—is equally agitated. We have seen signs of that agitation on the Opposition Benches today.

Socialist spokesmen can therefore be expected to attack the proposal as a Tory plot to finish them off by cutting off their cash. It is true that in a parliamentary democracy which, to date, has rejected the idea of public funding of political parties, it is important that the current principal Opposition party should not be denied adequate resources when the current party of government is assured of very

[Sir Michael Neubert]

substantial contributions from business. Such considerations have no doubt played their part in the past in holding Conservative Governments back from returning to contracting in, and will no doubt do so in the future.

Yet, in isolation, the proposal is entirely justified. Conservatives believe in a role for unions but we believe equally strongly that a worker should have the freedom to join a union or not to join a union as he or she wishes. If it is to be a completely free choice, no automatic mechanism or administrative convenience is acceptable. Such arrangements are part of the past. There is now a different and healthier relationship between employers and unions, and between unions and their members. Each partnership can make common cause in its own interests, a benefit long enjoyed in the United States and west Germany and an essential feature of agreements reached by Japanese companies investing here. It follows that a union should be prepared to stand on its merits and provide positive incentives to recruitment, rather than rely on inertia.

There is the further fear for the Labour party that the political levy may also be subject to a switch to "contracting in". That does not look likely—at least, not this time around. The same arguments apply, however, and are equally valid.

The next few years are bound to witness changes in the political landscape if there is to be any feasible alternative to a Conservative Government—not that I am looking for such an alternative, the House will understand. The relationship between the Labour party and the trade unions will be among the most crucial of those changes—from which will perhaps emerge a more self-confident Labour movement which could cope with a freely contracted political levy. Until that time, the Bill—soon, I hope, to be on the statute book—is a welcome further step towards a more modern system of industrial relations.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I remind hon. Members that speeches are subject to a 10-minute time limit.

7.8 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): As the Secretary of State will recognise, the Liberal Democrats and their predecessor parties have supported many of the Conservative Government's trade union reforms. In some cases, we have pressed ahead—calling, for example, for the abolition of the closed shop in advance of the introduction of Government legislation. It is important to make that statement at the outset, because the Government have not made a case that justifies further substantial and detailed interference in the working of trade unions. There are other measures in the Bill for which no case has been made.

People who would normally be on the Government's side—for example, employers' organisations—have described the measure as "a Bill too far". *The Economist*, in a more graphic heedline, referred to it as "kicking the corpse". It seems strange that the Government have an unbridled enthusiasm for interfering in the minute details of the workings of effectively private bodies, although operating very much in the public sphere, in a way which they would regard as unacceptable for almost any other organisation.

The hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) indicated what he thought were the concerns of the Labour Opposition. The Conservative party should bear in mind the dangers of provoking a backlash as and when there is a change of Government, which there will have to be if British democracy is to survive much longer. The arguments being put forward by Conservatives may be used, for example, to regulate the donations of companies to political parties and in other ways to regulate sources of revenue that the Conservative party previously depended upon.

As has already been said by several hon. Members, some of the better proposals in the Bill are there not because of the commitment of the Government but because of the requirement of the European Community. Indeed, the right hon. Lady the Secretary of State bore fine testimony to the strictures that were pointed out by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), in the recent debate on the Maastricht treaty, of a Minister who comes to the Dispatch Box and claims the credit for a number of measures which her Government have bitterly fought almost at every stage.

It is worth detailing that the provisions on maternity leave, contracts of employment, health and safety, equal treatment and the transfer of undertakings are all being introduced in order to fulfil European directives rather than the spontaneous desire of Her Majesty's Government to provide those benefits for citizens of the United Kingdom.

The measure at the heart of the Bill which has rightly attracted most attention and adverse comment is the proposition to abolish wages councils. It is well known that the Minister of State has made no secret at any time of his opposition to wages councils and has never bothered to speak in code about it, even though some of his colleagues did.

The case for abolition has not been made, and the timing is cynical in the extreme. To introduce such a measure at a time of record unemployment, the worst industrial downturn since the 1920s, when people in the unprotected sector are facing real cuts, and to suggest that those on the lowest wages should lose the benefit of the minimal protection afforded by wages councils is vindictive. I echo the comments of other hon. Members that it is nauseating to hear highly paid Ministers and even more highly paid corporate executives demanding that the lowest-paid people should carry the greatest burden of the recession. That is not defensible; it is neither a moral nor a justifiable stance.

There is no evidence that the abolition of wages councils will create jobs. That statement is made without substantiation: there is no firm evidence either way. The suggestion which equates the earnings of people in the wages council sector with pin money is offensive and unjustified. It ignores the changing circumstances brought about partly by social change and partly by the effects of the recession, which mean that, in almost every case, the money brought in by people in that sector, even if the majority are women, is essential to the welfare of the families who depend on it, whether or not the wage earners are the main breadwinners. Their partners may be facing or suffering the consequences of redundancy.

It is utterly offensive that, because women may not be seen as the breadwinners in given households, they should be paid less in spite of the merit of the jobs they are carrying out. Anyone who suggests that that is a high moral position to take in the last decade of the 20th century is trying to drive us back to an era that we all thought had gone for ever.

Obvious statements have been made about the abolition of wages councils leading inevitably to more people seeking more benefit from family credit and income support. It seems extraordinary that the Government should accept that. It is well known that, as Liberal Democrats, we do not share the Labour party's commitment to a national minimum wage, but we accept the need for a structure which provides people with minimum incomes and we accept that wages councils are essential in those sectors of the economy where people have no other protection.

The Government seem to be setting the careers service up not for simple privatisation but for unclear piecemeal privatisation. At present, we have a partnership whereby local education authorities are required to provide a careers service and the Secretary of State provides the inspectorate to ensure that it is done properly. The Bill proposes that the Government, through three Secretaries of State, will take total control of and responsibility for the careers service, with no inspectorate or accountability requirement.

In those circumstances, will the Minister tell the House how the quality of service will be assured, what mechanism will be used to ensure that every child has access to an impartial, professional careers service, and how we can be sure that it will not be suborned by the commercial needs of those running it to steer people into sectors where they require trainees rather than meeting the needs of the individual, whether a young person or a mature adult? Can the Minister explain how transferring the service from local authorities to the Secretary of State will increase local accountability? Does he no longer accept that local accountability is desirable or necessary?

If I may anticipate the suggestion that local boards of businessmen will be appointed by the relevant Secretary of State, that is not the accountability which people want. Such board members would not be elected, nor would they be required to explain their objectives.

Perhaps the most controversial provision is in clause 12, the check-off clause to which the hon. Member for Romford referred. Superficially it may be reasonable, but it seems to be moving into detailed regulation of trade union membership which goes far beyond simple contracting in and contracting out. If Conservative Members were as assiduous in calling for deregulation in that sector of the economy as they are in others, I do not believe that they would support the clause.

It is ironic that even employers are making the point that the clause will increase their administrative burden, yet apparently the Government are determined to impose additional regulations on employers against their express will. Time precludes me from quoting them, but many employers' organisations have expressed their opposition to the clause.

Clause 19 is a recipe for wanton litigation by people with no involvement in industrial disputes. It goes completely against the grain of trying not to clog up court time with unnecessary litigation.

The Bill is not necessary. It does not fulfil the aspirations of the people. It will do nothing for workers' rights, nothing for partnership and nothing for profit sharing, and we will vote against it.

7.18 pm

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): I am grateful for the opportunity to address the House as my involvement in and support for democratic trade unionism goes back many decades. I am a believer in democratic trade unionism. I started my career quite some time ago in the car and car component industry, at Fort Dunlop near the area which I now represent, in quality control on the shop floor. At one of the many meetings of the Select Committee on Employment that I have attended, Opposition Members found it difficult to understand that I had been among the steam, the smoke and the carbon black of the tyre industry. They also found it difficult to understand that a Conservative Member knew something about manufacturing industry hands on and about the real effect of trade unionism.

I am glad to say that my career progressed reasonably rapidly, and I found myself making quite significant decisions in the companies I worked for about introducing new products and having to cope with supply to the car industry.

The problems created at the time by the undemocratic practices of the trade unions were legion. People who remember Birmingham and Coventry in the early 1960s and 1970s will understand that, after 20 years in the industry, I became so frustrated that my colleagues and I could not manage. That frustration was my main reason for wanting to become a Member of Parliament. Decisions were taken capriciously by a small key core of trade union leaders and not by the lads with whom I had worked, who I knew so well and who were the real trade union members. They had no democracy. I believe in trade unionism and I believe that they should have, and now have, democracy.

It was therefore with great joy that I won my seat in 1979. Within 18 months, I was grateful to become Parliamentary Private Secretary to the then Secretary of State for Employment, now Lord Tebbit, who was himself a dedicated and experienced trade unionist. Following Lord Prior, we introduced various Bills in the 1980s, including the so-called Tebbit Bill and the secret ballot provisions. We provided trade union members with the democratic structure that they now enjoy. From Lord Prior, Lord Tebbit and others, we achieved that step by step.

I was a member of most of the committees in the early days when we made those changes. It was hard in a sense, because one understood the resentment felt by those who were affected by the changes. However, one was buoyed up by the strong support of those who wanted to see decisions on strikes in particular taken by the people who were intimately involved—the trade union members.

That is why, with that long experience, I welcome the Bill. I also welcome it as the joint chairman of the all-party motor industry group. The motor industry needs all the help it can get. It has increased productivity magnificently. It is now such an attractive prospect in terms of productivity and excellent and unrivalled industrial relations that we have inward investment from Japanese

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companies like Nissan, Honda and Toyota, which would not have happened without the Conservative legislation of the early 1980s.

That legislation led to the recognition that trade union workers must have democratic processes and be able to have secret ballots and it has led to our current superb record. Without that legislation, we would not have had that inward investment. It would have gone to France or Germany, and cars would have been imported instead of being built in this country.

It is not just a matter of the front line with the motor car itself. There is a knock-on effect into the car component and subsidiary industries. Many hundreds of thousands of jobs, particularly in the west midlands, depend on the car industry—for example, on the success of Peugeot. Peugeot is one of my constituency employers, because many of the people who work at the Ryton plant live in my constituency. Peugeot received a Queen's Award for industry in 1991 in the teeth not just of our United Kingdom recession, but of an international recession.

It is magnificent to know that many of the Peugeot 405s that we see driving around Paris and elsewhere in France are made in Coventry. That achievement was made possible only by the high productivity and good industrial relations of the company. There is a similar record at Rover and Land Rover. Land Rover's increased production of the Discovery is a landmark victory in the teeth of the recession. Again, that has been made possible only by good industrial relations created by Conservative legislation in the early 1980s.

Therefore, a further step is excellent. In response to those who believe that the CBI does not support the Bill, I will quote from the CBI brief:

> "The CBI fully endorses the Government's continued commitment to the periodic review of the law governing industrial relations.
>
> The CBI welcomes the new Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill as a measure which contains some useful proposals in this area."

The CBI has some detailed arguments to which I will refer briefly. I wholeheartedly welcome the main provisions of the Bill. I welcome members' ability to obtain information about a union's financial affairs. That is surely their right. All clubs, even local football clubs, have an annual general meeting at which the members are allowed to examine the accounts. Such examination may be time-consuming for the chairman and treasurer as the members go through the accounts in great detail. Surely trade unionists in a modern society should have the same right.

It seems eminently sensible to give individuals the choice to ensure that they are happy to be members of their union. There has been much discussion about what is or is not legal in respect of the check-off arrangements. Perhaps the Minister will clarify the existing law and what the proposals will mean in terms of extra protection for trade union members.

Proper notice of strike ballots and strike notice are absolutely vital in furthering the process of democracy and the involvement of trade union members—not trade union leaders. A manager of a company or a trade union president has responsibilities, in the case of the company manager to the shareholders and the employees, and in the case of the union president to the trade union members. The union president is there to represent the members, not as an ideological right to pursue political aims. The Bill adds to the step-by-step process towards democracy.

The proposals in respect of the citizen's right to restrain unlawful industrial action are excellent, and are part of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's citizens charter. All hon. Members are aware of frustrated people who come to their advice surgeries on Fridays and Saturdays complaining about the lack of an ombudsman or tribunal to help them. However, I have a word of caution, and perhaps the Minister will refer to this point when he replies to the debate.

We also see people at our advice surgeries who will never accept no for an answer. As good constituency Members, we pursue such matters to the best of our abilities. However, some people might be capricious in taking such action. I should be grateful if the Minister will reassure me that unlawful industrial action will be clearly defined, so that only those with a good, clear case against unlawful action will be able to approach the ombudsman.

I should like to make many more points, but I am conscious that my time is up. As my heart and life have been in the motor car and car components industries, I welcome the Bill. As they are the dominant industries in the midlands, my constituents will also welcome it.

7.27 pm

Mr. Terry Rooney (Bradford, North): The Bill has finally surfaced 18 months after the Green Paper was published. It is significant that during that time, none of the consultations have been published. There has been no improvement in the knowledge of employment law on the Government Benches. As we have seen tonight, Conservative Members are not even familiar with contract law. There has been no improvement in the understanding of how trade unions work, their aims and objectives and what their members require of them. Not to worry, we should perhaps expect nothing other than that.

There are significant additions to the Bill which were not included in the Green Paper, one of which is the further centralisation to Secretaries of State in London of powers and duties previously held by local education authorities with respect to the careers service. What is the thinking behind that? Is it meant to provide additional funds to the training and enterprise councils to meet their present deficit in funding? Or is it even more insidious so that we will see the likes of Manpower and Brook Street Bureau providing career service advice on the basis of which client company pays the highest fees instead of on the basis of providing the necessary advice that young people require? Whatever the source of that career service advice, there seems to be a lack of objectivity. Perhaps our good friend the Minister will deal with that matter when he replies to the debate.

Much has been said about the abolition of the wages councils, which comes as no surprise to Opposition Members although it was not in the Green Paper or in either of the last two Conservative party manifestos—but there again nor is so much else. That addition to the Bill is simply an extension of the vitriol and dogma that we witnessed at this year's Conservative party conference, when generalisation and stereotyping about certain targets sought to divert people from the real state of the economy, of the nation and of the misery that people are suffering.

The abolition of the wages councils is also consistent with last week's autumn statement, in which about 5 million public sector workers were told that they will suffer a cut in pay in real terms during the next 12 months. If there is to be a cut in the public sector, there has to be equality with the private sector and the abolition of wages councils will ensure that everyone suffers in the same way.

The minimum wage argument is strange. When one considers that billions of pounds seem to be paid out by that mythical person, the taxpayer, in family credit, housing benefit, poll tax rebates and various other income-related benefits, I suggest that the state is operating a minimum wage in one form or another. Surely the responsibility for paying a decent living wage should be transferred to employers, in exactly the same way that the responsibility for statutory sick pay was transferred to them. It is okay for the taxpayer to pick up certain elements but not others.

The trade union-related elements of the Bill are dishonest. They are born out of malice and ignorance. They claim to be an extension of individual rights, but they will turn out to be a diminution. They seek to destroy totally the collective entity that is trade unions. The Government seem happy to see all employees as helpless individuals without the strength of collective bargaining and union recognition.

Is it not strange that as a society we deem it right and proper to have a taxation system, in which I include the national insurance fund, so that collective provision can be made for public services which would not be open to us as individuals? Even the Government do not challenge that. When it comes to rights in the workplace, that is to be denied. If we extended that principle to national defence, it would seem that we should make the army, the air force and the navy redundant and supply every household with a pea shooter.

Although it might be a frightening thought, let us assume that the Cabinet is the employer and that the Bill is law. Let us consider—*[Interruption.]* Did the Minister wish to intervene?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): No; I was talking to my hon. Friend the Whip.

Mr. Rooney: I just wanted to check as I thought the hon. Gentleman might be trying to learn something.

Consider the notorious and somewhat failed rebellion of anti-European persons on the Government Benches a couple of weeks ago. Let us imagine that the Bill applied to them and that they had to give the Government Whips seven days notice of their industrial action and of the names and addresses of the persons involved. They would have had to give three days notice of the exact motion that they would be framing. Can one imagine what would have been the tactics—the arm twisting and pleadings—of that wonderful employer known as the Cabinet, that so-called good employer? What would have happened if it were a bad employer? Really the idea does not stand credence.

Individuals should have the right to belong to a trade union, the right for that union to be recognised, to negotiate for them and to represent them. On several occasions, the Government have been asked why they do not legislate for cases when 100 per cent. of the work force has joined a trade union to make the employer recognise that that union has bargaining rights. They have ducked the issue on every occasion and have said that such bargaining is separate and concerns individual rights. That is nonsense.

I know of one example. Surprisingly, we have some good employers in Bradford, who encourage trade union membership. What is perhaps even more surprising is that they recognise unions, and negotiate with them daily. However, we have our share of bad employers. One company has about 38 employees on an average wage of £68 for a 44—hour week. Every employee joined a trade union and sought its recognition. The employers persistently refused to recognise the union. After two years, several industrial tribunal actions had been won by trade union representatives on behalf of people dismissed by the employer for engaging in union activities, and the employer finally recognised the union. The employees now enjoy wages of £160 a week.

The dishonesty of the Bill is perhaps best reflected in a document published by the Department of Trade and Industry. Probably no one in this Chamber has seen the document because it is available only at our foreign embassies and at overseas trade fairs. The document says, "Invest in Britain", and that Britain has the best anti-union laws in Europe, the lowest wage rates of the 10 industrialised countries and there are no restrictions on taking capital out of the country——

Mr. Ian Bruce: No, that is not correct.

Mr. Rooney: You might not like it, but get a copy of the document, pal. I will see you afterwards.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There are no pals here, only hon. Members.

Mr. Rooney: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The one good piece of news in that document is that we have the cheapest mined coal in Europe and the greatest energy resources, although the news does not seem to have reached the President of the Board of Trade——

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rooney: No.

The truth of the Bill, seen in conjunction with the past 13 years of trade union legislation, is the Government's determination for Britain to be a low skill, low wage, low esteem and no representation economy—a sweat-shop economy, which is simply the assembly unit for the Japans, Germanies and Americas of the world.

That situation was reflected throughout the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s in the textile industry, which sought to survive in west Yorkshire on the back of low wages. We all know what happened to the bulk of that industry. The textile firms which survived invested in machinery, equipment and training and in paying people decent wages. The surviving companies are a testament to what the strength of management and unions can do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's 10 minutes are up.

7.37 pm

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): I am grateful to be called so early in the debate. I shall follow the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney) with the brief remark that it seems strange that he should quote a document incorrectly and that he does not have a copy of it with him. He was probably trying to say that Britain has the lowest

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unit labour costs and not the lowest wages within the European Community, because everything else he said was patently rubbish.

I wonder why the Labour party did not rush to its feet to welcome so many elements of the Bill. So often, what is described by Opposition parties as an attack on trade unions is benefiting the rights of trade unionists to ensure that they are properly looked after at every stage of their membership, which is what is contained in the Bill. For the trade union movement to say that there is no requirement in law for someone to have to sign to authorise deductions from their wages, and to spend so much time objecting to the fact that that is contained in the Bill, seems inconsistent. It demonstrates the anomaly by which, apparently, by giving somebody a contract——

Mr. Miller *rose*——

Mr. Bruce: With only 10 minutes in which to speak, I cannot give way.

We must sort out the law and make sure that, in future, people are clear precisely what happens in such circumstances. It may come as a surprise to Opposition Members to learn that, in briefing me personally, the TUC told me clearly that it wants to ensure that its members regularly receive from the unions to which they belong a statement every time the deduction is increased. That is not attacking trade unions but ensuring that they keep good contact with their membership.

There are many examples of people who have paid money to trade unions, and the link between the members of the union has been the purchase of union cards to enable them to join different organisations. Such examples have often been catalogued in the House. In other words, we are engaged in a sensible operation to tidy up the law to ensure that trade union members who are paying for a service can keep control of their unions.

There must, of course, be a right of choice if people wish to join other trade unions. That right exists today, assuming that another union will accept their membership. The TUC rules prevent unions from taking on members in areas where they do not normally have negotiating rights. Only by a trade union member knowing precisely what is going on can he be certain that the union to which he has become affiliated is doing a good job for him. Otherwise, he has no choice, especially if he cannot change unions.

I have been anxious to take part in the debate to correct some misconceptions about wages councils. Any statistical analysis of the evidence shows that wages councils have never worked. Indeed, the experience of many groups of workers who have been removed from the so-called protection of wages councils is that their wages have risen faster.

If Opposition Members are wondering why a Conservative Member should be urging the abolition of wages councils, I assure them that there are circumstances in which it is sensible for people to decide, in free collective bargaining, to work for lower wages. No hon. Member has ever objected to the fact that, in law, if one works for oneself, one can pay oneself 2p an hour. It is the right of anybody who sets up a business to take less pay to make a go of it. I lost £9,000 in the first year of setting up in business, and as a self-employed person I worked between 60 and 80 hours a week.

Why should it be permissible to work for less for oneself, whereas a business man who is in trouble, or who is trying to start up with few resources, cannot negotiate with his workers and say, "I cannot pay what I believe to be a sensible living wage, but I can afford to make a start, or to keep the business going, if you are prepared to take lower wages"? By that means it might be possible to create or retain jobs that would not otherwise exist.

The sort of wages that I was able to offer when I started my business attracted only women, and the only people with ability who applied were women. Yet within two years of setting up, the wages of all my staff doubled, and both men and women applied to work for the company. That happened simply because we showed that we could create business and employment, and only by such means can wages be paid.

Labour Members seem to think that, by some magical process, every employer can afford a certain minimum wage. That is not the case. Nor is it the case that employers are grinding their employees into the dust. The vast majority of employers would never attempt to do that, because a ground—down worker is not productive. Almost every employer I know would like to pay more, but must increase productivity to enable higher wages to be paid.

That is why we must take a realistic view of spending £3 million on wages councils. We must act to free up a section of the labour market. I guarantee that, when the Bill becomes law, the statistics will show that no harm will have been done to the average worker, that we shall have created jobs in the way we did in the 1980s, and that yet more bureaucracy will have been swept away. The measure represents an excellent move forward, and I am surprised that Opposition Members have not appreciated its excellence.

7.45 pm

Ms. Angela Eagle (Wallasey): I wish at the outset to declare an interest. I am in the process of becoming sponsored by the Confederation of Health Service Employees, a trade union for which it was my privilege to work for seven years before coming to this House. The modest sums involved in such sponsorship never go into the pocket of the hon. Member concerned.

The Bill is the sixth piece of legislation since 1979 designed to regulate industrial relations. Indeed, we have been in a state of almost permanent legislative revolution of which Chairman Mao would have been proud. While the Government have used the rhetoric of freedom and fairness as justification for their actions, their real agenda has been the systematic destruction of rights at work, coupled with the deliberate weakening of trade unions' ability to resist. Their aim has been to deregulate the labour market and to bring back exploitative cheap labour to these shores. In that aim, they have certainly succeeded.

The Government will tolerate the existence of trade unions so long as they are impotent. They will allow a theoretical right to strike while ensuring that that right is so couched in a plethora of complicated rules and regulations as to render it practically impossible. If the unthinkable should happen and a strike should occur, the Government have sanctioned victimisation by selective dismissal to dispose of the miscreants. They have replaced bargaining in the work place with fear.

There are, in the Government's bizarre view of the world, no bad employers—only evil trade unions which manipulate their members by forcing them to go on strike against their will. Myths about the behaviour of trade unions which live on in Tory demonology have little or no bearing on reality, yet they have provided the Government with scant justification to dash headlong into legislative assault and battery, of which the Bill is another example.

The myth persists on the Government Benches, for example, that trade union leaders force their members, like some sort of conscript army, to go on strike. After seven years of working for COHSE, I assure the House that the truth is exactly the opposite. The Government concluded that, by forcing trade union members to ballot, they would almost destroy industrial action. Even so, 92 per cent. of ballots have resulted in a yes vote.

Even when the shameless Conservatives were unable to justify their next turn of the screw, we found the former Secretary of State for Employment declaring in a press release after his Green Paper had received the thumbs down:

> "Governments must be prepared not only to listen but to lead. Sometimes it is the duty of Government to take action which is in advance of opinion."

When we strip away the hypocrisy and doublespeak with which the Conservatives always deploy their argument in such debates, it becomes obvious that their legislative attacks are handsomely rewarded when the money from their paymasters in the City and business floods into Tory party coffers.

That is unregulated compared with the stringent laws governing trade union donations for political purposes. The Government have tightened up on those. Perhaps we would obtain more information about their sordid backroom deals if the Tories published their accounts in a regular and accessible way, as trade unions have done for years, even long before they were obliged to do so.

I invite the House to contrast the Conservative party's over-zealous legal regulation of trade unions with its attitude to fraud in the City, which is clearly a persistent and serious problem. The Cadbury committee, which recently investigated the matter, concluded that the guiding principles should be, first, that self-regulation——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Bill deals fairly specifically with trade unions. I am not sure where the Cadbury committee comes into that. Will the hon. Lady return to the Bill?

Ms. Eagle: I am exploring the difference between the Conservative party's treatment of the voluntary regulation of City fraud and the over-regulation of trade unions. Is that in order? I should like your advice.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What the hon. Lady said at one point was out of order; that is why I gently suggested that she returned to the Bill. I hope that we can now move on.

Ms. Eagle: I hope that I have made my point about the Government's different treatment of different parts of our society.

The extent of the Government's bias against trade unions and the hollow nature of their rhetoric about freedom is summed up by the fact that virtually the only right that the Government have given working people in the past 13 years is the right to take action against their trade unions. Trade unions exist to protect people, despite what Conservative myths suggest.

People want the right to be treated fairly at work. They want the right to employment protection and decent wages and conditions. Yet the Government have systematically stripped working people of all those rights, bleating that such basic minimum standards are a burden on business. We even learned at the weekend that the Government apparently believe that the laws contained in the draft EC directive on the minimum age of work which aim to prevent the exploitation of children are also a burden on business. Next the Government will tell us that preventing children from sweeping chimneys for a pittance is an unacceptable restriction on the employer's right to manage.

The Conservative party claims that removing minimum standards and "freeing the labour market" creates employment. That is why wages councils are to be abolished. Indeed, the neo-classical theory of economics worshipped by the Conservative party predicts that result. However, no practical experience bears it out.

When 16 to 20-year-olds were removed from the protection of wages councils, their pay fell, but the rate of unemployment in that age group rose, and it is now one in five. If the Government proceed to abolish the wages councils for the 2·7 million people who are currently covered by them—80 per cent. of whom are women and the most vulnerable section of the labour force—they will achieve the same magnificent result.

The argument that deregulating the labour market creates employment is not proven. The opposite appears to be true. Where deregulation has occurred in our labour market, there is higher unemployment. Indeed, we still have mass and rising unemployment, despite the much vaunted success of the Government's employment legislation.

Conservative Members talk a great deal of cant about the benefits of the Government's employment legislation. Indeed, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), who is currently the chairman of the Conservative party, had the gall to claim in a debate on the 1990 Bill that the Government's employment legislation was the great success of their period in office. I congratulate the Conservative party on finding any success in the smoking ruin that is now Britain after 13 years of their mismanagement. However, like most of its propaganda, that assertion is not true.

Not only has the recession inhibited strike activity, but the declining level of strikes which the Government cite as proof positive of their success has been observed in almost all western countries in the same period. Those countries have achieved better results than Britain without compromising human rights, reneging on international agreements or condoning fear and victimisation in the workplace.

Another equally absurd claim was made by the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) when he was Secretary of State for Employment. In the debate on the 1990 legislation, he said that the legislation would strengthen our economy. The accuracy and sagacity of that comment fair take the breath away.

It is about time that the Government got on with providing employment and decent standards of work for

[Ms. Eagle]

British people, and stopped pursuing their political vendettas and neo-classical economic obsessions. The sooner they do so the better.

7.54 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I begin by declaring my interest as a consultant to MinOtels Great Britain Ltd.

One could say a great deal about the Bill if time allowed. We know that the Labour party is against the Bill. It has also opposed every employment Bill that we have ever introduced. It is always in favour of the Bill before last. Labour Members may not mean it when they say that, but when an election approaches they always say it. We can be fairly sure that in the fullness of time they will be against the next employment Bill and will claim that they were always in favour of this one.

Several hon. Members have concentrated on the wages councils. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) put it well when he said that we should concentrate on the wages councils tonight. I accept that there is a case to be answered. At first sight, and when examined superficially, there is a beguiling case to be made for retaining the wages councils. It sounds like a good idea to have a council to protect the poorest members of society. Then we hear that the wages councils go back to 1909. So it is bound to appeal to the innate and reactionary conservatism on the Labour Benches.

We also hear that the wages councils were introduced by Winston Churchill. That is always a good thing to say to both Opposition and Conservative Members. So at first sight the wages councils seem a good idea. The idea seems to be self evidently right and to benefit the poor. However, the idea that the wages councils help the poorest workers in our society one jot is a manifest absurdity which masquerades as a self-evident truth.

Let us consider for one moment what the wages councils are supposed to do. They work on the assumption that a Whitehall bureaucrat or somone appointed for one day a month or one day every two or three months can say to an employer, "I do not want to hear about what you can pay, the demands of your industry, your problems of recruitment or pay differentials. I have decided that the right increase for you is X per cent." When one thinks about that, one realises what a thoroughly daft idea it is.

The only proper measure of a proper wage is what an employer feels it is worth his while to pay and whether someone is prepared to work for that sum of money. If the two are out of kilter, the bargain is not struck. If the employer believes that the service that he wants performed is worth a certain sum and someone finds it attractive to perform that service at that price, a sensible wage is fixed.

Earlier in the debate a sedentary intervention was made which was probably lost because it was not responded to. It was a fair point. Someone asked whether we would work for £2·50 an hour. Many of us have worked for less than that. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] The reason why that comment incites noises on the Opposition Benches is that Opposition Members have no experience. If one comes to the House via the polytechnic route, one does not experience anything like the problems that my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) or I had starting a business or what it is like to work as an articled clerk for 50 hours a week for £6. Opposition Members have no idea about that.

Opposition Members are apparently so concerned on my behalf—I am touched—because they assume that if people are on a low wage they are there for life, locked into that wage for ever and that they will be ground down as the years go by. That is nonsense. For many people, low wages are a phase in their working life: it does not last.

Coupled with the idea that once people are on a low wage they are locked on to the misery train to the end of their days is the idea that somehow people support their families on that low wage. That is piffle. The evidence shows that 80 per cent. of people who work in occupations covered by the wages councils have either two or more earners in their home. So the idea that those who are covered by the wages councils are locked into a low pay system for life and have to support their spouse and family on it is nonsense. It simply does not work that way.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset, spoke about the evidence that supports those propositions. In this short speech I do not have time to go through all the research. As I gently said to my hon. Friend earlier, a number of authorities show what the evidence is. A study by Kaufman in 1989 and a study by Beenstock and Warburton in 1984 both said that the effect of having fixed, statutory, low minimum wages is that, ultimately, people lose their jobs. Inevitably, those were academic studies but the experience that followed deregulation in 1986 for those under the age of 21 is yet more evidence. We were told that young people's wages would go down, whereas in reality the effect was that their wages went up.

The evidence does not stop there. Even if Opposition Members are neither interested in the academic evidence that supports the proposition nor concerned about looking at the experience of 1986, Labour Members have made the point time and again that minimum wages are not in the best interests of the poor.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) has already quoted the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) saying:

> "I knew the consequences were that there would be some shake-out, any silly fool knew that".

Some people align themselves with the man on the Clapham omnibus. The hon. Gentleman aligns himself with any silly fool, but he has a point—even a silly fool would know that.

Someone who knows what he is talking about without being bullied into it is the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who has previously worked with the Low Pay Unit and is an acknowledged expert in the subject that we are discussing. He said that the employment consequences of a minimum wage

> "would be little short of disastrous".

It does not matter where one looks—at the evidence, what has happened since 1986, or what Labour Members who take the trouble to think about it say—one cannot conclude that minimum wages are in the best interests of the poor.

The system is riddled with anomalies. It is absolutely potty that the wages councils will, for instance, cover those who work with cooked meat but not raw meat, those who sell a radio but not a tape recorder, and laundries but not launderettes. All those anomalies are implicit in a system that substitutes the judgment of bureaucrats for those of the people who work in the marketplace. There is only one of two ways to deal with those inconsistencies: either we regulate everything—a Stalinist mentality is still alive and kicking among Opposition Members from time to time —or we say that it is a complete nonsense and we cannot proceed in that way. All that we can do when faced with that problem is to say that those anomalies cannot be straightened out but are implicit in the system.

There is stacks of independent commentary. For instance, editorials in newspapers like *The Times* have made the point time and again, often quoting left-wing speakers, that minimum wages simply do not help.

I should have thought that we would want to do something positive for the low paid. We should be prepared to look at something that is beguilingly attractive but ask whether, ultimately, it sets out to help those who need help. We have heard nothing about that from Labour Members tonight. If we wonder why, given the fact that there is good authority from Labour Members about the destructive effect of minimum wages, we should look at how the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) feels about the employers that we are discussing. We all know that there are bad employers but, in the experience of most of us, those are a tiny few. But not according to the hon. Gentleman. What frames his policy on behalf of the Labour party? He set it out well in Blackpool in September and was quoted in *The Independent* by Barrie Clement, labour correspondent, who, whatever else he is, is certainly no Tory hack. He made careful note of what the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras really thought about the employers who provide work opportunities in this country. He said that the hon. Gentleman described them as "rich buggers"—I, too, am offended by the language, but I am quoting—

> "who paid poverty wages to their employees".

Just in case somebody could not understand his subtlety, he apparently said with a great flourish of his beard that rich business people who pay their workers low wages were "thieving scum".

That is the attitude of Labour Front-Bench Members and what pervades those who frame their policies. With that degree of malignant mediocrity which the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras brings to the debate, is it surprising that the Opposition are not prepared to consider the evidence?

8.4 pm

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): It is not surprising that Conservative Members' views on the trade union movement are based not on an intellectual argument but on the bias inherent in the Tory party since trade unions came into being.

As a trade union member of some 54 years, formerly a member of the National Union of Seamen at the age of 16 and a member of the Transport and General Workers Union since 1946, I have sufficient experience in the trade union movement to challenge many of the points that Conservative Members have made. I did not join a trade union for high political ideals but because, at the age of 15 when I went to sea, I was working under conditions that were deplorable in every sense of the word. Those conditions and my wages—28 shillings a month—made me aware that the person for whom I was working was not dealing with me fairly, so I became a member of the National Union of Seamen.

My experience over those years, excluding the war years, is that the trade union movement has been responsible for protecting workers from exploitation which Tory Members have not even mentioned, tonight or at any other time. The Bill confirms my view that the Conservative party's war of attrition against the trade union movement is on-going, and will continue while they remain in power. I do not believe for one moment that that arises out of pure ideological hatred, because there are other factors, such as those that can be seen in the demise of the construction industry.

In many areas, the construction industry has been deregulated. It is a diminishing industry due to the Government's economic policies. The unions deal not only with pay and conditions but with the health and safety of their members. The consequence of the Government's legislation is that cowboy outfits have come into the construction industry, and trade unionism is a thing of the past. Employers disregard health and safety measures in many places, resulting in record deaths in the industry.

In the docks industry, despite the promises by the Secretary of State that the post-abolition period would not mean an attack on trade union membership, we have seen a return to casual labour and everything that was prevalent in the bad old days. The consequence of the Tories' anti-trade union laws has been employers' derecognition of trade unions in virtually every port in the United Kingdom.

No one in the House believes that the Government have any other motive than to see the trade union movement made ineffective so that it will be difficult if not impossible for it to represent its members, as it has a responsibility to do. During the Government's term of office, we have seen the damaging effects that their legislation has had on the trade union movement. Government measures mean that a generation of young people have never enjoyed the advantages of belonging to a trade union, as they have been discouraged from doing so at their places of work, particularly in small businesses.

One reason that the Conservative party supports small businesses is that many of those businesses do not recognise trade unions. That is not to say that we do not support small businesses that act in the best interests of their workers, but many such firms take advantage of young people, paying them low wages and providing poor conditions.

I do not believe that the Conservative party is sincere in its attempts to improve the lot of the trade union movement. The Conservative party talks about the necessity of checking and re-checking whether the contributions of a union member have been authorised by him or her. I was originally opposed to the check-off arrangements. I have held every office at branch level of my trade union, and have been a district and national delegate of the docks and waterways section of the Transport and General Workers Union. The check-off system in my branch and many others resulted in a lowering of the attendance at the branches as contributions were deducted from members' wages. The convenience offered by the system has merits in the longer term.

However, it is wrong for Conservative Members and the Secretary of State to suggest that there is a need for employees constantly to refer to employers about the deduction of trade union contributions. Employees have a right to withhold union membership if they so wish. The employer is required to obtain the consent of the trade union member in order to deduct the payments from his or

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her wages. Therefore, there is no need for the clause in the Bill. That being so, the clause becomes an act of pettiness or a further sign of how the Government want to confuse the issue and escalate their persistent efforts to undermine the genuine work of the trade union movement on behalf of its members.

The trade union movement has rights that were established many years ago, when working conditions were such that even those who opposed the organisation of labour agreed that collective action by workers was necessary in order to remove many of the excesses that employers imposed on their work forces. The position has not radically changed. Since the Government have been in power, there has been a movement away from the recognition of trade unions and a deterioration in work conditions.

The Labour party believes that the trade union movement should have the rights that the Conservative party openly gives to employers. We believe that trade union rights should not be subject to constant Government interference. We believe that the trade union movement is entitled to continue to operate within the framework of the law, and should be in a position to represent its members.

During the past 13 years, the trade union movement has frequently been rendered ineffective when trying to represent its membership. It is almost impossible for a trade union to announce a dispute without falling into one or other of the traps set by the laws introduced by the Conservative Government. We believe that those laws have impeded the trade union movement. The Labour party must ensure that those laws are removed when a Labour Government come to power, as will certainly happen.

8.14 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): I have sat on the Standing Committees considering most of the trade union reform Bills, and I hope that I shall be lucky enough to serve on the Standing Committee on this Bill. There will be endless opportunities for detailed discussions of many of the Bill's clauses in Committee, and I shall concentrate now on the strategic role played by the Bill in the development of industrial relations in Britain.

Having listened to the speeches made so far, I have a wonderful sense of deja vu. Labour Members trot out all the same phrases and make all the same speeches as in years past. They say that it is a "Bill too far", that it is "anti-union". The only thing missing from the Labour's speeches is a commitment from their Front-Bench team to repeal the Bill as soon as Labour comes into power. I suspect that that is because the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) is a far cannier politician than many of his predecessors and has the benefit of experience. He knows that, in a relatively short time, what the Government are now proposing will be the orthodoxy, and will be adopted by the Labour party.

I declare an interest in that I am a lawyer and, since the early 1970s when industrial relations law began to develop, I have been very much involved with it. I have represented unions as well as employers, and individuals as well as companies. One of the most interesting features of this subject is the way that realities have changed, but the noises made by the Labour party have not—although the voices of many of the more intelligent trade union leaders have significantly changed.

When unions were formed, and for a large part of this century, the working man had no real protection other than collective action. If a worker was to be dismissed, the only protection to be gained was from collective action by his or her trade union. In the early 1970s, the bulk of industrial actions, particularly the devastating wildcat strikes, related to dismissals.

In today's debate, the focus has switched from strikes over dismissals to pay and conditions. That is because strikes over dismissals are now so rare due to the alternative body of law that developed in the 1960s and 1970s, giving individuals a platform of rights that they can exercise in accordance with their own judgment. They are no longer dependent in the same way as they were on the collective support of a trade union.

The first changes related to rights against employers, with legislation on matters such as redundancy payments, unfair dismissal, health and safety and women's rights. The Opposition were happy with those changes because their long-term impact was, to a degree, obscured. They came at a time when industrial relations—as developed through much of the century—had reached their nadir.

In the 1970s, the system had become a parody of what good industrial relations should be. It was frequently based on mindless confrontation and poor emloyment practices by employers and trade unions alike. Some trade union leaders had political ambitions that overreached their duties as trade union leaders, and they were unable to distinguish between the two.

A corporatist approach was adopted to industrial relations and the economy generally. The great and the good of industry and the trade unions sat down to beer and sandwiches at No. 10 to discuss the issues of the day. However, the great and the good did not represent the overwhelming majority of people in this country. The unions did not represent what was going on in the minds of many of their members. The Confederation of British Industry certainly did not represent small and medium-sized businesses. The consequence was that we lost out dramatically in the growth of the small and medium-sized businesses which have been the mainstay of many of our industrial competitors around the world.

While Opposition Members were happy to accept changes in employers' rights, they were less happy when faced with the other side of the coin: the rights of the members of trade unions vis-a-vis their unions. To be fair, many of the changes that we brought in were just imposing on the whole trade union movement the best practices adopted by some of the unions—certainly in relation to ballots.

Many unions had always had effective balloting systems. Unfortunately, as we saw with the National Union of Mineworkers at the time of its national strike, those balloting procedures did not work well when a president was determined to ride roughshod over his constitution. Hence the rule of law was reimposed, with powers of sequestration for the courts, and balloting procedures were developed. Certain key issues were sent to ballot. There was an end to intimidation, which had become commonplace and which had caused so much distress to many people through the 1970s and the early 1980s

The Labour party always argued against these changes, but once they were in place they came to accept them as the orthodoxy, because most people in this country, including a majority of those in trade unions, saw the reforms as thoroughly desirable.

The role of the trade unions is inevitably changing. If they cannot dictate to their members what they should do, and if they cannot compel people on the shop floor to join, they have to sell the services which they have to offer. Many of the better unions and the cleverer trade union leaders see that there is an important role for trade unions in this changing world. The sort of industrial relations agreements reached by the best manufacturers in the world—as evidenced in Japanese investment in the United Kingdom and much else besides—demands a highly collaborative industrial negotiating machinery, which is based not on confrontation but on a will to collaborate.

Successful unions are good at this. They must look at new areas, such as the protection of pension rights. They must offer skilled advice and representation of individuals to enforce their rights. A whole range of ancillary benefits flow from this too. These services are necessary, and, contrary to what we have heard this evening, I do not believe that the changes will necessarily lead to the fragmentation of the unions. To be successful in these areas requires a critical mass of resources and skills within a union effectively to represent its members' points of view.

Against this background, the Bill is mainstream. It continues a series of developments that have featured in industrial relations changes since the mid-1960s. It brings in a range of changes in respect of employers and individuals and in respect of members and their unions.

Perhaps the Bridlington agreement focuses most clearly on this point. Until now, people have looked at the Bridlington rules as a sacred cow. The truth is that, when they were brought in, one of the major problems in industry was the demarcation dispute. The Bridlington principles were a successful solution to such disputes. Now the situation has changed, and working practices are much more flexible. The problem for which the agreement was devised has passed away, and the rules are now being used to stifle the will of members. There have been many recent examples of members of unions being dissatisfied with their leadership and wanting to join another union instead.

Hon. Members will recall that members of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers wanted to join the GMB because they were fed up with USDAW's stand against Sunday trading. Airline cabin staff wanted to leave the Transport and General Workers Union because they were fed up with the militancy of its leaders. They wanted to join the British Air Line Pilots Association, but were prevented from doing so. There are many other similar examples.

No union should believe that its members belong to it as of right or that anyone who makes a pitch for those members is a poacher and should be deterred by the collective weight of the TUC. Carrying through that logic, the sort of dispute that occurred between the TUC and the electricians would be just the first of many. Competition between unions for membership in modern circumstances is just as healthy as competition between companies. Unions that are in favour of Sunday trading will attract shop workers who want to work on Sunday. That competition will make union leaders reflect their members' interests better, and will provide the mechanism for evolution and change.

I look forward to detailed debates in Committee. This Bill stands bang in the middle of the mainstream of industrial relations development. Some of the best companies in the world believe that Britain is the best place in Europe in which to manufacture. We must ensure that we have in place the best industrial relations practices for those companies, and this Bill takes that process forward.

8.24 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I welcome the rights for employees enshrined in this legislation, and the protection afforded to citizens against unlawful industrial action, with the appointment under clause 19 of a new commissioner. I also welcome clause 20 and schedule 2, which add to current provision for pregnant women by giving a new right to all employees, irrespective of length of service, to 14 weeks maternity leave.

Many families throughout the United Kingdom rely on a mother's earnings to provide their basic standard of living. In more and more families mothers are the sole earner and the head of the household. For as long as that is so, every effort must be made to ensure that mothers-to-be enjoy the full protection of their rights as mothers and workers. Naturally I support clause 21, which provides for all female employees, irrespective of their length of service, a right not to be dismissed on the grounds of pregnancy or childbirth.

I also welcome clause 23 and schedule 4 which will give every employee who works eight or more hours a week the right, within two months of starting work, to a written statement of his main terms and conditions, including details of entitlement to pay, hours and holidays.

I am not persuaded by Conservative Members that the existence of wages councils has been holding back higher earnings for those protected by them, so I oppose clause 28 and the abolition of the wages councils. That is a step backwards for the rights of the workers who are covered. Wages councils provide a security net for low-paid workers, and by their removal the way will be opened to a minority of unscrupulous employers who have no respect for the rights of employees and who seek to exploit those already on low wages. Many who will fall victim to this lack of protection will have their spending power further reduced, and there will be an adverse effect on the wider economy.

The Government's statements of commitment to economic recovery will have a hollow ring, given this development. The Government cannot hope for an upturn in the economy while at the same time wrecking the means to that upturn for many families. The saving to the public purse from abolishing the wages councils and making their employees redundant will be greatly outweighed by the losses to the economy resulting from what will amount to a wage cut for many workers who will be deprived of their right to a fair wage.

In Northern Ireland, between 1971 and 1989, male employment fell by 9 per cent.; in the same period, female employment rose by 34 per cent. Of this rise in female employment, more than 97 per cent. was in part-time work. Part-time employees are traditionally less qualified and lower paid than their full-time colleagues; yet many families rely on the wages of a part-time lady to provide the basic necessities for a reasonably dignified existence.

The economic and social consequences of exposing so many families to further reductions in income are

[Mr. Roy Beggs]

frightening to contemplate. Unlike the Government, I do not see the destruction of workers' rights as a means of achieving their end. We cannot keep people in work and out of social security benefits by destroying workers' rights. The abolition of the wages councils can only lead to an increased reliance on benefits in the longer term, as more and more families find themselves caught in the poverty trap.

It is time that the Government directed their attention away from conference rhetoric to please constituency associations and towards long-term measures to ensure that the United Kingdom has a well trained, adequately paid and willing work force. With unemployment queues nearing 3 million and the United Kingdom struggling to regain its economic strength, the last thing that we need is a demoralised and unwilling work force.

In Northern Ireland, the 1991-92 minimum basic hourly wage set by the wages councils varies from £2·60 to £3·60 per hour and 34,000 workers currently enjoy the protection of the wages councils. Considering that many of those are involved in physically demanding work, £2·60 per hour is not much to ask of any employer.

What can the Government seriously hope to achieve by removing the protection of the wages councils? If the Government hope that it will stimulate the economy by giving greater freedom to the employer in the labour market, they should think again. No self-respecting employer would pay below that level. The only employers who stand to gain by the abolition of the wages councils are those who have no respect for employees in the first place and therefore have little contribution to make to the wider economy.

Of the 34,000 employees covered by the wages councils in Northern Ireland, many are in the service sector, but some still remain in manufacturing. It is nonsense to endanger their right to a fair wage.

Finally, I call upon the Government to pay careful attention to the need to ensure that Northern Ireland has equal representation in the new careers organisation along with other regions of the United Kingdom. I support the call of the Institute of Careers Officers for a national council for careers guidance, subject to the inclusion of representation as of right for Northern Ireland in such a group.

8.31 pm

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): First, I declare an interest. My family business in Yorkshire owns a number of petrol stations, at one of which we have a small grocery stand, a fact which, on its own, brings that service station under the wages council for groceries.

I wanted to speak in today's debate because, from leaving school in 1974 until I became the Member of Parliament for Scarborough and Whitby, I worked in the family business. Our activities include retailing, manufacturing, property and agriculture. The company was established by Joseph Sykes, my ancestor, in 1845. Therefore, one way or another, my family has seen a lot of employment law.

The Labour party remains responsible for some of the most reckless and damaging trade union laws this century; legislation which culminated in 1979 when we saw the alien practice of union men picketing town halls, factories, depots and hospitals and union men threatening the wives and children of those who dared to cross the picket line. Those were the every day alien practices of life in the 1970s under the Labour party.

We were elected to change all that, at which point Labour Members scurried off to ask their union bosses, "What shall we do now?" So it was that they could not quite bring themselves to support the Employment Act 1980, which banned the violence of the flying picket. They felt uncomfortable about the Employment Act 1982 which dealt with the corruption of the closed shop, and they did not like the 1984 legislation one bit—an Act which gave union members a secret ballot before strike action.

Labour Members tried to blockade the Employment Act 1988 requiring union bosses to submit themselves to election by secret ballot and they tried to scupper the Employment Act 1990 because it removed union immunity from secondary action prosecution. So, there we have it: five Acts in 10 years and the Labour party voted against every single one of them. That is how it comes about that we have this particular flying picket on the Labour Front Bench today.

Two of the Labour Front-Bench spokesmen on the issue supported in writing the violence and howling pickets of Wapping. There they sit huddled around their brazier trying to warm themselves against the cold facts; sent here, I might add, compliments of the National Union of Railwaymen, or the PMT, or the RMT, or whatever they call themselves these days, compliments of the Transport and General Workers Union, compliments of the Graphical, Paper and Media Union, whatever that is; sent here this evening no doubt to "down tools" over the question of secret postal ballots on strike action. The Leader of the Opposition came out of the closet on that recently. He said that ballots are an "irrelevant effrontery", "intellectually disreputable", while hard on his coat tails was the delegate from the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union who, on "Panorama", said:

> "on the restoration of a Labour Government strings will be pulled".

He went on to say:

> "and we would be definitely pulling strings of our sponsored MPs."

Strings have been duly pulled, not to say wrenched. The Leader of the Opposition, despite his carefully manicured appearance, is sponsored by the GMB—quite appropriate really when one thinks about it.

No doubt there are some Opposition Members who want to "call out the lads" over the question of trade union financial affairs, measures that will give their members information about union finances—the fat salaries of the union bosses, the loaded perks that go with the job for which the ordinary member has to pay. I say that it is right to stand up for the member who faithfully pays his dues year in, year out. Is not he entitled to know what, or perhaps even more relevant who, his money is being spent on? But at least we know that the Opposition will support us on that one.

We also know that it will be "one out, all out" over the question of the wages councils. We know, for example, that minimum wages cost jobs. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), the shadow Transport Secretary, came out of yet another closet on that one when he said:

> "I knew the consequences. There would be some shake out. Any silly fool knows that."

That is one down—270 to go.

I was forgetting. The Leader of the Opposition admitted that he had been hiding in the same closet when he said:

> "One or two jobs may be lost."

He may well be right—if he is talking about 1 million or 2 million.

No, we in the Conservative party will not take any lectures about the Bill from the Tolpuddle party. The only irrelevance that we have to deal with this evening is the TUC hymn sheet which Opposition Members have been sent here to sing all the way until Christmas. We will not take any lectures from Opposition Members whose only experience of employing someone is limited to the poorly paid research assistants who swarm about the Palace of Westminster every day.

No, the Bill is part of the process that takes trade and industry in Great Britain towards the millenium. It is part of the process that the Prime Minister set in train when he torpedoed the social chapter last December and which Jacques Delors acknowledged would make Britain a paradise for investment. Forget Labour's Europe. All one has to do to see Labour's Europe is to go to Sheffield or Liverpool.

No, as we head towards the 21st century, this is a Bill for more investment, more employment, more business, more output and more exports; a Bill for Great Britain; a Bill which is relevant for the 1990s; a Bill which consigns the alien practices, along with the Labour party, to the dustbin of history.

8.38 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Today's debate takes place against the backcloth of massively rising unemployment and poverty which is so deep rooted in Britain that it is sad and tragic that all that the Government can do is to kick the boot at the worker and the trade union movement.

On 6 November, the *Financial Times* said:

> "In deciding now to abolish the wages councils the government is taking a risk. Attempting to reduce the wages of low paid workers, at a time of depressed confidence, rising unemployment, and with the public sense of injustice already aroused by the miners débâcle, is not the most politic of actions. In any case, the evidence does not suggest that the low levels set by the wages councils have a significant negative employment effect, as the government claims.
>
> Abolishing them now, in the current depressed economic climate, is likely to do little more than reduce the wages of some low paid workers, while increasing the amount of family credit paid to those low-income households that are adversely affected. The government is showing again a rare taste for the wrong battles."

The Institute of Management Consultants believes that the abolition of wage councils will severely damage the United Kingdom's productivity. Its director general said:

> "The success of organisations depends on the productivity of the work-force. A low wage policy leads to a vicious circle of low morale, low performance and low productivity. The UK cannot compete in the 1990s with a 19th century approach to labour. The way forward is through higher productivity and higher skill levels created and rewarded by higher pay . . . The government's belief that low wages will create jobs is mistaken in those industries with minimum wage rates only marginally above benefit levels. Growth and real employment will come only through rewarding skills. Instead of removing the remaining protection for the low paid, Ministers should be showing a public commitment to a better trained workforce."

I happen to be sponsored by the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, and I am delighted and honoured to represent that union in the House. I know that it fights on behalf of low-paid workers and people who have not been given proper training, to take them into a higher pay echelon. It is unbelievable that this country can be at the bottom of the European league in regard to giving those who work for this country the conditions that they deserve.

The wages councils cover 2·5 million people, but they do not cover some of my constituents. I know a security man who works for £1·85 an hour. Conservative Members may say that everyone else in the family works, but that is not true: he is the sole breadwinner. Having spent 20 years in the armed forces, he left to work for a poverty wage. Is that what we want to happen? Do we want people who have spent a decade or two in the Army to end up earning a pittance?

That man worked for a Government establishment; that is, he worked in Coulport—under the Government's auspices—for a private security company. Why should we allow our people to be degraded by receiving such payments? Ultimately, the taxpayer will have to stump up housing benefit, income support and free school meals for that man's children. I think that it is appalling.

I am not a great lover of Churchill, but I recognise some of his main attributes. For instance, he fought and argued for the rights of wages councils. He knew that, out in the big bad world, there were employers who would speculate and get away with paying workers tuppence an hour. They would do what was done in the days of Oliver Twist—provide a bowl of soup, and give a belt in the ear to those who asked for more.

What happened when young people were taken out of the realm of wages councils? Were there more jobs for them? Not in my constituency. The facts and figures clearly prove that more young people are now unemployed; they also prove that young people are working for abysmal wages. They are forced to work seven days a week for about £1 an hour, with no rights, and they are sacked if they ask for half a day off to attend a wedding.

Christmas will be here in five weeks. What a Christmas present this Scrooge-like Government are offering to low wage earners. If they are still in power next year and the year after, there will be many empty stockings hanging up in our young people's homes. Many children will not know what Christmas is, and will never see Santa Claus—unless they are out begging on the streets. The steets of London, Glasgow and Edinburgh are full of folk begging. The Minister should consider them, and consider the workers who are trying to make a living wage and who need the protection afforded by the wages councils.

Every prediction that the Government have made has proved wrong. The Chancellor has kept telling us that the turning point is just around the corner. I feel that I am turning the corner at 100 mph, but all that I see is more poverty, more unemployment, more bankruptcies and more house repossessions. The Bill will not help the low paid. If the Government wanted to give working folk back their morale, they would establish the minimum wage proposed by Labour, and they would come up with a plan of action to train our young people to take on the rest of the world.

I believe that our young people have the necessary will and spirit; all that they lack is the mentality of this stupid Government, who do not realise that our people can make the nation great again. The Minister should abandon his

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proposals to abolish the wages councils, and consider the pleas of the trade union movement. The trade unions are the country's allies—not its enemies, as Conservative Members would like to think.

My father was a trade unionist who fought for this country; my aunts and uncles fought for it too, and they were all trade unionists. Opposition Members are as committed to Great Britain as anyone else, and we see the trade union movement as an integral part of the nation's heritage and the fight to make it great again. The Government, however, are prepared to drive our people further into poverty. They talk of individualism, but the only individuals they are concerned about are their friends in the City.

8.48 pm

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): I am pleased to be able to speak in such an important debate. I do not wish to follow the passionate but misguided comments of the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham), who epitomises the dinosaur approach of Opposition Members who are always looking backwards rather than forwards.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on her excellent, vigorous and constructive speech. The Bill is modest but wide ranging, designed to make limited changes to a number of important areas affecting employment and the trade unions. I believe that it will be warmly welcomed in the country and among a considerable number—probably the majority—of trade union members.

Since becoming a Member in 1983, I have taken part in a number of debates on trade union reform Bills which have subsequently been enacted. I am extremely interested in this subject, not only because employment issues are important to the country in general and to my constituency in particular, but as a former trade union member. When I was a teacher in the 1970s, I was a member of the National Union of Teachers for a while, during which time I saw at first hand how archaic trades union organisations were and how undemocratic they had become. Branch meetings were held at inconvenient times. The propaganda and voting by show of hands were quite appalling, and interest in individual members was non-existent. There followed the disgraceful situation of the union instructing its members to withdraw from school on a half-day strike, at which point I left the union because I felt that it was wrong for professionals to strike—wrong because of the principle and the damage to children's education, and wrong for a strike to be called before a secret ballot of all union members.

I was delighted in 1979, therefore, when the Conservative Government embarked on a systematic programme of trade union reform and employment legislation. That was long overdue and reform had become even more necessary after the legislation enacted by the Labour Government of the 1970s, supported by left-wing trade union leaders and financed by trade unions. Much of the legislation enacted in that period was proposed and allowed by trade unions.

Throughout the 1980s, I supported the rolling programme of legislation. That legislation has proved to be a great success. The worst excesses of the 1970s and the abuse of power by unrepresentative and irresponsible trade union leaders is well known. In addition, the Government had, and still have, a dual role—to protect society from politically motivated trade union barons and to assist ordinary trade union members to gain control of their unions. *[Interruption.]* Despite the sedentary comments of Opposition Members, I am not opposed to trade unions. I believe that they have a valuable role to play in contemporary society, but it is different from their historical role. Of course their role is to look after and represent the work force and to ensure that working conditions are improved, but they must now give advice, look after issues such as pensions and ensure that individuals are looked after in the workplace. Some good trade unions have done that, but others have failed to do so because they have been more interested in political activity than in advancing the interests of the workers whom they are supposed to represent.

Trade union leaders are now elected on a more democratic basis to look after their members' interests in the workplace. It is not their job to be political animals. Trade unions must attract members by showing what they can offer the work force; they cannot take members for granted, as they did in the past. Needless to say, the Opposition always opposed the union reforms of the past decade and remain out of touch. That is why they remain in opposition and will not be elected to government in the foreseeable future.

Employees should have increased freedom of choice —not only whether to belong to a trades union but to which trades union they wish to belong. There must be no coercion to join one union. That is in line with Conservative philosophy of choice. We know that it is anathema to Opposition Members, who do not believe in choice in anything. The Government are determined to increase choice for ordinary citizens, and that is— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. There are too many sedentary interruptions.

Mr. Evennett: We have provided increased choice in housing, education and many other areas. The Government are continuing to widen choice in all areas, including trades union membership. Under the Bill, individuals must not be excluded or expelled from a union without good reason.

I have confined my speech to trade unions. We have heard much about wages councils and most of what needs to be said has been said by Conservative Members, but the improvements for trade unions under part I are advantageous to ordinary union members, particularly the improvements to the conduct of union elections. I note and approve of the Bill's endeavours to improve the election system for trade unions. This must improve fairness for candidates and ensure that they are all treated equally. The Bill also addresses the secrecy of union affairs, such as membership and remuneration—

Mr. Jimmy Boyce (Rotherham): What about Tory party funds?

Mr. Evennett: The hon. Gentleman has a large mouth and nonsense keeps coming out of it. If he listened for once he might learn something—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already spoken about sedentary interruptions. If hon. Members want to say something, they should seek to intervene in the proper parliamentary manner.

Mr. Boyce: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Evennett: No, I have no time.

In 1992, union members should be furnished with important details about their union. Certification officers' powers should be strengthened to investigate apparent impropriety in union affairs. Those are democratic safeguards for individual union members. More information and power for individuals will make for better trades unions. More choice and increased rights for citizens are the order of the day in 1992.

The Government's commitment to the citizens charter has been well received by the general public. For far too long, individual members of the public have been powerless against the might of large unions. I welcome the fact that under the Bill ordinary members of the public will be able to seek legal redress if they suffer as a result of unlawful industrial action. We have all suffered when strikes have been held at short notice. Indeed, sometimes no notice has been given and such action has disrupted business and has disrupted and annoyed my constituents. When that has occurred, especially in the transport sector, people have experienced terrible difficulty in getting home after a long day's work. I know that Opposition Members do not care about ordinary citizens, but Conservative Members believe that they are very important and that they should be our prime consideration.

The Bill proposes seven days' notice of strike action, which will be of considerable benefit to the general public. I warmly welcome those provisions. Some of my constituents would like my hon. Friend the Minister to go further and would support no-strike agreements for public services, so perhaps he will consider that as part of the rolling programme which we warmly support.

Judging from the sedentary interruptions of Opposition Members, one would not have thought that this was a modest Bill, but it travels along a moderate road leading to improved and more responsible trade unions and more power to members of trade unions. It is a valuable addition, I believe, to the legal reforms of the past 13 years. It will strengthen the rights of the individual, the employment rights of people at work and the democratic rights of trade union members.

8.58 pm

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): There are just 55 wages inspectors, whose job it is to enforce the wages council legislation. Yet, even with this tiny number, their diligent work uncovered 5,971 establishments last year paying below the legal minimum rate. There were only, however, 15 prosecutions; that is, one quarter of 1 per cent. of the known, discovered offences were prosecuted. That hardly suggests wild enthusiasm for law enforcement, but of course this was a matter of whether money would be put back into the pockets of low-paid workers from whom it had been stolen by employers who were acting illegally.

Not satisfied with that, the Government are now embarked on a drive to cut the wages of the lowest paid. They must think that wages will fall; indeed, they say that jobs will be increased because wages will fall. They think that employers are so eager to take on extra staff that anything that they can save by cutting wages they will gladly spend on increasing their staff.

Employers employ as few people as they can possibly get away with. This can be seen by looking at the number of unstaffed check-outs, while customers have to queue. I declare an interest as a sponsored member of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers. I know about check-outs, and of course unstaffed check-outs mean queues by customers. Customers have to wait just so the staff will not have one minute to look around. So as few workers as possible are employed, the hours of part-time workers are cut against their wishes and their hours are frequently lowered to remove rights to legal protection. Wherever possible, employers employ casual workers, temporary workers or home workers at the lowest possible rates. It is highly improbable that cutting wages will increase employment in that sort of situation. However, it will have the effect of worsening the conditions of the low paid.

We have been told that no damage has been done to the wages of the young since the wages councils were stripped of their powers in relation to young people. However, my union had a look at the job centres in the Manchester area a fortnight ago. It found an advertisement—one of many deplorable advertisements—for a junior trainee hairdresser to work from Monday to Wednesday 9 to 6, Thursday 9 to 8, Friday 9 to 7 and Saturday 8.30 to 4.30; age 16 to 17 only, at a rate of £35 a week. Assuming that she would get a one-hour meal break a day, which cannot be assumed in hairdressing, I make that 50 hours a week at £35 pay. That was in Bolton. In Bury there was an advertisement for a stock assistant: 40 hours; £1·66 an hour at 16, £1·86 an hour at 17.

As the Equal Opportunities Commission has said, the rates for young people have decreased as a proportion of adult rates, and it believes that there is the strongest possibility that the pay of women currently covered by wages councils will fall proportionately to men's rates. But the Government say that it does not matter. They say, in a letter to my general secretary—one of many similar letters sent by Employment Ministers:

> "Most Wages Council workers are part-timers contributing only a part of the income coming into the family home. There is no close link between the wage rates of such workers and their income."

There are a number of aspects to that. One is that the income coming into a household is not necessarily available to the woman of that household. It is not her income, and her husband or partner may not consider it to be their income; he may consider that it is his income. So the idea that women as workers can simply be subsumed into the household is absolutely anachronistic. Conservatives always accuse us of being old-fashioned. There is nothing more old-fashioned than that; nothing more insulting and damaging to many families.

The EOC refers to the fact that, in 1978, it was discovered through research that three times as many families would be in poverty if it were not for the earnings of the mother in the household. The EOC points out that women's earnings contribute more to the family now than they did in 1978. We are talking about family poverty.

The Government say that overwhelmingly people in poverty do not have a job. They are experts in increasing the number of such people. They are now going down the road of increasing the number of people who are in

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poverty despite having a job. They are adding to the poverty of unemployment the poverty of the working poor. *[Interruption.]* I notice a great sense of humour among Ministers. They laughed heartily when my hon. Friends talked about the problems facing families at Christmas. People can draw their own conclusions from such expressions of humour.

People will be in poverty; they are in poverty now. Earnings of women are essential; they are not frivolous. Their earnings are not second incomes in the sense of not mattering to the family. The earnings matter to the individual woman and they matter to her family. There is every evidence that women's earnings will be cut as a result of the Bill.

If wages will not fall as a result of the Bill, why do the Government say that there will be extra jobs? How will that come about? If the Bill will have no effect on wages, where will employers get the extra funds that they are deemed to be willing to spend on more employment?

What will really happen is that demand will be withdrawn from the economy, which is a fancy way of saying that people will have less money to spend in the shops. That will mean not only that shopworkers' wages will be cut because they are the biggest group of workers covered by wages councils, but that their job opportunities will lessen because the recession in retailing is likely to be worsened.

Anybody who continues to think that the Conservative party is good at managing the economy must be blind to facts. The one certain fact is that the Conservative party is greatly damaging the economy of private citizens, especially low earners. I am pleased to have had the opportunity of saying that and to draw attention to the fact that if one removes a floor, rates above are likely to fall as well.

There is no truth in the Government's press statement in which they say:

> "Where companies pay above the pay levels laid down by wages councils, they are irrelevant."

Wages councils provide the floor. If the floor goes, people earning above wages council rates will also be affected. The Bill is a drive against the wages of the poor, but it is also a drive against wages generally. I hope that it will be defeated.

9.7 pm

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): If what the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) said about the unions is right, if they have a powerful role in acting for their members in negotiations, if they are able to influence contracts of employment without reference back to their members personally, if they are able to have subscriptions deducted from wages without reference to their members every year, and if they are important in our society, why should they not give basic rights to their members?

One such right is the right to a full postal ballot before industrial action. Why should they not give that right so that employees have the opportunity to consider the merits of industrial action in their own homes, away from the pressures of the workplace?

Why should not trade unions give an annual statement of their finances, saying what is happening to the money that the members have paid? Why should not the trade unions consult on subscription increases when they come up? Why should they not have to justify themselves to their members every three years if they are to continue to have the right to check off? Finally, if the institutions are so important, why should not the individual member have the right to choose which one he or she wants to join?

Over the years, we have heard trade union representatives and Labour Members repeatedly object to legislation, only to find a few years later that it has become official Labour party policy. It is too bad that, instead of a genuine debate, we hear nothing but the Labour party's parrot calls.

Winston Churchill introduced the legislation which laid the foundations for wages councils in circumstances very different from those obtaining today. He wanted to protect the disabled, the widows and the infirm. He was concerned that

> "the worker whose whole livelihood depends upon the industry"

concerned should not be "undersold". I repeat that circumstances have changed since then. In those days, the social security system, which provides a safety net for low-paid workers, did not exist—and the trade unions were perhaps not so effective as they later became. Above all, we should remember that 80 per cent. of workers now covered by the wages councils do not rely on that money for their entire livelihood.

There was a time when trade unions would admit that circumstances had changed. In the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, the Transport and General Workers Union was opposed to wages councils. In its response to the Donovan commission, the TGWU said:

> "Wages Councils do not represent an effective means of raising the standards of lower paid workers and they should be abolished."

At the TGWU policy conference in 1981, at which a motion in favour of statutory control of wages was lost, the deputy general secretary reasserted the union's opposition to statutory controls on wages.

Under Labour, unions such as the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades took no part in the proceedings to abolish the wages council for box makers, but welcomed the change as soon as it had been abolished. It supported the abolition of wages councils. At one time, the Labour party defended proposals to get rid of 10 wages councils. It seems to me that, these days, we cannot have a genuine debate on these matters, even though there has always been a strong body of opinion in the trade union movement to the effect that wages councils are ineffective.

The councils are also inflexible. They interfere with employers' ability to provide incentive schemes for their workers and freeze differentials at low levels. They prevent new businesses starting up and moving from low wages to higher wages as they progress. They are anachronistic. Why are workers with woven cloth covered, whereas workers with knitted cloth are not? Why are hairdressers covered when beauticians working in the same establishments are not? Why is cooked meat covered but not raw meat? The time has come for the wages councils to be abolished.

I am amazed that measures to provide rights to trade union members should be opposed. Sensible measures to deal with anachronisms such as the provisions governing pregnant women must be welcomed, and it is a pity that Labour Members oppose the Bill.

The changes in the way in which industrial tribunals and the employment appeals tribunals work are important. At present, there are long delays and backlogs —indeed, I have written to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about one case involving a year's delay. Measures to allow chairmen of tribunals and the employment appeal tribunal to decide cases on points of law will drastically reduce such backlogs. That measure, too, should be supported.

9.14 pm

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): May I start by recognising the speech of the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley)? I appreciate that compliments from the Opposition are often considered mixed blessings, and so they should be, but while I did not agree with all he said, I appreciated his comments on wages councils and the way in which he presented them. I also noticed the pre-emptive strike on him by his party through the mouthpiece of the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) and I thought that the hon. Gentleman might require some assistance. However, he was able to present his case splendidly. Therefore, I look forward to further contributions from him in Committee.

The best that one can say about the Bill is that it is a squalid, mean-minded, mean-spirited and ill-conceived piece of legislation—in fact, one of the worst pieces of legislation to come before the House for a considerable time. It has little to do with workers' rights or industrial relations, and nothing to do with employment. It is all about trying to keep the Tory troops on the Back Benches in order and in good humour. The Bill is nothing more than a vestigial remnant from the past, and, like all vestigial remnants, it is utterly useless. It is a piece of outdated Thatcherism from which the world has moved on, but apparently not some in the Tory party.

It is not so much a Bill whose time has come, as many Tory Members tried to maintain; rather it is a Bill whose time has passed, although the contributions from the Tory Members make it clear that many of them are living in the past.

The Bill is schizophrenic. It is not sure where it stands. It lacks intellectual rigour and honesty. There are good parts in it, such as the provisions on maternity rights, the transfer of undertakings and contracts, and the attempt to protect whistleblowers and the right to stop the job. But all those good parts are submerged in a deluge of mean and provocative clauses which attack a decent wage, decent terms and conditions, a decent future and, above all, the only organisation which will fight for all those aims—the trade union.

The whole basis of the Bill was given away by the hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert), when he said that the check-off provision was the basis on which the Government would bring about the fatal blow to trade unions. That is what it is about. It is not about protecting the rights of individuals, but about trying to kill off trade unions and their links and contributions to the Labour party. I am grateful to the hon. Member for being honest enough to say that in the House.

Apparently the Government are embarrassed by this tatty little piece of legislation. So they should be. I was not a Member when the Government started to introduce their industrial legislation in 1979 and through the 1980s, but I understand that the Tory Benches used to be crowded when that legislation came forward. It is significant that most Tory Members are so embarrassed by the Bill that they have been hiding.

The Secretary of State was so embarrassed that she did not want the Bill brought back until after Christmas, if not later. She had briefed industrial correspondents on that. Presumably she was hoping that she or the Government would move on, but she has not been successful, and the ideologues have won. The Government have every right to be embarrassed; in future, they will be not just embarrassed but ashamed of the attacks on individuals brought about by the Bill.

Let us look at this curate's egg. On the one hand, the Government plan to abolish wages councils, saying that they are a burden on employers. On the other hand, they are introducing measures which we greatly value, such as the right to contract, maternity leave, and the transfer of undertakings, all of which in the Government's own language can be classified as burdens on employers. Why the contradiction?

Part of the Government's problem is that they do not know the difference between burdens and duties. It is the Government's job to place duties on employers to safeguard the rights of employees—the right to a decent wage, the right to decent conditions and the right to maternity leave and to a contract. Those rights are guaranteed by duties on employers.

I dare say that many employers consider those matters to be a burden. However, the Opposition do not take that view. We believe that they are duties that any reasonable society would expect their Government to place on employers. The main reason for the apparent contradiction in the Bill and its intellectual dishonesty, opposing duties in one sphere—wages councils—while supporting them in respect of maternity rights, health and safety and contracts, is that the latter measures are not ones that the Government wanted to bring in.

The Government did not want to introduce maternity rights or provisions on health and safety and contracts. They did not introduce them through any generosity of spirit. They have brought them in simply because they were forced to do so by EC directives. The Government should not claim any credit for those provisions. The Government did not want them. They are in the Bill because they were forced on the Government.

Even when the Government are forced to include such measures, rather than concede them with a good grace, they have had to be dragged screaming and kicking into the latter half of the 20th century. The Government opposed the directives on maternity rights and the other beneficial effects every inch of the way.

Clause 26 deals with the transfer of undertakings. The directive about that has been around since 1977. The Government have been in office for 13 years, but they are only now introducing legislation to implement it in full. That does not show much commitment on the Government's part.

The Secretary of State made great play of the maternity benefits, but the Government did not want them and they fought them every inch of the way in the Commission. They had the original proposals watered down. That is another example of how the measure is mean in spirit, mean in action and simply rotten to the core.

The meanest part of the Bill is the part that the Government do want—the abolition of the wages councils. It is difficult to imagine a more pitiful response at

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a time of economic slump. With Britain in recession, unemployment rising, homelessness increasing and confidence collapsing, it is difficult to imagine a more inappropriate Government response.

Then again, the Government are only being true to form. At the height of the recession, following their own gross mismanagement, their only response is to put the boot into some of the weakest in society, to remove from the weakest their only protection, the wages councils. It is typical of the Government and the Tories that, when they are in trouble, they can only attack the weakest. They attack workers earning as little as £2·60 an hour, which represents a take-home pay of about £80 a week.

The Government give many reasons for their attack on wages councils, and they are all as pathetic as the action itself. The Prime Minister gave some reasons in response to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). The first of them was repeated tonight by the hon. Member for Teignbridge—that wages councils have been around since 1909 and therefore should be abolished. The Prime Minister said:

> "These days, wages councils are an anachronism. They no longer have a useful role. They were set up in 1909 and they are not relevant to 1992."—[*Official Report, 5 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 407.*]

That is quite an interesting piece of political philosophy: because something has been around for a long time, de facto it must be abolished. The House of Lords has been around for much longer, and I therefore look forward in the next Parliament to a Bill to abolish the House of Lords for the same reason.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Or the abolition of the Government.

Mr. Galbraith: As my hon. Friend points out, the Government have been around for a long time and they are also in line for abolition.

The Prime Minister's next reason for abolishing the wages councils is that they are supposed to be bureaucratic. Whenever I hear that argument from the Government, I know that they are really struggling in their last refuge. Yes, wages councils cost just over £2 million, but new provisions in the Bill will cost that amount. Are those not bureaucratic? What is the difference? The councils and those provisions are not bureaucratic—they are the necessary price we pay to introduce decent terms, conditions and rights for individuals, and it is a price well worth paying.

Both those arguments are pulled together in what the Prime Minister said constituted a burden on employers. The Government's philosophy is laid bare—no burdens on employers, no regulations, no statutes, just the free market. Malnourished children up the chimneys and pregnant women down the mines—that is the Government's philosophy for society. There will be no rights, nothing for anyone, but there will certainly be exploitation.

The Government try to dress all that up as a measure to increase jobs. I heard much talk about that from the Conservative Benches. The Government contend that wages councils reduce employment. They have decided to abolish wages councils because of their ideology and they are now scrambling around for reasons. They have come up with the idea that they reduce employment. I am having difficulty finding evidence to support that case. They have trotted out the same hoary old studies on minimum wages. Even they must know that they do not necessarily apply to wages councils.

After considerable prompting by the hon. Member for Eltham, the Minister produced a long list of references, contending to support his case, showing a relationship between wages and employment. It was an impressive little biography, in nice alphabetical order, quickly pulled out of a computer. But the notable thing about the Government's list, which was also tripped out by the hon. Member for Teignbridge, is that it concerns the relationship between wages and jobs and not necessarily minimum wages.

Many of those studies are also fatally flawed. First, they presuppose the effect of a minimum wage on other wages, and set about calculating the extent of job losses based on the wrong premise. Because they work from the wrong premise, they get the wrong answer.

The second flaw in their argument, and the reason that the premise is wrong, is that the labour market is not a homogeneous body, with every part responding similarly, and I should have thought that Conservative Members would have known that. For example, take the rise in women's pay to equal men's, following the Equal Pay Act 1970. According to Government philosophy, as applied to the abolition of the wages councils, that would have reduced employment because it led to a rise in average wages; yet, far from falling, women's employment continued to rise.

The Government base their studies on the employment effect of wages councils and do not analyse any relative changes in wages. There is no conclusive evidence that wages councils decrease employment, and it may be quite the opposite. They may lead to an increase, and their abolition to a decrease.

In 1986, workers under the age of 21 were removed from the wages councils' responsibility. Wage rates for that group have fallen, but there has been no increase in the number employed. Nearly one in five young workers aged between 18 and 19 are registered as unemployed, which is double the rate among the rest of the population. Rather than helping young workers, removing them from the responsibility of the wages councils has led to their prospects deteriorating.

That was effectively summed up in the study by Machin and Manning, which I am sure the Minister has read in full, as I have. They studied wages councils in the United Kingdom—the councils that the Government hope to abolish—and concluded that there is no evidence of an increase in employment as a result of a decline in the councils' effectiveness.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Am I not right in recalling that that study excluded part-time workers, who are the majority of people covered by wages councils?

Mr. Galbraith: No, it did not exclude part-time workers, but I shall consider the Minister's question when I read the report again. The authors concluded that employment declined as a result of the decreasing effectiveness of wages councils, and added:

> "There is no evidence that the activities of wages councils have acted as a restraint on employment in Britain in the 1980s. If anything, it is easier to make the argument that minimum wages have been good for employment."

In other words, there is no evidence to suggest that wages councils reduce employment. Indeed, they have the opposite effect.

All that was admitted by the Government. In reply to a question from the hon. Member for Eltham, who asked what effect abolishing wages councils would have on employment, the Under-Secretary of State replied that the Government did not have such information. So the Government want to abolish wages councils even though they have no information on which to base their prejudices.

On the other hand, there are strong arguments in favour of wages councils, and many have been stated in the debate. In particular, they prevent the good employer from being undercut by the bad. The abolition of wages councils means pay rates falling so as to compete, staff becoming transient and jobs being used merely as a step further along the ladder. So good employers cannot maintain their pay rates, cannot retain or train staff, and cannot provide a better service.

The main argument in favour of wages councils is that of justice. My hon. Friends and I want not the abolition of wages councils but the abolition of the exploitation which will come from their abolition. With the abolition of wages councils, pay rates will fall, as my hon. Friends have pointed out. Indeed, that is the basis of the Government's argument, and they cannot run away from it. Their view is that wages will fall and employment will increase. That is the basis for a reduction in wages.

As part of the low pay review in the autumn of 1989, a study showed that the abolition of wages councils covering those under 21 resulted in their wages suffering. It also showed that, if the qualifying age had remained at 18, nearly 20 per cent. of the licensed hotels surveyed would have been paying below the minimum. A job survey by the Greater Manchester low pay unit in July 1988 found that 70 per cent. of jobs with advertised rates of pay were offering rates less than those that would have been paid had they not been under the protection of wages councils.

In a random analysis of cases referred to the Scottish low pay unit, the rates for those not covered by wages councils were absolutely atrocious. I will detail a few: hairdresser, £1·55 per hour; catering assistant, £1·80 per hour; security guard, £1·70; dental assistant, £1·95; clerical worker, £1·75; secretary, £1·67; car valeter, £1·67; care assistant, £1·75; and cleaner, £1·65. There was not one above £2 an hour.

That is the situation that the Government want to impose on the workers of Britain. Do they really want wages at such a pathetically low level? How long are they prepared to let wages fall? How much are they preparing for the exploitation of the workers? What standards do they want to set?

There are no reasons why wages councils should be abolished, and there is every reason to retain them. At the time of rocketing unemployment, with poverty increasing all round, the Government, with all their powers, pull themselves up to the grandeur of their office and all they can offer is a mouse—the abolition of wages councils—which is a response so pitiful, callous and inadequate that it is difficult to imagine it coming even from the present Government. Exploitation, poverty and injustice are clearly their vision for Britain.

The Bill is mean in spirit, spiteful in intent and callous in effect. It will do nothing to improve either the lot of employers or the economy of Britain. For all those reasons, we shall most certainly be pleased to vote against it in the Lobby tonight.

9.34 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth): Listening to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), I found myself wondering why, if he thinks that wages councils are such a good thing, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) was so reluctant to tell the House that he would reinstate them after they were abolished by the House of Commons.

The changes that we propose in the Bill are entirely consistent with our successful step-by-step approach of the past 13 years. They will ensure that we have a legislative framework in tune with the needs of a modern economy: a framework which will contribute to, rather than impede, the promotion of individual rights; a framework which will enable businesses to respond quickly to changes and opportunities in a competitive market; and which will therefore help in the creation of new jobs, as my hon. Friends the Members for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) and for Meriden (Mr. Mills) said in their excellent speeches.

The Government's policy is clear, consistent and credible. But what of the Opposition's policies?

Mr. Graham: How will someone who is paid £3 an hour on a wages council scale be any better off if the wages are reduced to £2? Does that mean that for £1 an hour another person will be employed? Is that the logic of the Government's answer?

Mr. Forsyth: No, that is not the logic of the Government's answer. The hon. Gentleman ought to know that two thirds of the people covered by the wages councils are paid more than the minimum rate. I shall come to the point about wages councils later. The hon. Gentleman may well want to intervene again then.

We have all grown used to the ritual commitments of Opposition spokesmen to repeal successive Acts of Parliament since 1979. Those Acts have helped to transform the climate of industrial relations in Britain, for example, by introducing secret ballots for union elections and before strikes; by the effective outlawing of most secondary picketing and secondary industrial action; and by ending the iniquities of the closed shop—the abuses which my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) described so vividly.

However, I thought that tonight the sobering experience of a fourth successive electoral defeat, together with the appointment of a new, although hardly fresh, Opposition spokesman, would herald a long overdue acceptance of the Government's industrial relations reforms. Where the Government have advanced through step-by-step reform, the Opposition, like Napoleon pulling back from Moscow, have been reduced to grudging step-by-step retreat—an observation made by my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), in the light of all his experience of the Standing Committees which have considered employment Bills. I hope that his experience will be extended further by his participation in the Standing Committee which will consider the Bill, but that is a matter for others.

The House will have seen what the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden and the Opposition have to

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offer in response to the Government's clearly formulated and detailed proposals. First, they have made a thinly disguised commitment to hand back more power to the trade unions. Secondly, they have a crass commitment to the disastrous minimum wage policy which would destroy so many of the very jobs for which they want artificially to increase the pay. Thirdly, they unquestioningly accept the Maastricht social chapter, in a misguided attempt to bring in by the back door the failed socialist policies so decisively rejected by the Government and electorate.

Labour's proposals are about as worthy of serious consideration as a Norwegian entry to the Eurovision song contest. But the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras deserves a prize for sheer brass neck in claiming that the Bill is irrelevant to the main employment issues that we face.

What is irrelevant about measures to give employees new rights and protections at work, new rights for pregnant workers and new protections for those with health and safety responsibilities? How can the Opposition pretend that it is irrelevant to protect the democratic rights of individual trade union members?

Mr. Burden: If the Government are so concerned about individual rights, why does not the Bill contain a clause to restore to employees who have been working less than two years the right to go to an industrial tribunal to claim unfair dismissal? Why can people be sacked unreasonably when their only crime is to have been employed for less than two years?

Mr. Forsyth: I should be more inclined to take advice from the hon. Gentleman on that matter if he did not intend to go through the Lobbies tonight and vote against a Bill that extends employees' rights to go to industrial tribunals of the kind that he described.

How can it be irrelevant to remove anti-competitive restrictions that hinder the creation of new jobs or to broaden the current straitjacket that regulates the management of the careers service? It cannot, and the Opposition know it.

The hon. Members for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) and for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle) and others showed clearly that the Opposition simply do not understand—or perhaps cannot bring themselves to recognise—that there is and always will be a very fundamental and direct relationship between economic competitiveness and jobs. Measures to improve competitiveness—for example, by reducing anti-competitive practices and removing artificial barriers in the labour market—will help to create a climate in which more, rather than fewer, new jobs will be created; and fewer, rather than more, existing jobs will be at risk.

Opposition Members have presented some ingenious arguments for the retention of wages councils tonight. Their views now are somewhat different from those of the last Labour Government. When the Opposition were last in office, they abolished 11 wages councils. The last Labour Government freed more than half a million workers from wages council control.

What has changed? I am puzzled. It is simple: when the Labour Government held power, they believed that they could dragoon people into joining the unions. Wages councils were seen as a threat to their recruitment plans and collective bargaining, as the right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central (Sir H. Walker), who was a Minister at the time, confirmed earlier in the debate. The argument at the time was, why join a union if the councils set the rates?

The trade unions have now changed their views in line with the new reality. As their membership and enthusiasm for trade unions has declined, the wages councils have become the last refuge. With the wages councils, the brothers could still negotiate the wages even if they no longer represented the workers.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the Minister give his own evaluation of those matters—he must have an opinion? What does he consider is a suitable minimum rate of pay for, say, a security guard who literally puts himself in the line of fire in the interests of society?

Mr. Forsyth: Oh dear, the hon. Gentleman has chosen a poor example because security guards are not covered by wages councils. He makes my point for me. The position for the 10 per cent. of workers who are covered by wages councils should be the same as for the 90 per cent., which includes security guards, who are not covered. They should receive a wage that reflects the ability of the employer to pay in a competitive manner.

What has been the Opposition's principled response? "Never mind the arguments or what we did in government", has been their response. The Labour dogs have continued to jump through the trade union hoops, as they always do.

I am still not clear what the Opposition's new policy is. I shall happily give way to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, who so gallantly gave way to me. He refused to tell us what he would do in the unlikely event of his being in government. We know that the hon. Gentleman would introduce the job-destroying minimum wage, but would he bring it in and keep the wages councils? Would he maintain the councils' present powers or increase them? Would there be new councils to cover the 90 per cent. of workers forgotten by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson)? Would there be more bureaucracy followed by more bureaucracy?

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras should tell the House what the Opposition's policy is exactly—it is all rather vague. The hon. Gentleman refused to give an undertaking that a Labour Government would bring back wages councils. I shall happily give way so that he can give that undertaking to the House——

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Forsyth: Where now the crusade on behalf of wages councils? The leader of that crusade will not even give a commitment to bring back the councils.

Mr. Dobson: As the Minister should know, our crusade is not on behalf of any particular structure; it is about the people who are presently being paid less than £3 an hour and who the Government want to be paid even less. We believe that those people should and would benefit from the Labour party's proposal to introduce a national minimum wage at a rate far higher than they currently receive.

Mr. Forsyth: I think that the hon. Gentleman was telling the House that he has no intention of bringing back wages councils. Why? Because he has listened to the arguments advanced by my hon. Friends today and has been persuaded. The structure in which the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras should be interested is that of his own argument and campaign that has just collapsed around his ears.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) was even more opaque about the Liberal party's intentions in respect of wages councils and a minimum wage. I shall happily give way to the hon. Gentleman if he wants to tell us the Liberal party's position. Once again, we see an Opposition who oppose, but have no idea about how to make progress on the issue.

I have the impression that Opposition Members have convinced themselves that wages councils are wholly concerned with combating poverty. The Opposition ignore improvements in living standards and the changes in the work force. They ignore the existence of targeted benefits and the fact that the majority of workers covered by councils are in two-income households.

There are almost as many low-paid workers from the richest 10 per cent. of households in this country as from the poorest. The biggest cause of unemployment—*[Interruption.]* Wage fixing is a cause of unemployment, but the biggest cause of poverty in Britain is unemployment, and wages councils put more people on the dole.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), who was a distinguished predecessor in the Department of Employment, acknowledges that wages councils destroy jobs. He raised a number of other important issues, which I hope to have the opportunity of discussing with him in future.

Mrs. Gorman: Is my hon. Friend aware of the evidence from the United States—which does have a minimum wage law—which shows that every time the minimum wage is increased, there is an increase in the number of relatively low-skilled workers who lose their jobs? That has been happening since 1947 when the law was introduced in America, where it has been a disaster.

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with my hon. Friend that there is no point in giving people the right to a minimum wage if the price paid is to have no job.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forsyth: I should like to make some progress first.

The councils impose rigid and bureaucratic constraints on employers and workers. Every year the councils meet to set a new minimum rate. Every year there are percentage increases, sometimes well above the rate of inflation. Every percentage increase sets the going rate for wage increases over an entire industry. Every firm, large or small, whatever its position, comes under pressure to raise the pay of all employees, however much they earn. The hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) must recognsie that the firms have to do so without regard to the factors that matter: market conditions, productivity, performance and ability to pay. As my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) told the House, employers, trade unionists, academics, and City experts all accept that legal wage fixing destroys jobs—yet the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden doubts the existence of the evidence.

The Opposition leadership refuses to accept the large body of independent research which shows the link between pay and jobs. It refuses to accept what is obvious to every family in the country: the more things cost, the less people can afford; the higher the pay increase, the lower the number of jobs. In Labour's "Alice in Wonderland" world, if things cost twice as much, people can have twice as many.

I am surprised that the Opposition's minimum wage is only two thirds of median men's earnings. If the minimum wage does not put jobs in jeopardy, why not pay everyone even more? Why not raise the minimum wage to average earnings? Why not increase it so that everyone is better off and no one suffers? This is the economics of the madhouse, and it is the economics of Labour Front-Bench spokesmen. The need for wages councils has long since disappeared. It is time for them to go.

It is also time individuals had the right to join the union of their choice. The Opposition, to their discredit, oppose that, claiming that it will jeopardise single union agreements.

We have heard many fine words about single union agreements from Opposition Members, and from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras in particular. They exhibit all the zeal of new converts. I have not forgotten how opposition to single union agreements by trade unions robbed Dundee and the north-east of Scotland, where I was brought up, of 1,000 jobs and £40 million worth of investment, as Ford was sent scurrying to Spain. Then, in the same year, the Electrical, Electronics, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union was drummed out of the TUC because it had signed single union agreements. For the TUC to defend Bridlington while extolling the merits of single union deals is breathtaking hypocrisy.

The provision in the Bill is concerned solely with trade union membership rights. It will mean that a person who wishes to join a trade union can no longer be told—by the TUC, by union leaders, by an employer, or by anyone else—which union he or she must join.

Mr. John Evans: Will the Minister explain something that the Secretary of State refused to explain? There is a single union agreement at Nissan in Sunderland. If a person who is a member of the Amalgamated Engineering Union decides to leave that union and to join, say, the TGWU, will he have the right to be represented in negotiations by the TGWU with Nissan management?

Mr. Forsyth: That sort of proposal was included in Labour's 1975 legislation, which was abandoned and which was not even supported by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service because it proved unworkable. Employers will remain free as they are now to decide which, if any, trade union they want to recognise. That is an entirely separate matter from the right of individuals to join a trade union of their choice.

Contrary to claims by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, there is no question of our seeking to outlaw the so-called check-off arrangements, as they are outlawed in socialist France. That is neither the intention nor the effect of our proposals——

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Why not?

Mr. Forsyth: Because we are reasonable. Employers and trade unions will still be able to enter into an

[Mr. Forsyth]

agreement to operate the check-off, but they will no longer be able to force a trade union member to accept such an arrangement against his wishes. As with other measures in the Bill, the Government on this occasion are on the side of the trade union member. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) said in a splendid contribution, no one should have to suffer check-off deductions unless he has given his clear written authority in advance.

Mr. Dobson: Does the Department know of any examples of union deductions being checked off people's wages when those people have not given their consent? If it does, why were those examples not included in the answer I was given by one of the hon. Gentleman's ministerial colleagues?

Mr. Forsyth: A convener from the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians was reported in *The Sunday Times* last year to have said:

> "a member known to me thought he had been paying his contributions for two and a half years and subsequently found he was not a member . . . now he asks where the money has gone . . . is he alone?"

Is he indeed? The hon. Gentleman should know.

We no longer live in a world dominated by the collective; a world where labour is treated as a homogenous block——

Mr. Dobson: Is it true that the company that stopped the money itself gives money to the Tory party?

Mr. Forsyth: What an astonishing question. The hon. Gentleman made it clear early in the debate that he does not understand the position in respect of individual consent for deductions of subscriptions. He asks me for an example of abuse and he comes back with a comment like that. It shows where the hon. Gentleman's loyalties truly lie.

The Bill is about creating new rights and freedoms; rights and freedoms which recognise the responsibilities of employers to their employees, of trade unions to their members, and of those who provide goods and services to the community at large. It champions the individual, whether as an employee, a trade union member or a consumer. In doing so, it provides protection against the unscrupulous employer and against the undemocratic or improper actions of trade unions or their leaders.

The debate has demonstrated in stark terms one of the fundamental differences between the Government's policies and those of the Opposition. The provisions in the Bill reinforce the Government's commitment to an employment market and an industrial relations climate based on the principles of flexibility, freedom and fairness —flexibility to meet changing business needs and the aspirations and circumstances of individual employees; freedom from unwarranted Government regulation and from manipulation by anti-competitive trade union practices; and fairness which derives from an effective package of individual employment rights.

In opposing the Bill the Opposition reveal their true colours. Their job-destroying national minimum wage and social chapter, which they espouse in the name of fairness, would hit hardest those for whom they sanctimoniously protest their support.

Worst of all, the Opposition have shown themselves to be the party which puts the interests of collective organisation above those of individual rights and freedom. In opposing the Bill's proposals for further reform of trade union legislation—reforms which respond to clear evidence of shortcomings in the existing law—the Opposition are confirming their established role as the mouthpiece of the trade union movement.

Do the Opposition really want to deny employees the right not to be victimised on health and safety grounds? Do they want to deny pregnant workers protection against dismissal? Do they want to prevent people receiving a proper statement of their terms and conditions of employment?

None of those new rights will come into law without the Bill. Will the Opposition vote tonight to deny trade union members the new democratic rights and protections included in the Bill? Do they still want to be seen as the party which denies individual trade union members proper statutory protection against mismanagement or abuse in their union's affairs?

Are the Opposition happy to see those who misuse members' subscriptions go unpunished? Do they want to prevent union members from knowing how much their leaders are paid? Do they condone elections where mythical Mickey Mouse and dubious Donald Duck can cast their votes again alongside real union members?

Will the Opposition vote to deny individual citizens protection against disruption and hardship which will come through the new citizen's right and the requirement for unions to give at least seven days' notice of strike calls? Or are the Opposition, as so often in the past, still to be cast in the role of the striker's friend?

The Opposition are singing from the old-fashioned song book of the trade union barons on whose patronage and support they still depend. But they are out of tune not only with the needs of the British economy and labour market of the 1990s, but with the aspirations and expectations of millions of individuals, including many trade union members—trade union members who, as the results at successive general elections have shown, continue to ignore the advice of their leaders by voting for the Government and supporting our reforms in this area. In their name I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 312, Noes 277.

Division No. 88] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julien
Bright, Graham

Brocke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rucliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*

Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motion relating to Car Tax (Abolition) may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

TRADE UNION REFORM AND EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS BILL *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenditure of the Secretary of State in securing the provision of careers services,

(b) any sum payable by the Secretary of State to or in respect of the Commissioner for Protection Against Unlawful Industrial Action, and

(c) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

10.14 pm

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellsemere Port and Neston): The section on "Financial effects of the Bill" says:

"The Bill is estimated to give rise to an overall net saving to public funds."

I question that judgment on a number of headings.

The Bill continues:

"The net cost to public funds arising from the provisions of the Bill which create new or extended grounds of complaints to industrial tribunals is estimated to be some £1·5 million in a full year."

I shall seek to show that those costs are indeterminate, and substantially higher than the estimated figures. In a period of alleged constraint on public expenditure, such an increase does not seem wise.

Clause 14 provides for independent scrutineers for balloting arrangements. Why do the Government not recognise that the scrutineers could enable people to be balloted in the workplace, thus saving substantial amounts of effort and time on the part of the scrutineers?

Clause 22 deals with the transfer of undertakings. The regulations will not create a high cost to the Exchequer, but if the Government are so keen to protect pension funds, why are pension funds excluded from the clause? Reference has been made this evening to Maxwell. Are the Government really taking the issue seriously, or are they protecting the interest of a few Lords who are in the business of buying and selling companies?

Schedule 4 deals with the rights of representation in disciplinary cases. Again, there is no reference to the rights of the individual. We have heard time and again today about the rights of the individual. The failure to incorporate the right of the individual to representation or clearly to specify that right in the Bill will increase the legal costs to the Exchequer from industrial tribunals, from the employment appeals tribunal, and from higher courts.

Extensive references have been made to an alleged £3 million to be saved from the abolition of the wages councils. We have had a long and impassioned debate today about that proposal. There may be savings of £3 million, but what will be the cost to the lowest paid? Has the Chancellor made the obvious calculation about the net effect of that abolition on social security payments? I should welcome a response from Ministers about the projections on such payments.

The functions of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service have been narrowed by the Bill. That is an interesting point. Narrowing the functions of ACAS may achieve some financial savings, but it contradicts what was said in the Government's official brief. Once again, fact stands in the way of dogma. The Government simply fail to understand a modern economy.

Clauses 29 and 30 narrow the scope and powers of tribunals. Chairmen will be given the right to sit on their own when working people who seek confidence in tribunals want their rights to be represented properly by a fully fledged tribunal. To cut the resources available to that service will be damaging in the extreme to the process of industrial relations. As a result of the change, more cases will go to the employment appeals tribunal and higher courts, and higher costs will therefore be involved.

The Bill is a reflection of the Government's failure, yet again, to understand. Contrary to what Conservative Members have said, the Bill attacks the structures of unions to the disadvantage of individuals, and it does so at indeterminate cost to the taxpayer.

The Bill could have afforded increased protection to individuals against unscrupulous employers and in the interests of industrial relations. It failed to do that. It could have promoted change that would have enhanced our competitiveness. It failed to do that. The mood of the House is clear: these matters will be dealt with in detail in Committee.

I take very seriously a financial point which has been made a number of times in a lighthearted manner. It is time that we had payment by results around here—including payment by results for Ministers. I am glad to see that they are not to take a pay rise this year—indeed, it is time for a pay cut. That would introduce TQM—total quality management—in style on the Government Front Bench.

10.22 pm

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Having listened to much of our proceedings today, I regard the Bill as a thoroughly sound measure. I am therefore happy to support the money resolution. The opinion of the House as a whole was also manifestly in favour of the Bill, as the result of the Division reflected a majority far greater than the Government's actual majority.

My constituents are economical by nature, as am I. The fact remains, however, that they do not begrudge expenditure on worthy causes. Who can describe it as other than worthy to secure the provision of careers services, as the money resolution requests? Which Conservative Member—and which of the saner members of the public—would begrudge money spent on protection against unlawful industrial action? We should have had that years ago. I am happy to support the money resolution.

10.23 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am pleased to discover that, rather than money resolutions going through on the nod, we are now to have genuine debates on them. I am grateful to my hon. Friends, a number of whom wish to speak, and to the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman). I hope that my information that this is the latest that the hon. Lady has been in the Chamber for more than 10 years is not true, and that she will be here regularly in future.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) to make a manifestly untrue statement? I am frequently in the House at 6 am; I am frequently here until late.

Mr. Cryer: I said that I hoped that it was not true. I hope that the hon. Lady will be here to take part in debates on money resolutions again and again. I welcome the fact that she is here. I find it extraordinary that she should take exception to my defence of her attendance record.

Why do we need a money resolution when, according to the Bill, it is estimated that it will give rise to an overall net saving in public funds? Paragraph (a) of the money resolution provides for the authorisation of

"any expenditure of the Secretary of State in securing the provision of careers services".

Yet the explanatory and financial memorandum states:

"There will be no overall change in the forecast level of central government expenditure funding for careers services by reason of the new arrangement which may be established by virtue of clause 33."

Why, therefore, is there a need for paragraph (a)?

Paragraph (b) refers to

[Mr. Cryer]

"any sum payable by the Secretary of State to or in respect of the Commissioner for Protection Against Unlawful Industrial Action".

According to the financial memorandum in the Bill, that amounts to £300,000. I shall come to that in a moment.

Paragraph (c) refers to

"any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act."

The financial memorandum makes clear that there will be expenditure of £600,000 by the Department of Employment and the Scottish and Welsh Offices.

According to the Minister, the cost of the extension of the work of industrial tribunals is estimated at £1·5 million in a full year. The additional costs for the certification officer and the new commissioner will be £300,000. Together with the £600,000 for the increase in the careers services, the total expenditure is estimated at £2·4 million, but the income claimed in the financial memorandum is £2·8 million through the wretched, nasty, vicious abolition of wages councils. The Minister is giggling about it all, but that gives a net income to the Department of £400,000. Why, therefore, do the Government need a money resolution? The reason is that the Government have allowed for large increases over and above the estimates in the paragraphs dealing with the financial effects of the Bill.

The £300,000 allocated for the new investigatory functions of the certification officer and the activities of the new commissioner is a paltry sum. A function of the certification officer will be to investigate financial malpractices in trade unions, of which there is very little evidence. Perhaps the Minister can confirm that the sum is small because the Government do not expect to find any financial malpractice. When the Government were considering that function, why did they not apply the same criteria to the City, and particularly to Lloyd's insurance market? There is no legislation before us which offers to trawl over the board rooms and the accounts of the big businesses which back the Tory party. Instead, the Government are spending taxpayers' money in an area where there is very little evidence of financial malpractice.

In addition, the new commissioner is to be covered by the self-same £300,000. He will decide whether High Court or Court of Session actions will be financed. On that basis, I should have thought that £300,000 was a very small sum. The one closed shop that the Government do not oppose is the lawyers' closed shop. The Minister knows full well that that closed shop can run away with hundreds of thousands of pounds in a matter of days. The complicated libel actions and breach of contract actions which take place in our courts can result in costs of £100,000 and £200,000. The Bill specifically requires the new commissioner to deal with cases where, because of their complexity, an individual cannot take them any further. Therefore, I wonder whether £300,000 is adequate since the Government will use taxpayers' money to bolster up complaints about trade unions and send them into the courts. At the same time, the Government are going to cut legal aid when people seek redress in the courts for ordinary purposes, including criminal actions. That reveals a scandalous set of double standards.

The paragraphs relating to the financial effects of the Bill refer to a figure of £1·5 million in respect of complaints to industrial tribunals. Those complaints are being enlarged to include challenges to terms of collective agreements, breaches of contracts of employment, sex discrimination cases, suspension disputes over maternity leave and remuneration, and employment protection in health and safety at work cases. Opposition Members support the view that we should protect people who raise health and safety issues at work, but that is a very minor part of a generally very bad Bill. Will the £1·5 million referred to in the Bill and the power in the money resolution be sufficient?

My next point relates to the savings claimed from the abolition of the wages councils which protect the lowest paid people in the country. The Minister cannot justify their abolition by claiming that it will create more jobs. When the Minister was asked a parliamentary question about that, he was unable to quantify the number of jobs that would be saved as a result of the abolition of wages councils.

The Government claim that they will save £2·8 million. Is that figure accurate? If it is accurate, the Government do not need the money resolution. The Minister has replied to questions about the costs of the wages councils and the Government claim that their abolition will save £2·8 million. However, there were only 55 wages inspectors in post on 2 November—down nearly 20 on the correct number. Is the Government's calculation of the savings based on the wages councils in full operation or on actual expenditure?

The Minister has also said that one third of wages council employees are paid at, or just above, minimum rates, so they receive relatively low pay. As there were only 55 wages inspectors, and presumably only a small support staff, does that add up to £2·8 million? If it does, the Minister must explain how he reaches that figure. If the figures add up to £2·8 million, the Government do not need the money resolution.

There was a shabby parade of Tory Members through the Lobby to attack the lowest paid by abolishing the wages councils when most of those Tory Members are moonlighting and have six, eight or 10 other jobs which pay more than their parliamentary salaries. That is an absolute and utter disgrace.

10.33 pm

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): I wish to raise two points in relation to the money resolution. Both relate to legal aid.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has already referred to legal aid, but Ministers have not referred to the availability of legal aid to cover the new extended jurisdiction of the industrial tribunals. I am sure that I do not have to remind the Secretary of State and her ministerial colleagues that legal aid attaches to breach of contract actions brought in the county courts and in the High Court.

The Government propose today to extend the jurisdiction of industrial tribunals to include those breach of contract actions, and I fully support that. It makes much sense for the industrial tribunals to have that new jurisdiction, but will the £1·5 million referred to in the Bill cover the provision of legal aid in breach of contract actions which will now be brought before industrial tribunals? That is a very important point.

If the Government are saying that legal aid will not apply to new breach of contract actions brought before the industrial tribunals, we are witnessing yet another cut in the legal aid budget, which is under severe pressure. We know that the Lord Chancellor is trying to reduce the volume of legal aid. If legal aid will not apply, members of the public and of the House will be interested to hear what the Government's true intentions are. That is an important issue. Legal aid should be available for such actions. It is available in the county court and the High Court, and it should be available once such actions are brought before industrial tribunals.

Secondly, the Government propose to spend at least £300,000 of taxpayers' money to support the activities of the so-called commissioner for protection against unlawful industrial action. My view, and that of many of my hon. Friends, is that the commissioner is for the provision of vexatious litigation. Given the financial circumstances facing the Government—excessive borrowing, the public sector borrowing requirement, and so on—and the financial constraints on the legal aid budget, I wonder whether it is appropriate for them to propose to spend money which could be better spent on legal aid elsewhere, such as on civil legal aid, which is under severe pressure, on promoting silly claims which will cost taxpayers money that they can ill afford to lose.

I hope that the Minister will be able to respond, especially to my questions about legal aid and breach of contract actions, which is an important issue of practice and principle. I know that many people who are concerned with that field will be interested in his response.

10.35 pm

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): I join my hon. Friends to question some of the financial estimates that the Government have produced in relation to the Bill.

The part of the Bill which has been least discussed today is the provision on the careers service. In the section entitled, "Financial effects of the Bill", it states:

> "There will be no overall change in the forecast level of central government expenditure funding for careers services by reason of the new arrangements which may be established by virtue of clause 33. In fully implementing the legislation, a small increase in resources (£0·6 million) will be required by the Department of Employment and the Scottish and Welsh Offices."

I do not think that we should be confused about the new arrangements for the careers service. When one reads the Bill, it is clear that we are talking about privatisation.

This seems to be the night for hon. Members to declare their interests, so I shall declare mine. Before I came to this place, I worked as a trade unionist in the public services and the public sector. Sadly, I endured a range of privatisation experiments and I have yet to come across one which has not cost the Exchequer far more than it has saved, whether in monitoring arrangements put out to contract, or in wholesale privatisation. Nothing said by Ministers tonight dissuades me from the belief that the privatisation of the careers service, as envisaged by the Government in the Bill, will cost the Exchequer more than the £0·6 million estimated.

The provisions relating to the rights of pregnant women at work seem to have been welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House, but the Government's financial estimate of their cost seems to have gone astray. We know that when the issue was discussed in Brussels, the British Government moved heaven and earth to water down the directive. Having succeeded in doing so, they could not even bring themselves to vote for it in the Council of Ministers. They went all the way to Brussels just to abstain. As we are discussing money, I wonder whether it was worth the air fare to go to Brussels to abstain on a directive that they had watered down more than it needed to be.

That directive was passed and, as a result, women in Britain and elsewhere will be entitled to paid maternity leave, irrespective of service. Or will they? This is where the financial implications come in. They will probably not be, because the proposed abolition of wages councils will inevitably take many women employees below the lower earnings limit of £54. More than 20 per cent. of working women—76,600 women—already receive pay of less than that figure. The abolition of wages councils will inevitably increase that figure, and the result of that will either be to reduce income to the Exchequer or mean more women turning to the social security system to make up their income. That, in turn, begins to undermine the estimated £2·8 million saving from abolishing wages councils.

Although working women will suffer in the main, many others will be affected. In my region of the midlands, it is estimated that about 270,000 employees will be affected by the abolition of wages councils. That represents about one in every 10 households. In other words, the crazy part of what the Government propose is that by attacking the pay of the already low paid, the recession will be prolonged and income to the Exchequer will be reduced. A pay cut of just 20p per hour in wages council industries means £10 million per week being removed from the purchasing power of the low paid, and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Member is getting wide of the subject. Indeed, he is making a Second Reading speech. He must speak to the money resolution.

Mr. Burden: I apologise for digressing, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In their estimates of the cost of the Bill, the Government have been highly selective in what they have chosen to include and exclude. We were told last week, when discussing the Department of Social Security's budget, that benefits would be index linked. I question the willingness of the Government to do that if, as a result of the effects of this measure, with the abolition of wages councils, the income——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member really must address his remarks to the money resolution.

Mr. Burden: My remarks are linked to the resolution, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the provision to which I referred at the outset deals specifically with the consequential effects of the Bill on the budgets of other Departments. That is the point that I was about to make.

I shall not delay the House any longer, however, save to say that when the balance sheet is finally worked out it will show that the Bill has cost the Government money and has cost the low paid both money and rights. When, in due course, my hon. Friends and I show that to have happened, I hope that Conservative Members will have the honesty and dignity to accept that we were right and that they were wrong.

10.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, for Employment (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): We have had an interesting debate on the money resolution, although it was perhaps somewhat unusual bearing in mind the way in which the hon. Member for Bradford, North chose to attack my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), saying that somehow——

Mr. Cryer: The Minister might get my constituency right.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman has represented nearly everywhere, so from the point of getting his constituency right——

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Do you agree that it is important for hon. Members to get the names of constituencies right, thus enabling the *Official Report* to identify the Members in question? The fact that the Minister is here so rarely does not excuse him from giving the correct constituencies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. While that is not a point of order for the Chair, it is helpful if hon. Members get the names of constituencies right.

Mr. McLoughlin: That is a very wise ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will appreciate that we have a problem in that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has represented many constituencies both here and in the European Parliament. To say that Members of Parliament should not moonlight when for two years the hon. Gentleman was doing two jobs——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am at a loss to understand what that has to do with the money resolution.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am, of course, guided by you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I was making the point made by the hon. Member for Bradford, South in attacking my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster.

The resolution provides authority for the provision, out of money provided by Parliament, of any public expenditure that may arise as a result of clause 33, which deals with the provisions for the careers service, clause 19, which makes provision for the new commissioner for protection against unlawful industrial action, and to grant assistance to individuals contemplating or taking proceedings against trade unions under the new right established by that clause, and for any additional public expenditure which may arise as a result of the other clauses in the Bill. That includes the expenditure arising from clause 8, which provides new investigatory powers for the certification officer and for the various clauses in parts I and II of the Bill which will extend and create new grounds for complaints to industrial tribunals.

It may be helpful if I explain that clause 33 of the Bill provides for the management of the careers service to be opened up so that it can be run in a variety of ways and be more responsive to the demands of local economic and education communities. It achieves that by placing a duty on the relevant Secretaries of State to ensure that careers advice is provided throughout Great Britain. That would be a tremendous advance for the careers service and not a diminution of it, as Opposition Members suggest. It is not our intention to diminish the careers service. Our intention is to secure more widespread availability of careers advice to the public in general.

The new provisions which may be established as a result of clause 33 will not lead to any overall change in the forecast level of central Government funding of the careers service. However, a small increase in resources—an estimated £600,000—is needed to cover the administration costs of my Department and the Scottish and Welsh Offices in implementing the legislation.

Clause 19 will enable an individual citizen deprived of goods and services because of unlawful organisation of industrial action to go to court to stop that happening. The citizen will also be able to apply for material assistance for the court proceedings. There will also be a new independent commissioner for protection against unlawful industrial action—something which the Opposition will undoubtedly oppose, as we have seen today. We believe in increasing, not diminishing, the rights of individuals.

Several of the clauses in parts I and II of the Bill create new and enhanced individual rights, the enforcement of which will be effected by providing extended grounds for complaints to industrial tribunals. Following any such application to an industrial tribunal, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service will offer its conciliation services to both parties. The principal additional costs which will arise from those proposals will be those of the industrial tribunals in dealing with complaints under the new rights, and the corresponding increase in the workload of ACAS.

It is believed that, overall, the Bill will bring savings, as several hon. Members on both sides of the House have said. I commend the resolution to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenditure of the Secretary of State in securing the provision of careers services,

(b) any sum payable by the Secretary of State to or in respect of the Commissioner for Protection Against Unlawful Industrial Action, and

(c) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.

Ways and Means

CAR TAX

Motion made, and Question proposed,

Car tax (abolition)

That the following provisions shall have effect—

Abolition: the basic rule

1. In section 1 of the Car Tax Act 1983 (charge to tax) the following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (2)—

> "(2A) Where (apart from this subsection) car tax on a vehicle would become due on or after 13th November 1992, it shall not become due and shall be deemed never to have been charged."

Consequential amendments

2.—(1) The Car Tax Act 1983 shall also be amended as follows.

(2) In section 4 (registration of makers and importers) the following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (1)—

> "(1A) Subsection (1) above—
>
> (a) shall not make a person liable to be registered by reference to anything done in a calendar year falling after 1992;
>
> (b) shall not make a person liable to be registered by reference to vehicles made or imported in 1992, unless he makes or imports not less than ten chargeable vehicles before 13th November 1992."

(3) In that section the following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (3)—

> "(3A) Without prejudice to subsection (3) above, the Commissioners shall cancel the registration of any person when they are satisfied that all tax due from him has been accounted for."

(4) In section 6 (converted and adapted vehicles) the following subsections shall be inserted after subsection (6)—

> "(7) No direction may be given under subsection (4) above on or after 13th November 1992 except in relation to vehicles whose conversion or adaptation was completed before that date.
>
> (8) Where a person is registered in pursuance of subsection (5) above, the Commissioners shall cancel his registration when they are satisfied that all tax due from him has been accounted for."

(5) In Schedule 1 (administration and collection) in paragraph 5 (records, accounts and returns) the following sub-paragraph shall be inserted after sub-paragraph (1)—

> "(1A) The duties under sub-paragraph (1) above, except so far as arising by virtue of section 27(3) of the Finance Act 1989 (certificates), shall be limited as follows—
>
> (a) the duty under paragraph (a) shall apply only to records and accounts relating to tax which has become due and vehicles on which tax has become due;
>
> (b) the duty under paragraph (b) shall apply only to records and accounts relating to vehicles on which tax has become due;
>
> (c) the duty under paragraph (c), so far as relating to returns of vehicles, shall apply only to returns of vehicles on which tax has become due."

(6) In paragraph 5(2) of that Schedule after "tax" there shall be inserted "due".

(7) In paragraph 6 of that Schedule (information) the following sub-paragraphs shall be inserted after sub-paragraph (2)—

> "(3) The duties under sub-paragraph (1) above shall apply only to information and documents relating to vehicles on which tax has become due.
>
> (4) Sub-paragraph (2) above shall not apply where the conversion is completed on or after 13th November 1992."

(8) In paragraph 7 of that Schedule (entry and search) the following sub-paragraph shall be inserted after sub-paragraph (2)—

> "(2A) The powers under sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) above shall be exercisable only for the purpose of ascertaining whether tax is due and, if so, the amount of the tax."

(9) In paragraph 8(3)(b) of that Schedule (offences) after "tax" there shall be inserted "payable".

(10) In paragraph 12 of that Scheudle (regulations) the following shall be inserted at the end—

> "Any duty imposed by regulations under paragraph (c) or (d) above shall apply only where the vehicles are vehicles on which tax has become due."

(11) Paragraph 13 of that Schedule (protection of car tax through vehicles excise system) shall be omitted.

Special cases

3. The Car Tax Act 1983 shall also be amended by inserting the following section after section 7—

> "*Abolition: special cases*
>
> 7A.—(1) This section applies where (apart from this section) car tax on a vehicle would have become due before 13th November 1992.
>
> (2) In a case where—
>
> (a) the tax would have become due at a time mentioned in section 5(2)(b) above, and
>
> (b) the conditions mentioned in subsection (3) below are satisfied,
>
> the tax shall be deemed not to have become due and never to have been charged.
>
> (3) The conditions referred to in subsection (2) above are that—
>
> (a) the tax would have become due because an offer to sell the vehicle was made by the person to whom it was delivered as mentioned in section 5(2)(b) above and was accepted, or because an offer to purchase the vehicle was made to that person and was accepted,
>
> (b) at the end of 12th November 1992 no sales invoice had been issued in respect of the vehicle by that person,
>
> (c) at the end of that day that person had not received the full purchase price of the vehicle, and
>
> (d) at the end of that day the purchaser had not taken delivery of the vehicle.
>
> (4) Where the tax would have become due at the time mentioned in paragraph (c) of section 5(2) above but at the end of 12th November 1992 the vehicle—
>
> (a) was still in the possession of the person to whom it was sent from the premises mentioned in that paragraph, and
>
> (b) had not been sold by that person or appropriated to his own use,
>
> the tax shall be deemed not to have become due and never to have been charged.
>
> (5) In a case where—
>
> (a) subsection (4) of section 5 above would have applied in relation to the tax or (as the case may be) the tax would have become due at the time mentioned in subsection (6) of that section, and
>
> (b) the conditions mentioned in subsection (6) below are satisfied,
>
> the tax shall be deemed not to have become due and never to have been charged.
>
> (6) The conditions referred to in subsection (5) above are that—
>
> (a) the vehicle was made or imported by an unregistered person for the purposes of a business carried on by him,
>
> (b) at the end of 12th November 1992 the vehicle was still in the possession of the unregistered person or was in the possession of a motor dealer who obtained it directly from him, and
>
> (c) at the end of that day the vehicle had not been sold by, or appropriated to the use of, the unregistered person or the dealer;
>
> and in this subsection 'unregistered person' means a person not registered under this Act."

Cancellation of prospective amendments

4. In the Finance (No. 2) Act 1992, section 18, Schedule 4 and Part VI of Schedule 18 (which make prospective amendments of the Car Tax Act 1983) shall be deemed never to have been enacted.

Commencement

5. This Resolution shall be deemed to have come into force on 13th November 1992.

Provisional statutory effect

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Sir John Cope.]*

10.48 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): As this is a ways and means resolution, will the Minister say whether the ways and means are to be found by increasing motoring taxes in next year's Budget? There has been much suggestion in the press that the abolition of car tax, which may prove helpful to some car manufacturers and retailers, will be clawed back by an increase in motoring taxes. Those stories were not denied, or may have been fairly official, although at this stage the Treasury does not specify what it might do.

Clearly, by choosing that instrument, the Government have forgone the opportunity to use car tax as an environmental policy instrument by putting a higher rate of car tax on heavy fuel-using vehicles and none on low fuel-using vehicles. It would be useful to know whether, having chosen that instrument, they are saying that there will ultimately be no net cost, or only the cost arising between now and next April, because they intend to claw back the whole lot through an increase in motoring tax later.

10.50 pm

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): When my right hon. Friend the Minister concludes the case for the ways and means resolution, will he reflect on the need very quickly to bring the company car tax consultation document to the House and to finalise it before too long? That is part of the excise duty argument. Will he do it as quickly as he can, please?

10.51 pm

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): First, I welcome the motion and the Government's partial conversion to a point of view which the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, trade unions in the industry and Members of Parliament representing car manufacturing constituencies have been advocating for some time.

I hope that I can claim some credit for the fact that the tax is being abolished. I called on the Government to act on it, both in questions to the Leader of the House on 19 July last year and in an Adjournment debate four days later. On 12 November last year, I asked the Prime Minister in Prime Minister's questions to back the British car industry by reducing the absurdly high levels of sales tax on new cars, then running at 27·3 per cent.

Abolition will also get rid of the anomaly of double taxation, which is always resented, whereby value added tax has been levied on the car tax. Its abolition is all the more welcome for that.

As with some of the other measures in the autumn statement, the complaint from Labour Members is not that some of our proposals are being purloined by the Government—the more they do what Labour says, the happier we shall be and the better off Britain will be—but that they have taken too long to acknowledge that we were right, they are half-hearted about it and they are not adopting our whole programme for recovery, which is what the economy really needs.

So it is with the car industry. Although we welcome the measure and the extra car sales to which it will give rise, no one can claim that it will in itself be sufficient to produce the scale of recovery that motor manufacturing desperately needs. Indeed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) has pointed out to me, if second-hand car dealers cut their trade-in prices because of the knock-on effect of cheaper new cars, as they might, there will not be the £400 stimulus per car which the autumn statement assumes.

Two other important points need to be made on this resolution: first, the sheer scale of the lack of consumer confidence, which has been locking the industry into recession; and secondly, the likely impact of the additional taxation on motorists, which the Chancellor warned that he is to impose in next year's Budget.

As the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said to me in a letter on the abolition of the special car tax;

> "Consumer confidence remains very shaky due to high levels of unemployment and personal debt; fear of unemployment; and negative equity in the housing market. It must be remembered that whilst a reduction in interest rates is welcome, car dealers have been offering interest-free finance on many models, and reductions in interest rates matter only in that they add to individuals' personal sense of well-being, rather than enabling them to buy cars at a cheaper price."

Mr. Mills: Did not that communication also mention the increased number of cars that would be sold—60,000 in 1992-93?

Mr. Smith: Indeed—I am coming to that. The forecast was for 60,000 in the current year and for 70,000 when the full year's effect of total abolition is taken on board.

But that must be set in the context of the sheer depth of the recession in the demand for cars. Compared with new registrations, which reached well over 2 million a year between 1987 and 1990, there were just 1·59 million last year, and the latest projection for this year is, at best, 1·56 million. So, even if the abolition of car tax were to result in an increase in sales by as much as 70,000, sales would still be some 670,000, or 29 per cent., below their 1989 level. That is a measure of the depth of the recession into which the Government's incompetence has plunged us. It also shows us how puny the measures contained in the autumn statement are by comparison.

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that car sales increased by more than 25 per cent. in the year up to this October, and that exports are up by well over a third, so the car industry is achieving much more than it did 12 months ago? Will he not acknowledge those facts?

Mr. Smith: I very much welcome the improvement in car production and sales to which the hon. Gentleman referred, but set against the scale of the overall depression in demand for cars, and compared with the levels of sales and production in the late 1980s, the figures provide scant comfort for those who work in the industry. I commend the truly heroic performance of the car industry and its work force in terms of the quality and competitiveness of new models, and the impressive productivity gains.

Nothing could more clearly demonstrate the fact that, helpful as the measure to abolish car tax is, above all the

[Mr. Smith]

industry needs a massive boost to consumer confidence. That will not be created as long as unemployment is set to continue rising, as the Chancellor concedes that it will. It will not happen while people are fearful for their jobs and worried about their accumulated debt.

It will not happen for the 5 million workers in the public sector who now face the Government's 1·5 per cent. incomes policy. They will not rush out to buy new cars, and neither will the 2·5 million workers covered by the wages councils that the Government have tonight so disgracefully resolved to abolish. All those factors will leave the domestic production of cars struggling to sustain the small 1·8 per cent. increase on last year that it is presently registering.

The hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) mentioned exports. Welcome as any increase in sales is —exports are critical to the industry—the measure will not of itself help exports. It would be wrong for the Government to place too much reliance on devaluation as a means of boosting sales and output. As the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said in its briefing on 9 November, after devaluation:

> "Despite impressive production figures in the face of the recession there are signs of growing difficulties in export markets, especially within the European Community. If this trend continues motor companies have warned that production schedules could be revised."

In its summary of the main issues that the motor industry is pressing on Government, the society states:

> "Inflation is still feared, the pound is regarded as unstable at its present level (which is much too low—the industry was competitive at DM2·90 to the pound) and there is great concern lest the industry again be subjected to taxation to help the government fund the PSBR. A two-speed Europe would speedily negate the purpose of the foreign investment so that new capacity would replace rather than add to existing capacity."

The lesson to be drawn from that is that it would benefit the car industry far more were the Government to get their act together on Europe and use the wasted British presidency to place at the top of the agenda for the Edinburgh summit the concerted European programme for economic recovery for which Labour has called.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): Will my hon. Friend join me in applauding the efforts of the socialist group in the European Parliament, particularly the work done by Carole Tongue MEP, in producing a report for precisely the sort of European strategy for the motor industry that my hon. Friend mentioned? Does my hon. Friend agree that, rather than adopting the sort of hands-off approach presently adopted by the Government, it would be better if they joined in the sort of initiatives taking place in Europe to ensure that the car industry has a stable and secure future? That applies not only to the big manufacturers, but to the many hundreds of car component firms in the midlands and elsewhere that need such a strategy.

Mr. Smith: I join my hon. Friend in commending our colleagues in Europe who, like us, have been pressing for this concerted programme for recovery. The car industry is a pan-European industry, so what happens in Europe is crucial to the prospects for exports and for the sale of British cars. However much importance the Government attach to measures to stimulate the economy, they are bound to run into balance of payments difficulties if the expansion does not also take place in other member states of the Community. We need to expand together. That is why the Government must put at the top of the agenda for the Edinburgh summit measures for recovery, to lift the fear of unemployment and jointly to stimulate investment. I understand that the President of the Commission wanted the Prime Minister to put those items on the Birmingham summit agenda, but the latter refused to do so.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Given all that he has said about the need for Europewide expansion, why did the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues go through the Lobbies en masse against Maastricht?

Mr. Smith: Because——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Both hon. Members have now gone very wide of the ways and means resolution.

Mr. Smith: We were registering a vote of no confidence in the Government, as Conservative Members know full well.

I must heed your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and return to the subject of the debate. The House needs to know from the Government exactly why and how they propose to recoup from motorists the £750 million which it is estimated the abolition of the special car tax will cost. In the autumn statement, the Chancellor said:

> "any action in this area will have to be paid for in my next Budget by higher motoring taxes after 1992-93."—[*Official Report*, 12 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 998.]

I trust that the Paymaster General will tell us why this money is being clawed back from motorists. A great part of the case against the special car tax was that it was unfair to have a levy that was not similarly levied on other goods. If the Government accept that logic, how do they justify proposing to clobber car purchasers again to compensate for the removal of the tax? Will that not amount to a transfer of the tax burden from purchasers of new cars to motorists in general? So motorists who cannot afford to buy a new car will have to pay the tax instead of those who can afford to.

Why, on Government figures, is there a possibility that total taxation on motorists will rise? Is the £750 million which appears to be the gross cost of abolishing the tax the actual amount that the Government intend to claw back? If so, why do not they make allowance for the extra VAT which will be generated by the increased sales of new cars arising from the abolition of the special car tax? If the full-year effect of the abolition increased new car sales, including imports, by 70,000, at an average price of £10,000, the additional VAT revenues generated would amount to about £122 million; so even if the cost of abolition is to be recouped in the way the Chancellor proposes, should not the amount be £628 million, not £750 million?

What is more, even if this amount is clawed back, is it not wrong to refer to it as some new fiscal stimulus— except for the few remaining months of this financial year? Typically, the Chancellor claimed a great many benefits for his autumn statement, but on examination those benefits fade away even more quickly than his hallucinogenic green shoots of the pre-election spring.

We welcome the measure abolishing the special car tax, which was a Tory tax in the first place, but we want answers to the questions that I have posed, and we warn that this measure will not be enough to provide the uplift in confidence that the car industry and the wider economy so desperately need. A full programme for economic recovery is needed for that—and that, sadly, is not on offer from the Government.

11.5 pm

Mr. Michael Ancram (Devizes): Briefly, and in contrast to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), with his sour and rather grudging welcome, I want to say how much the measure has been welcomed in my constituency where both Honda and Rover manufacture cars. They consider that this has been a real boost to their work and see it as a sign of hope for the future.

The workers in those two plants will have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said about confidence. They believe that the measure gives them a real hope that they will see their industry come out of recession. All they will have heard tonight from the hon. Gentleman, speaking for the Labour party, is the usual talking down of their industry, confidence and hope.

I welcome the measure, and I hope that the House will also welcome it.

11.6 pm

The Paymaster General (Sir John Cope): The hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) welcomed the measure, admittedly in what my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) called a grudging way, and he was right to do so. He had no alternative but to do so, because the measure had been widely welcomed by not only the motor manufacturers, to whom the hon. Member for Oxford, East referred, but also by the retail trade and many other people. It is not surprising because it is a welcome measure.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the car tax as a Conservative tax in the first place. In fact, it carried into VAT in 1973 the extra rate of purchase tax that there was and had been for a long time under the previous Labour Government. The car tax continued throughout the subsequent Labour Government, and it has fallen to a Conservative Government to abolish it in this year's autumn statement, after having halved it in the Budget earlier this year.

The hon. Gentleman also claimed credit for the abolition of the tax by saying that he thought of the idea first. As you well know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, having been here for some time, when a tax is reduced or abolished, nearly everyone claims credit for it, but no one ever does when it is the other way round.

I shall not follow the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the autumn statement—apart from anything else, we are about to have two days of debate on that—but it is undoubtedly the fact that this measure, taken together with the other measures in the autumn statement, will boost confidence and help to assist the welcome improvement in domestic car sales and car sales generally.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of exports, which do not arise under the resolution, and drew attention to the difficulties in other markets, which is another way of saying that other countries have problems of recession as well as us. But I noted what he said about a two-speed Europe and it came oddly from one who voted against Maastricht the other day along with most of his hon. Friends—all his hon. Friends.

Attention has been drawn to what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said in the course of his autumn statement—that any action taken in this area will be paid for in the next Budget by higher motoring taxes. That, in a sense, is the answer to the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). That was made clear by the Chancellor in the autumn statement, and I can confirm it.

I can also confirm that the hon. Member for Oxford, East is right to say that the £750 million is the gross cost next year—that is to say, car tax plus VAT. What I cannot do, and have no intention of doing, is anticipate next year's Budget statement and the way in which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will approach this aspect of it. It would clearly be wrong for me to do that.

Mr. Burden: I do not wish to press the Paymaster General too hard about what his right hon. Friend may say next year, but will he give some preliminary responses on taxation levels and the method of taxing company cars? The Government have claimed considerable credit for what they describe as taxation of perks in that connection. If it is possible that they will look at that next year, will they bear in mind the fact that the extent to which taxation has been levied on company cars has principally affected the possession rather than the use of such cars? As a result, a company director who has all his or her—it will probably be his—private mileage paid for will be affected disproportionately, not as greatly——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions are supposed to be brief, and they are not supposed to be speeches.

Sir John Cope: I was about to intervene on the hon. Member myself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I suppose that you were right to dissuade me.

Company car tax has nothing to do with the motion, but my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) mentioned it as well, and I will pass on what has been said to my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. We are in the process of considering company car tax, and we shall continue to consider it between now and the next Budget.

Mr. Beith: Is the Paymaster General saying—or does the Chancellor intend to imply—that the Budget announcement in April, projecting a tax forward into the forthcoming year, will feature a tax sufficient to recoup all the costs in the current financial year, together with those in the next financial year following the abolition of car tax?

Sir John Cope: I have no wish to add anything to what my right hon. Friend said in the autumn statement, and I do not think that, on reflection, the hon. Gentlemen would expect me to.

Mr. Andrew Smith: I must push the Paymaster General on that point. The Chancellor has said that he intends to recoup the cost from increases in motoring taxation next year. May I repeat the point that I put to him earlier? Does he not accept that the VAT on extra sales will bring in some £122 million, and would it not be right to take that off the extra cost? Otherwise, will there not be additional overall motoring taxation?

Sir John Cope: I heard what the hon. Gentleman said the first time, including his speculation about VAT yield.

[Sir John Cope]

Yes, he may push me if he wishes, but I will not add to what I have already said, and I do not think that he would really expect me to do so.

The motion introduces the abolition of car tax, and, of course, primary legislation will put that into effect. The move has been widely welcomed in the car industry—both the retail and manufacturing sectors—and even more widely than that. Moreover, it has been welcomed in the House this evening, and I commend it.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That a Bill be brought in upon the foregoing resolution: And that the Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Clarke, Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary MacGregor, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lang, Mr. Secretary Lilley, Mr. Michael Portillo, Mr. Stephen Dorrell, Sir John Cope and Mr. Anthony Nelson do prepare and bring it in.

CAR TAX ABOLITION BILL

Sir John Cope accordingly presented a Bill to abolish Car Tax: And the same was read the First time, and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow; and to be printed. [Bill 87.]

PETITION

Samuel Merry

11.15 pm

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): The background to this petition was the brutal killing of Samuel Merry, a constituent in Ayr, earlier this year. The sentences passed on his killers were widely perceived to be inexplicably lenient. Immediately thereafter, some 3,000 or 4,000 people in Ayr signed a petition prepared by the family, but its format was not acceptable to the House. Accepting that, a new petition was prepared and signed by 100 neighbours and relatives of the late Samuel Merry. Tonight, I present that petition, which states:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that the honourable House will introduce legislation at the earliest possible date to provide the Prosecution in Scotland with the right of appeal against sentences. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

I beg leave to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Social Fund

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

11.15 pm

Mr. Jamie Cann (Ipswich): I think that I can safely say that this debate is not being televised. Given the number of Members present, I thought of cutting short my speech but as the Minister is present and cannot go until I have finished I have decided not to do so.

I was elected in April, so I bring fresh eyes to the social fund; they do not look very fresh at this time of night, no doubt, but in parliamentary matters they are. I did not know about the social fund until I was elected, and I have had to learn much since. The question that I want to pose is, does it achieve what the Government set out to achieve when they established it?

The social fund, as hon. Members will be aware, if we are still in the plural, covers by regulation a number of areas that I do not wish to consider tonight. I wish to consider two discretionary areas—budgetary loans and community care grants.

The aim of the social fund is to provide for exceptional and unexpected calls on household budgets that cannot be dealt with through the normal use of income support. It was stated that the Government wished the administration of the grant and loan to be more flexible and responsive to individual need, and with a minimum of formality. The question is whether it is more flexible and responsive, whether it offers the minimum formality and whether it copes with the exceptional and unexpected. I should like to share with the House three cases that have arisen in my constituency in the past few months that cast some doubt on that.

The first is a case of a budgetary loan. I shall call the person concerned Paul. In all three cases, I shall use an assumed name. If the Minister wants the proper names, I shall give them to him afterwards. Paul has a wife and five children. His total income from invalidity benefit is £136 a week, and after fixed costs the family of seven is left with £65 a week to cover food, toiletries, household expenditure, bus fares and so on. Paul and his wife asked for a loan of £200 to purchase shoes for their five children ready for the new school term. The response that he received was that

> "The Social Fund Officer has decided after considering your application and your personal circumstances that your needs do not have enough priority and we cannot pay you the money you asked for. There is a limited amount of money in the Social Fund available for loans and grants and the Social Fund Officer has to decide when looking at individual applications which of them have the most priority."

If children's shoes do not have sufficient priority it appears to me that not enough money has been put into the system.

At least Paul thought that he could afford to repay a loan. Those who cannot are utterly dependent on a community care grant. I will read out the criteria for determining whether someone can have such a grant. It

> "may be awarded to promote Community Care . . . by assisting an applicant with expenses . . . where such assistance will
>
> (i) help that person or a member of his family to re-establish himself in the community following a stay in institutional or residential care; or
>
> (ii) help that person, or a member of his family to remain in the community rather than enter institutional or residential care; or
>
> (iii) ease exceptional pressure on that person and his family; or
>
> (iv) allow the applicant or his family to care for a prisoner or young offender on home leave; ".

That is admirably flexible, until we come to the case of Ray.

Ray is single. He got into trouble and was put in gaol. He has been out of gaol now for just over a year. He has gone straight. He is on income support but he has debts. The income that he can spend each week is £30. All the agencies have tried to help Ray—the probation service, the housing service, the social services together have helped to keep him straight. They got him a furnished bed-sitter and when it was found that there were a considerable number of undesirable people with him there—not his fault—they got him a flat. But he has not got a bed, a cooker, a fridge, a chair or pots and pans. He has walls, a roof and a floor.

Ray, on £30 a week, cannot repay a budgetary loan, so he applied for a community care grant. What happened? He thought that he would be all right under section (i), but the social fund officer said:

> "I acknowledge that 'Ray' has had to leave accommodation that was unsuitable to his needs. He has however been living within the community for some twelve months prior to his application for a grant. There is no evidence . . . that he has not re-established himself during this time."

So, no job, no bed, no furniture, no real income, but it is not, apparently, to be assumed that he has not re-established himself successfully in the community. I would say that he has not.

Ray has said

> "that he is likely to have to return to care if a CCG is refused"—

this is the second category.

> "I can see there to be no tangible prospect of such an event occurring. . . . It may be that he will have to give his flat up and seek alternative accommodation if he does not get the grant. He is not at risk, however, of having to go into some form of care."

So he was ruled out on that as well.

What about the stress element—section iii? Ray

> "is single and without family ties. The situation that he finds himself in has and is no doubt causing him pressure."

Well, it would, would it not?

> "An award of a CCG would, however, only assist him. It would not help anyone else."

But the regulations say "the person and his family", so as it would not help anyone else, it would help only Ray, the tests set out in section iii are not met. So Ray does not get his grant.

That is how a supposedly flexible system has inflexibly damaged that young man. I do not believe that that is right and I am sure that the vast majority of people in this country do not believe that it is right.

Bill is another young man, who lives with his mother and his step-sister, who has a baby and another on the way. He is on income support. He has debts and cannot afford a loan. He wanted some money to buy a suit so that he could go for job interviews, because he has qualifications but he just does not happen to have any money. His application was refused. He said that he needed the suit because getting a job would mean that he could put more money into the family and could relieve the stress on the family. That argument was not accepted. The social security officials said that the only stress that would be relieved would be his stress, so the tests had not been met.

A young man cannot get a job because he cannot get a grant. A young man cannot sit at home although he is

[Mr. Jamie Cann]

trying to go straight because he cannot get a grant. Yet the system is supposed to be flexible and adaptable to people's needs. It is not flexible or responsive. It is certainly not informal; it is bureaucratic. People cannot afford the loans and they cannot get grants. The system is more about budgets than it is about need, as I realise from the people who come to see me.

The system is hated by the people who are supposed to be able to depend on it in their hour of need and it is even hated by the people who have to run it. The system and the funding should be urgently reviewed.

11.25 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): I congratulate the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Cann) on obtaining this Adjournment debate. I have listened carefully to what he said. Despite his apparently coming here with little knowledge of the social fund—I cannot believe that an experienced council leader in Ipswich has no knowledge of the social fund—he was able to outline not only his cases, but his general feelings about the social fund extremely well.

I shall deal with some of the hon. Gentleman's specific points. He will appreciate that I cannot discuss individual cases, although I am more than willing to receive from him details of the cases that he mentioned. It was kind of him to outline the circumstances without using the real names, and I appreciate that. If he wants to bring particular circumstances to my attention, I shall be more than happy to receive a note from him.

I hope, therefore, that I can provide some useful points in reply. As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, we undertake close monitoring of the social fund. From that, there is clear evidence that, despite the cases that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, the fund is providing extensive help for those who need it.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about budgets. The total cumulative expenditure on the social fund, including the regulated maternity, funeral and cold weather payments, now exceeds £1 billion. Since the start of the scheme, more than 1 million non-repayable community care grants and more than 5 million interest-free loans have been awarded.

We were pleased to note that a Policy Studies Institute report published earlier this year showed that social fund loans were a helpful source of interest-free credit for people on the lowest incomes.

By April 1994, the level of planned gross expenditure on the discretionary part of the scheme will have increased by 105 per cent. since the introduction of the scheme—greater than both inflation or any temporary increase in the number of people on income support. It should also be remembered that the social fund is just one part of the overall social security system which next year will cost almost £80 billion, equating to more than £11 per day for each tax and national insurance payer.

I recognise that the hon. Gentleman was concerned about expenditure and budgets, and I have even better news for him. I am sure that he will have welcomed the announcement on 2 November by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security of an £8 million increase to the 1992-93 budget. That means that this year's discretionary social fund budget, which is now at £310 million, has already increased by 36 per cent. since April 1991. That increase far outstrips the 5 per cent. increase in income support case load between May 1991 and May 1992.

There is even better news for social fund budgets for 1993-94. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in his uprating statement, he expects the gross discretionary budget from April 1993 to be £340 million. That further substantial increase is possible, first, because of the continuing excellent performance on the recovery of loans, which shows the success of the loans system which enables more people to be helped by the fund; and, secondly, because of an increase of £5 million in the net budget. The cash limit has been increased from £130 million to £135 million from April 1993. Those increases mean that the April 1993 gross budget will be 12 per cent. up on the gross budget at April 1992 and 50 per cent. up on the gross budget at April 1991.

I am sure that even the hon. Member for Ipswich will agree that that increase in the cash limit, which comes at such a difficult time, indicates the Government's continuing determination to help those most in need through the social fund.

There is also good news for the hon. Gentleman closer to home, in Suffolk. It is absolutely clear that the hon. Gentleman's constituents have benefited from the increases in social fund budgets to which I have referred. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have welcomed the large increase of 18 per cent. in the social fund loans budget for Suffolk for 1992-93 as a consequence of the statement of 2 November to which I have referred. That increase is significantly above the increase in the income support case load for the same period. More significantly, if the hon. Gentleman looks at the overall increases in allocations for the past two years up to today, he will find that the grants budget in Suffolk district has increased by some 82 per cent. since April 1991, and the loans budget by some 75 per cent. in the same period.

Those figures speak eloquently of the Government's commitment to the social fund, and of the benefits that it has brought to the hon. Gentleman's constituency. The hon. Gentleman pointed out some of the difficulties; his remarks should be seen clearly in the context of the additional assistance already provided to his constituency.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Burt: Such is my affection for the hon. Gentleman that I shall, of course, give way—if the hon. Member has cleared it with the hon. Member for Ipswich, that is.

Mr. Cann *indicated assent.*

Mr. Dewar: I am somewhat alarmed by the thought that the Minister holds me in affection, but I shall ride my luck.

Is the Minister confident in his sunny predictions about the present situation? He will know that the Social Security Advisory Committee report and work by York university, commissioned by the Department, contain stringent criticisms of the way in which the social fund is operated, and suggest that in many cases it is impossible to define the difference between applications which succeed and those which do not. We all know of cases in which the cash-limited nature of the fund means that applicants are told that, although they qualify and have a certain measure of priority, it is just not possible to pay out and thus meet what is undoubtedly a real need. Can the Minister live happily with that state of affairs?

Mr. Burt: My affection for the hon. Gentleman is undiminished and fully justified. With a telepathy not often found on the Opposition Benches, he has touched on the very point to which I was coming next—in relation both to the reports received on the social fund and to the budget itself.

Opposition Members should be aware that a number of positive points were made in both the main reports on the social fund this year—by York university's social policy research unit and by the Social Security Advisory Committee. Perhaps I may help the Opposition by referring to some of them. The SPRU report showed that many people are being substantially helped by the fund. Moreover—this answers the final point made by the hon. Member for Ipswich, which was somewhat over the top by his standards—so far from people hating the fund, there was a high degree of satisfaction among many groups who received awards. There is also a general acceptance of loans, and certain factors—such as having a lower income or more and younger children—are associated with receiving awards. Finally, community care grants are being focused on elderly people receiving disability-related benefits where a household member has a severe health problem. We are hitting the target much more often than Opposition Members would concede.

The positive points mentioned in the Social Security Advisory Committee's report include the good work done by social fund officers in their difficult job of making discretionary decisions. The effective immediate help provided through the fund for unpredicted events—for example, help to families returning home from the Gulf in 1990—was also commented upon favourably. The independence established by the social fund commissioner was also welcomed by the Social Security Advisory Committee. The committee also went on to accept the restriction of eligibility to those with little capital receiving income support, the need for reasonable financial limits at this time of constraint on public spending and the broad criteria on which budgeting loans were offered.

The reports make other proposals as well. As I have stated, we shall look at them carefully. It is important to note, as Opposition Members rarely do, that the endorsement of many of the principles of the social fund is significant in demonstrating that the fund represents an important leap forward from previous schemes.

Mr. Dewar: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but I do not want him to get away with that rather rosy image. I accept that positive points are made in both reports, but will he agree that they both recommend fundamental changes to meet fundamental criticisms? Can I take it from his remark about the reports being carefully considered that there is some hope that their major recommendations will be dealt with favourably by the Department?

Mr. Burt: As the hon. Gentleman has been straight with me, I will be straight with him. Yes, indeed, there are positive aspects of the reports which I have been able to mention. If he is prepared to concede those, I acknowledge that other things in the reports cause us concern. They are being carefully considered. It is too early to say what the response will be, but the hon. Gentleman has it from me that the negative aspects mentioned in the reports are noted, and there will be a response in due course.

In the interests of balance, it is fair to recognise that in trying to administer a fund which caters for difficult and exceptional payments, it is hard to get the right scheme. We saw problems with the single payments scheme. This scheme has done much better than opponents would concede. The positive points that I have quoted are genuine and I am happy to acknowledge some difficulties, provided that some of the good points are recognised by the Opposition. If that happens, we shall have made progress.

In regard to budget limits, the hon. Member for Ipswich raised some concerns about the budget in itself. The budget is an integral part of the fund. The discretionary part of the social fund was designed as a flexible system for helping people, mostly those on income support, who have to meet large, intermittent or unexpected expenses. There are relatively few rigid rules as to what help can be given. We see the discipline imposed by a budget as a necessary framework for the exercise of how social fund officers apply discretion.

Most organisations—including the Government and, I suspect, also the Labour party—have to operate within an annual budget and there is no reason why the social fund should be different. Indeed, the previous rigid and inflexible single payments scheme suffered from spiralling expenditure, with the cost doubling every two years from 1980 to 1986, even allowing for inflation. This was out of all proportion to the increase in the number of people on benefit—less than a two thirds increase between 1979 and 1985. That expenditure was poorly targeted on needs, with four fifths of the money going to fewer than one in five claimants in 1987. It was therefore essential to refocus it on the greatest needs.

As to the points which the hon. Member for Ipswich made on community care grants, I appreciate that he mentioned particular cases and I look forward to receiving information about them. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on those cases. However, I am satisfied that the overall framework of the social fund provides appropriate assistance to those who need it, particularly in relation to community care grants. More than 1 million people have received community care grants since the scheme began.

The grants are intended to help people in priority groups, such as the elderly or disabled, to lead independent lives, including assisting them to re-establish themselves in the community after a stay in care, and to help people to carry on living in the community—the hon. Gentleman was right to illustrate some of the criteria—as well as aiming to ease exceptional pressure on families.

Local authorities, of course, have the major responsibility for community care, and community care grants complement that responsibility rather than replace it. It is, however, for the social fund officer to decide in an individual case whether the applicant's circumstances meet the basic eligibility criteria for a grant and then to decide whether the need is of sufficient priority to be met. I am confident that that is a suitable way in which to assess those exceptional needs in a flexible manner. There is a rapid and flexible system of review which also assists in dealing with those grants.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Ipswich will appreciate that some of the decisions taken by social fund

[Mr. Burt]

officers in the situations that he described are taken in the most difficult circumstances. It is difficult at this distance to decide on such cases across the Dispatch Box. I am sure that, in the vast majority of cases, social fund officers apply themselves properly and carefully to the needs before the them. The fact that so many awards are made and so much money spent on the system shows that the Government and the system try to meet people's needs.

However, we are not simply content to consider the way in which the system has worked in terms of theory and principle and not consider improvement. We have made a number of operational improvements to the scheme which assist in dealing with some of the difficulties mentioned by the hon. Member for Ipswich. The operation of the fund has not stood still since the field work for the SPRU report that I mentioned earlier was completed. We are constantly considering ways in which to improve its administration and operation. In difficult budgetary conditions, one examines the administration of the benefit system to discover the most effective ways to deliver.

As we deal with people, we find that they want speed, efficiency and accuracy from the benefit system. They can be dealt with through improvements to administration. The social fund and those responsible for it have not been slow in coming forward with operational developments.

Those developments have included the continuing development of a major main frame computer system which will start to roll out early next year. That will be a major assistance to the fund. Secondly, all letters and forms used in connection with the social fund have been redesigned. That is not cosmetic: the way in which information is presented to claimants is important. Although some people claim that they find forms difficult to understand, the forms are carefully examined and researched. Those genuine and real improvements will help the constituents of the hon. Member for Ipswich.

A third development is improved guidance on local priorities. The hon. Gentleman referred to priorities. They are set and are difficult for the fund to operate. However, we are constantly looking at ways in which to improve guidance and particularly at local areas and their difficulties.

The fourth development is improved training for social fund officers. We all recognise the importance of training —no one more so than I—in the Benefits Agency. Finally there has been a recent major process review by the Benefits Agency which reviewed social fund delivery and administration.

Those improvements are only part of the changes, but they clearly show that the fund is under constant review and is continually responding to new pressures and the need to provide an even better service.

In responding to the problems that the hon. Member for Ipswich described, I hope that I have shown some of the ways in which the Benefits Agency and social fund seek to meet need. They will not always meet need as much as people want. Sometimes demand is not always equated to need. However, the determination of those who run the system and of the Government is to do their best to meet needs.

The social fund had a difficult origin in that the difficulties produced by single payments translated into the current system. It seeks to meet the needs of society flexibly. It is not always possible to create a rigid structure. No doubt there are similar cases to those mentioned by the hon. Member for Ipswich elsewhere where similar circumstances have been met by some form of payment. To try to create consistency over such a large system that has already £1 billion and approved 5 million loans has been extremely difficult. However, the search and the determination are always there.

When the Opposition consider the problems that the Government have to face, they seem to think that we are trying to be difficult to people in hard circumstances. I know that the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen are looking hard at the benefit system. I give them full credit for the way in which they are approaching their task, and they know that I do so generously. They will accept that we are not alone in Europe in studying the benefit system carefully and finding that it cannot meet all the demands that people place on it. As I said, demand is not always equated to need. Many other European countries also face difficulties in providing for one-off payments. Some make far less central provision than we do, relying more on local government provision and help from charities and voluntary organisations.

I hope that I am not being unfair, but I sometimes think that the Government do not get the credit that they deserve from Opposition Members, who find it easy to criticise and to be churlish but have no conception or understanding of running such a complex benefit system, of which the social fund is part.

In conclusion, I hope that my remarks have assured the hon. Gentleman that the Government are keeping the operation of the fund under constant monitoring, that we have already taken significant steps to increase the resources available to the fund, and that we shall continue to take any steps which we consider necessary to ensure that it continues in its role of providing assistance with exceptional needs for those experiencing the greatest difficulties.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 18 November 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Housing Waiting Lists

1. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on current housing waiting lists held by local authorities in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): Details of supplementary housing capital allocations to local authorities will be announced shortly. Those measures will be helpful in relieving pressure on waiting lists, although I have to say that housing waiting lists themselves are not always a reliable indicator of housing need.

Sir David Steel: Will the Minister acknowledge that my local authorities are not alone in reporting record waiting lists, since his own Scottish Office "Statistical Bulletin", which has just been published, shows that the number of applicants under the homeless category has increased by 133 per cent. in the past 10 years? Are those figures not an affront to the conscience of Scotland? Will the Minister recognise that last week's statement is equivalent to tinkering with the housing repair problems and that what is needed is to get the unemployed building workers cracking on a house building programme?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am delighted to be able to announce this afternoon that we are making available, this year, an additional £7·5 million to local authorities for projects to combat homelessness. Bids will be sought by 11 December and I plan to announce the distribution of those new resources before Christmas.

The right hon. Gentleman should remember that waiting lists are not the same as the homelessness application lists returned by local authorities. Households may be on the waiting list of more than one authority. Those lists include households that wish to be rehoused at some time in the future and may include households no longer seeking accommodation. However, the right hon. Gentleman's point about homelessness is well taken. We hope to have the bids for resources in from the local authorities very soon and we shall inform them about the £7·5 million allocation straight away.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Conservative Government need no lectures about out track record on Scottish housing given that, since 1979, home ownership in Scotland has risen from a paltry 35 per cent. to 52 per cent? Does he agree also that our fellow Scots should be congratulated on that achievement and not patronised, as they are, by the Opposition parties?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes; what is more, the home ownership programme will be greatly increased through the rent-to-mortgage scheme, which we are introducing in the Housing and Urban Development Bill, which will give each tenant the right to take up that option.

Mr. McLeish: What about the homeless?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The answer lies with the £7·5 million allocation, which will help particularly with specialised bids from local authorities. When we asked in the past for such special bids, they resulted in 1,800 accommodation units for the homeless in Scotland, which was welcomed by those who worked in housing.

Dr. Godman: How much of the £7·5 million will be allocated to Inverclyde district council? In Inverclyde, homelessness, that terrible social evil, is on the increase and many other housing problems bedevil or make miserable the lives of far, far too many of my constituents. I have asked the Minister over and over again to play the game by my constituents when it comes to housing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the hon. Gentleman's district council and others, priority will be given to projects that aim to reduce the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for homeless people and help single-parent families. It goes without saying that the hon. Gentleman should ensure that all the relevant circumstances are put in the housing plan for his district authority because we shall announce provisional allocations for next year in due course.

Water Industry

2. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of his consultations about the future of the water industry in Scotland.

3. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for privatising Scotland's water.

6. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is now in a position to announce his plans for the future of the water industry in Scotland.

15. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish his consultation document on the future of the water industry in Scotland.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I made a statement yesterday on the future of the water industry and have published a consultation paper.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Secretary of State recognise that the water industry has operated for more than 100 years in the public sector in Scotland without the need for recourse to domestic disconnections? Does he accept that we are a healthier and more socially just nation as a result of the absence of those powers? Will he give an undertaking today that, whatever the other considerations about whether water is privatised, he will not change the law as a result of that consultation to make it possible for poor people to have their water disconnected, with all the consequences that flow from that, which we are already seeing in England and Wales?

Mr. Lang: I answered the hon. Gentleman's question yesterday. Disconnections do not affect the viability of the options laid out in the White Paper. The hon. Gentleman talked about the history of the water industry. Significantly, at the end of the second world war, there were more than 200 separate water authorities. It is only since 1946 that the Water (Scotland) Act has given general powers to local authorities in that matter. Gradually, the number of water authorities has been changed and the structure of the industry in Scotland has been reformed and modernised. We now face the need to make further changes and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will make a submission in response to the consultation paper.

Mr. Wray: Will the Secretary of State tell the House that the Government put no money into Strathclyde Water? Under section 94 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, it is given a borrowing limit of £83 million and the revenue comes from meter and water charges of £94 million. The total running cost of sewerage services in Strathclyde is £86 million, the water debt is £170 million and the total debt of sewerage and water is £417 million; that means that Scottish and British taxpayers pay £66 million a year. Has not the Secretary of State for Scotland the guts to ask the Government to do exactly the same as they have done in England and Wales, by wiping off £500 million? We want a tartan dowry in Scotland, like the green dowry in England and Wales.

Mr. Lang: The water and sewerage industries need capital for investment every year. The only time they were denied it was during the 1976-79 period of the last Labour Government, when water investment was cut by one third and sewerage capital investment was cut by half. Such vulnerability exposes the difficulty of relying on private sector funding when massive new capital investment of some £5 billion will be needed in the next 10 to 15 years. Does the hon. Gentleman think that that £5 billion should be taken from health, housing, roads, education or some other source, or will he look at the consultation paper and try to find a more positive approach to the problem?

Mrs. Michie: I do not think that the Secretary of State has answered that question. He is threatening the people of Scotland by implying that the capital debt will be written off only if water is privatised. Does that not amount to plain blackmail?

Mr. Lang: I do not know how the hon. Lady thinks that existing debt can be written off—it must be repaid. Although the industry needs some £600 million a year, roughly £400 million of that comes from revenues, and the remainder comes from capital. The capital expectations, which have doubled in the past four or five years, are anticipated to go on increasing in the next 10 to 15 years. That money must be found and I await the hon. Lady's submission in response to the consultation paper and her suggestions about where it can be found.

Mr. Kirkwood: On the issue of accountability, does not the Secretary of State accept that one of the unique qualities of the existing system is that local people have the ability and the opportunity to influence the priorities of their local water and sewerage services? Some of us are concerned about the priority given to legislative standards enforced from on high. It is important that customers have a chance to influence what the water organisations do in their name. Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that whatever system is introduced, it will enshrine and retain that essential accountability?

Mr. Lang: The setting of standards to which the hon. Gentleman refers is something which should be done above local level—at national and European level. It is in order to meet those standards that we are inviting public consultation on the various options for the best way forward. The degree of accountability that can be derived from the options laid out in the consultation paper varies. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will send in a submission underlining that point.

Mr. Jenkin: I am an English Member of Parliament and my right hon. Friend will decide whether to privatise the industry in Scotland according to his consultation process—it is not so much a matter for me. However, should my right hon. Friend choose to privatise the industry, will he reassure the Scottish people that in England and Wales privatisation has led to a huge investment programme, a great improvement in water quality and improved conditions of employment for employees of the water industry?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for telling us of his experience of the industry in England and Wales. During the 20 years to 1989, investment was below £6 billion and it is expected to be more than £28 billion over the next 10 years. That shows how the resources can be found in an imaginative way.

Mr. Adley: Without wishing to influence my right hon. Friend one way or the other—and I also declare an interest in the hotel business—may I ask him to look at that section of the legislation in England that affects infrastructure charges? Is he aware that an hotel in Leeds with which I have been associated for the past five to six years started off under the good offices of the Yorkshire water authority, which produced a quotation of £3,000 to attach the hotel to the mains? Now, the Yorkshire water company proposes to charge £208,000 for the same service. That fact does not need to influence my right hon. Friend's overall decision, but he should look carefully at the small print of anything that he introduces.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for telling us of his personal experiences with the Leeds water authority. However, I must disappoint him, as I have no responsibilities for water in England or Wales.

Mr. John Marshall: When considering the possibility of privatising Scottish water services, as most Conservative Members wish my right hon. Friend to do, will he consider the experience of Thames Water, where there has been a 50 per cent. increase in investment and where water costs 45p per house per day—a reasonable charge? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the abolition of the drinking water directive would help the water industry throughout the United Kingdom?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for telling us of the experiences of Thames Water. The drinking water directive and other European Community directives set standards to which we want to aspire. The investment programme on which we in Scotland have embarked means that we intend to aspire to those standards.

Mr. Tom Clarke: In view of the Secretary of State's self-imposed confidentiality about the Quayle Munro report, will he tell us whether Quayle Munro is free to give advice to potential buyers and precisely what Quayle Munro said to him about disconnections?

Mr. Lang: The Quayle Munro report did not address issues such as disconnections, but dealt with matters such as the viability of a range of options, which are now laid out in the consultation paper. Whether Quayle Munro later becomes involved in giving advice to individual companies is a matter for Quayle Munro.

Doctors and Nurses

4. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many doctors and nurses there were in Scotland in 1979 and at the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): At 30 September 1979 there were 9,839 doctors, including general medical practitioners, employed in the national health service in Scotland and at 30 September 1991, the latest available date, this had risen to 11,079. The number of qualified nurses in the national health service in Scotland rose from 31,931 to 43,011 over this period.

Mr. Burns: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Will he confirm that that shows an increase of just over 10 per cent. in the number of doctors and an increase of about a third in the number of nurses in the health service in Scotland? If my mathematics are correct, does he agree that they more than underline the Government's commitment not only to health care and patients in Scotland, but to the national health service throughout the nation?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The figures are correct and beyond dispute, even by Opposition Members. They represent an increase of 12 per cent. in the number of doctors and an increase of 35 per cent. in the number of nurses since the Conservative party came to office. That underlines the Government's real commitment to the national health service and to its improvement in Scotland and throughout the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. McAvoy: Is the Minister aware of the threat to the employment of doctors and nurses and to services to the public by the threatened closure of hospitals in Glasgow, especially the Victoria infirmary and Rutherglen maternity hospital which serve my constituents? There will be a consultation period, but, as Mr. Laurence Peterken has displayed his absolute determination to close the Victoria infirmary and the maternity hospital, will the Minister ensure genuine consultation by removing Mr. Laurence Peterken from office for the period of that consultation?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman, who is widely respected in the House, does himself no good by personal attacks on a distinguished servant of the national health service. The hon. Gentleman referred to the Victoria infirmary and will know that it serves my constituency as well as his. The Government welcome the production by the Greater Glasgow health board of a consultation document in relation to changes in medical practice and changes in population. I assure the hon. Gentleman that there will be the fullest public consultation before any decisions are taken.

Mr. Kynoch: I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that we are spending 44 per cent. more in real terms on the national health service in Scotland than was spent in 1979. I hope that my hon. Friend will take an interest in the review of acute services currently being carried out by Tayside health board and ensure that Stracathro hospital, the only major hospital between Dundee and Aberdeen for acute and emergency services, is retained. That hospital serves many of my constituents and those in neighbouring constituencies.

Mr. Stewart: As my hon. Friend may know, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may wish to consider a trust application from Stracathro hospital. He will also be aware of the immense success story of the Aberdeen Royal hospitals NHS trust, about which I could detain the House with details for some time. However, Madam Speaker would not wish me to do so. Undoubtedly, the success of the Aberdeen Royal hospitals NHS trust shows that trust status hospitals in Scotland are working well.

Mrs. Fyfe: It seems a little odd that the Minister has to be told that information in the Library shows that the true full-time equivalent increase in nurses and midwives is only 6 per cent. Is it not true that numbers have been increasing anyway since the health service was founded? I should like to ask about future funding for doctors and nurses. How many doctors and nurses will there be if five Glasgow hospitals are allowed to close? How much income does the Minister expect to get from selling 82 acres at Stobhill or 10 acres at Victoria infirmary? How many patients will be refused treatment in his market system because the health board will not pay the costs?

Mr. Stewart: Oh dear, the hon. Lady does talk nonsense. However, I am glad to have a reassurance that even the hon. Lady——

Mrs. Fyfe: Read the statistics.

Mr. Stewart: I also go to the Library. I am glad to have the hon. Lady's reassurance that, however defined, the number of nurses in Scotland has increased under the Government, as has the number of doctors. I am glad that the Opposition have today conceded that, on any measure.

I am surprised that the hon. Lady does not think that there is a case for considering the future of acute services in Greater Glasgow. I should have thought that anyone looking at changes in medical practices and in population would concede that it was sensible to look at the options. We are moving from the stage at which we invested massively in district general hospitals in peripheral areas to a strategy of massive investment in district general hospitals in urban centres. I should have thought that the hon. Lady, representing Glasgow, Maryhill, would welcome that. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order so as to hear the Minister. Has he finished his response?

Mr. Stewart: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: In that case, I call Mr. Oppenheim.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does not this huge increase in the number of doctors and nurses in Scotland give the lie to the common Labour smear that we do not care about the health service? Is it not also the case that we have further committed ourselves to huge increases in NHS funding for this coming year, despite economic difficulties? Is that not in sharp contrast to the period when the Labour party was in power and got into economic difficulties, when the first thing that it cut was the hospital building programme?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is right. The Government's commitment is clear, and is shown by the figures. We are committed in broad terms to capital expenditure of £500 million over the next 10 years in the national health service in Scotland. As my hon. Friend rightly reminds Opposition Members, when the last Labour Government were in power, capital spending on the NHS was cut in real and in money terms. Under the Conservatives, it has increased and will continue to increase.

Training Provision (Autumn Statement)

5. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the implications of the Chancellor's autumn statement for training provision in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: Training provision for Scotland is one component of the figures for my right hon. Friend's overall programme that were announced as part of the autumn statement. It reflects a division of overall training provision for Great Britain, determined on the basis of relevant factors, such as relative unemployment. The marked improvement in Scotland's relative unemployment position since last year means that our share of overall training provision is smaller.

Mr. Worthington: In September, the Department of Employment let it be known that there was a shortfall of more than 9,500 training places for young people in Scotland, and there is a mounting level of long-term unemployment. Can the Government promise that when there is an allocation of resources to training, there will be an increase to meet that shortfall?

Mr. Stewart: I can give the hon. Gentleman the absolute assurance that in the past couple of days I have checked with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise on the youth training guarantee. It is being met and will continue to be met.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, since 1979, the Government have increased the allocation of funds for training to thousands of millions of pounds, that additional training places have always been found to meet the requirements and that this is far in excess of anything ever achieved under any Labour Government?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This Government are clearly committed to an effective training policy. It is output which matters, not input. Even on the measure of public expenditure to which Opposition Members pay such attention, in real terms this Government are spending two and a half times more on training than the last Labour Government.

Mr. McFall: Statistics on the youth training programme in Scotland show that at the end of the scheme year, more than 60 per cent. of young people find themselves back on the dole. With the economic slump closing 200 Scottish firms every week, and unemployment having risen 30 months in succession and touching almost 250,000, what advice does the Minister have for those youngsters? They must feel, at that early age, that there is no future for them. They followed the Government's advice, underwent training, and now find themselves unemployed and worse off than before. Is it not the case that the autumn statement holds out nothing more than the bleakest of Christmases, and beyond, for Scotland's young?

Mr. Stewart: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman undermines the effectiveness of the youth training scheme. No one suggests that everyone who undertakes training will automatically obtain employment at the end of it, but the Government's youth training guarantee for young people is given by no other European Community country.

Mr. McLeish: But it is not being honoured.

Mr. Stewart: My answer to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) is that the guarantee is being met, though I know that he constantly issues press releases saying that it is not. I checked with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise in the past couple of days that the youth guarantee is being met.

Housing

7. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who he has met in the past year to discuss the supply of housing in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend and I have frequent meetings with individuals and organisations involved in the provision, management and sale of housing in Scotland.

Mr. McAllion: Scotland faces a national housing crisis in terms of increased homelessness, which has risen 133 per cent. over the past 10 years, and the loss, over the same period, of 250,000 homes for rent. Does not the Minister understand that his recent spending announcements come nowhere near the sums required to meet the targets set by the Institute of Housing in Scotland of 15,000 new affordable homes for rent every year? Does he not comprehend either that people in Scotland with the most desperate housing need cannot afford owner occupation and rent-to-mortgage schemes? Most of all, they cannot afford the Minister's obsession with forcing tenure changes at the expense of the Government's failure to meet the demand for decent homes at an affordable rent.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There is a large amount of activity in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. The Scottish Homes allocation in Dundee has increased from £10·9 million in 1991-92 to more than £15·8 million. As the hon. Gentleman will be the first to recognise, the remarkable transformation at Whitfield is continuing—as I know, having visited the Ormiston people's housing co-operative and Vale of Duntrune community housing association. The hon. Gentleman will welcome, as I do, the £70 million extra that will be made available to Scottish Homes' enabling programme as a result of the excellent settlement that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State managed to obtain, which will increase the programme by some £20 million in each of the next three years. I will bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's own district council's needs before we make provisional allocations.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Surely the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McFall), in his question, has done exactly the reverse——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am not seeking comments at Question Time. I must have questions, from all parts of the House.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Surely it needs to be said to people in all parts of the country, and particularly in Scotland, that they can afford to buy their own homes—and that by purchasing their council houses, 100 per cent. of the money raised can be spent on providing the new homes for which right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House seem to be asking.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I agree. We know that 52 per cent. of Scots now own their homes, and that many more aspire to home ownership. I had the good fortune to visit the first rent-to-mortgage owner in Dundee, who works for the council. The scheme is welcomed by those who seek the right and the opportunity to own their homes, and it provides a new home ownership market which will be appreciated by those who cannot quite afford to exercise the right to buy.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The Minister will know that there are some excellent sheltered housing complexes throughout Scotland, including my constituency. They provide high-quality housing for elderly people who are protected by wardens 24 hours a day. Why does not the Minister give more funds to the local authority, to Scottish Homes and to the housing associations, so that more good housing can be provided for our elderly people?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The extra £20 million a year over the next three years which constitutes the extra enabling programme for Scottish Homes should allow more progress to be made in that regard. We shall bear Glasgow's needs very much in mind if any supplementary allocations are made, or else when the provisional allocations are made.

Green Belt

8. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to protect the green belt.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): My right hon. Friend's policy for protecting green belts is set out in Scottish development department circular 24/1985. Our consistent policy has been to maintain and enhance the green belt.

Mr. Galbraith: The Minister will know that much water authority land lies within the green belt. That land is much used and appreciated by my constituents in Strathkelvin and Bearsden. Will the Minister guarantee that, in the event of privatisation, no restrictions will be placed on access to the land, and, furthermore, that it will not be released for development so that private shareholders can rip off the public sector once again?

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. Most of our water resources come from land that is particularly attractive—the lochs and reservoirs—some of which may include sites of special scientific interest. No concern should be felt about the future ownership of that land.

Water Industry

9. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish the report by the consultants Quayle Munro on the future of water services in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Hon. Members: Answer the question.

Sir Hector Monro: It is a good answer, worth waiting for.

As part of the Government's review of water and sewerage services in Scotland, consultants were commissioned to give advice under conditions of commercial confidentiality for the purpose of informing policy. That advice is reflected in the consultation paper that my right hon. Friend published yesterday.

Mr. Welsh: Actually, that was not much of an answer. Why have the Government allowed access to the local government report, but not to the water privatisation report? Have they something to hide? Surely, "commercial" sensitivities are in fact political sensitivities—the sensitivities of an isolated Government who are swimming against the tide of Scottish public opinion. Will the Minister confirm that the price of his secrecy is about £50,000, and will he now abandon this unwanted, unnecessary privatisation scheme?

Sir Hector Monro: Even after 24 hours' reflection, the hon. Gentleman is getting most of it wrong. Does he not understand that the document published yesterday by my right hon. Friend is a genuine consultation document? There are eight options, and variations may be produced in the intervening period. If Opposition Members put their minds to producing constructive reports for my right hon. Friend, they would be doing something really valuable for the Scottish people whom they represent.

Mr. Wallace: The Secretary of State said yesterday that he had engaged Quayle Munro to look into the technical aspects of water organisation. What technical qualifications—as opposed to financial qualifications—did Quayle Munro have? Do any of the commercial sensitivities relate to any French companies? Finally, is not the Secretary of State under a statutory duty, under section 1 of the Water (Scotland) Act 1980, to publish information relating to water services in Scotland? What is more fundamental than information that relates to the future organisation of those services?

Sir Hector Monro: I hope that the hon. Gentleman too has read the report which he has now had in his hands for 24 hours. Of course, the Quayle Munro report was valuable to my right hon. Friend for its technical and financial information. What the Secretary of State has published is a fair reflection of the position. It gives many alternatives. In fact, Opposition Members were all rumbled; they thought that it would be a privatisation document, and it is not. It gives alternatives which the country can consider. We will look at it carefully and come to conclusions later next year.

Mr. McLeish: Does the Minister accept that it is a scandal for a company that has access to confidential information to be allowed to advise possible bidders in the privatisation process if the Government proceed with that crazy idea? Will he tell the House that the real reason for commissioning Quayle Munro was the cosy clique of Ministers and favoured consultants seeking private information about quotations and franchising, and had nothing to do with any of the other six options? Will he tell the House why his office is behaving in such a deplorable manner, abusing the taxpayers' money and the office of the Secretary of State? It is a scandal. When will the report be published so that we may know what is in it?

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman should count up to eight rather than to 10 and he would realise that there is a great deal of valuable information in the report. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman does not want to hear the answer, he need not listen. Quayle Munro was one of a number of companies that tendered for the consultation process. There was no question of a cosy operation; it was very competitive tendering.

Local Government

10. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will report progress on the consultations regarding future local government of Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I am very encouraged by the substantial public response to our second consultation paper on local government structure. More than 15,000 copies of the consultation paper and more than 70,000 shorter leaflets have been issued. The consultation period continues until the end of January next year.

Mr. McKelvey: The Secretary of State either forgot or deliberately did not mention subsidiarity. When he gets from the Prime Minister a definition of subsidiarity, will he relate with clarity to Charity McGarrity from Inverarity that she will not have subsidiarity, but that she, like the rest of Scotland, will have to remain in the mode of subserviarity? Does he realise that that breeds subversivarity? *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Lang: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman's question was greeted with hilarity by his colleagues. I must remind him that his original question was about the consultation paper on local government reform, but his supplementary had nothing to do with that. Nevertheless, I hope that he will read the consultation paper and let me have his thoughts ahead of our decision.

Sir Anthony Durant: Would my right hon. Friend care to comment on the press reports about the conduct of Monklands council which I understand is in the constituency of the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Lang: I do not think that I want to pry into that private grief. I am happy to leave that to the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Secretary of State.

Scottish Enterprise

11. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chief executive of Scottish Enterprise to discuss the Scottish economy.

Mr. Lang: My ministerial colleagues and I often meet both the chairman and the chief executive of Scottish Enterprise to discuss a range of economic development and training issues. I contacted the chairman this morning to inform him that as part of the package of special measures that I announced last week, Scottish Enterprise will receive an additional £6 million added to this year's budget and Highland and Islands Enterprise an additional £1·5 million.

Mr. Salmond: Does the Secretary of State remember the boast of his friend, party supporter and instigator of Scottish Enterprise, Bill Hughes, who said that the aim of the organisation was to eliminate Scottish unemployment? What time scale does the Secretary of State envisage for the achievement of that ambition, given that Scottish unemployment is rising remorselessly, that the modest aspects of recovery announced in the autumn statement were geared to the south-east of England and that it is widely reported that there will be substantial staffing cuts in the Scottish Enterprise training network? How can that combination lead to the elimination of Scottish unemployment, as promised by Bill Hughes?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman seems to have forgotten that Scottish Enterprise was the latter manifestation of the Scottish development agency, with its functions changed dramatically so as to prevent it being the acquisitive engine of nationalisation that it was under the Labour Government. Now it is an engine of economic regeneration and is doing its work extremely effectively both at its own hand and through the local enterprise companies all over Scotland. The hon. Gentleman will no doubt also like to know that in the package I intend to increase the allocation for the trunk roads programme by £8.5 million, for local authority roads projects by £5 million, for health service and social work capital programmes by £10·25 million and for the water and sewerage programme by £6·5 million. That commitment of resources will go directly towards improving Scotland's infrastructure and reducing unemployment.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to reaffirm to the House—and when he does it will he do it slowly so that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) takes it in—that gross domestic product, per head, in Scotland is currently at an all-time high and that male take-home pay in the hon. Gentleman's part of Scotland is the highest in Scotland? Will he further encourage the hon. Gentleman to stop talking Scotland down every time he gets the chance to do so?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. As a result of the improvement in the underlying economic infrastructure in Scotland, it is significant that the unemployment rate in Scotland is lower now than it is in the south-east of England. Whereas a year ago it was 0·1 per cent. higher than in the United Kingdom as a whole, it is now 0·4 per cent. lower than in the United Kingdom as a whole.

Dr. Reid: Why does unemployment keep going up in Scotland, and who is to blame?

Mr. Lang: Unemployment is rising in Scotland, as it is rising elsewhere in the United Kingdom and in every industrialised country in the world, as a result of the world economic recession. However, what is significant is that unemployment levels in Scotland were, in June of this year, at broadly the same level as they were a year ago. Last month, and the month before that, the headline unemployment total in Scotland fell. Last month, job vacancies in Scotland were up. The indications are that the Scottish economy is responding to the measures brought in by the Government, Scottish Enterprise and others in order to improve our competitiveness and help to create jobs.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Secretary of State recall telling me last month that Scottish Enterprise had been set up in order to help the recovery of the Scottish economy? Since Scottish Enterprise is to lose jobs and since Scottish Enterprise knows that the effect of the autumn statement will be job losses all over the country, does the Secretary of State accept that he seems to be the only person in Scotland, given all these job losses, who thinks that Scotland is experiencing an economic recovery?

Mr. Lang: It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman should be so derisive of all the efforts of Scottish Enterprise and all the local enterprise companies in Scotland. Business men, with many preoccupations of their own, are lending their time and effort to help to generate employment and to improve the economic infrastructure and the environment. That is creating a climate in Scotland in which our unemployment figures are standing up so much better than they are elsewhere. The hon. Gentleman anticipates the future budget for Scottish Enterprise, but perhaps he ought to wait until it is allocated.

Governance

12. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further consideration he has given to the issue of improving the governance of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Our review of ways of making the government of Scotland more responsible to Scotland's needs within the Union is continuing.

Mr. Galloway: As my hon. Friends say, "Oh dear, oh dear." The Secretary of State has now been taking stock for 224 days. We have not had the merest whimper of an acknowledgment, that although he governs our country, 75 per cent. of our people voted against him. In Edinburgh on 12 December the Secretary of State, with his Cabinet colleagues, will be closeted with the European Heads of Government and grappling with them over the British Government's demand for subsidiarity, defined as the right of people to have local decisions taken as locally as possible. How can it be that it is right for this House of Commons and this British state to have subsidiarity when it is wrong for the people whom the Secretary of State misrepresents in this House and in the British Cabinet room?

Mr. Lang: I understand the hon. Gentleman's sense of frustration. After all, he laid out his own programme in July of this year when, Scotland United, an organisation which existed at the time, and to which he belonged called for

> "more extra-parliamentary work . . . a less reverential approach to Parliament itself; a shadow Scottish parliament meeting in Edinburgh; selective boycotts of set-piece parliamentary occasions like the now farcical Scottish Question Time; a greatly expanded Scottish Labour front bench; and the planned disruption of strategically-selected Commons business. No 'business as usual' until the Government comes to the negotiating table."

Plainly, as I look around me, Madam Speaker, I see that the hon. Gentleman's negotiations have not made much headway.

Mr. Bill Walker: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that in the taking-stock exercise, the Conservative and Unionist Government are not considering the flawed proposals put forward by the Labour party or the unworkable proposals put forward by the Scottish Convention? They would be bad for the Union, bad for the unitary Parliament and eventually very bad for the people of Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I am happy to reassure my hon. Friend that our proposals will do nothing to undermine the integrity of the United Kingdom or this sovereign Parliament, unlike the Opposition's proposals in the general election. I can also assure my hon. Friend that I and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister continue to give the matter our close attention. We should welcome any constructive, positive and sensible suggestions from any quarter.

Mr. Trimble: In considering the future governance of Scotland, is the Secretary of State considering the introduction of safeguards against political and religious discrimination to avoid controversy such as that in Monklands district at the moment?

Mr. Lang: I would certainly deplore the discrimination to which the hon. Gentleman refers. I am not aware that the problem is widespread in Scotland and I would not anticipate our measures being directed towards that end.

Mrs. Ewing: When does the Secretary of State expect to end the stock-taking exercise and when will he make a statement to the House to advise all of us and the people of Scotland about the improvements he envisages in the government of Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her eager anticipation of the outcome of the deliberations. We shall make an announcement as soon as we sensibly can. I am sure that the hon. Lady agrees that it is more important to get it right than to get it quickly.

Hospitals (Argyll and Clyde)

13. **Mrs. Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet the chairman of Argyll and Clyde health board to discuss the management of hospitals.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to meet the chairman of Argyll and Clyde health board at present, but my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State meets health board chairmen regularly.

Mrs. Adams: I was gravely concerned when I saw the Under-Secretary of State rising, because I knew that I would not get an answer to my question. Does the Minister accept that we are told that we have a listening Government who consult the people on the management of hospitals, on water privatisation and on the governance of Scotland? Will the Government give us one iota of evidence of their having listened to the results of consultations and of their having implemented the results of those consultations?

Mr. Stewart: I gave the hon. Lady a completely accurate answer to her question. If she is asking about the consultation process in relation to the application for trust status by the Royal Alexandra hospital in Argyll and Clyde, I can assure her that my right hon. Friend will look carefully at all the evidence and arguments.

Mr. Graham: When the Secretary of State meets the chairman, will he consider testing properly the democratic rights of the people of Renfrewshire by giving them the opportunity to vote to see whether they accept our local hospital becoming a trust? I am sure that if a ballot were held, the Secretary of State would get the clear message from the people of Renfrewshire that they have no truck with the Tory trust.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman expresses himself with his customary clarity on these matters. My right hon. Friend will consider the representations made in his customarily objective, well-reasoned and non-partisan way.

Scotch Whisky

14. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed in Scotch whisky production in Scotland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Stewart: In 1987, 11,100 people were employed in plants whose principal product was Scotch whisky and which had 11 or more employees. The equivalent figure for the following four years was on average 10,300. I will give details in the *Official Report*.

The following is the information:

	Number
1988	10,100
1989	10,000
1990	10,700
[1]1991	10,400

[1] Provisional.

Mr. Steen: I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister is not too surprised about the fact that the amount of Scottish whisky consumed in the British Isles over the past few years has been declining dramatically. Does he agree that one reason for that is that the unit of alcohol in Scottish whisky is charged at double the rate per unit of alcohol in French, Italian, Spanish, or German wine? Bearing in mind the fact that the number of people employed in the Scottish whisky industry over the past 10 years has declined by 40 per cent., does he agree that our job in Britain is not to create jobs in Europe and France, but jobs in this country?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stewart: The reaction to my hon. Friend's question shows the popularity of his views on all sides of the House. As my hon. Friend will appreciate, taxation is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer—[HON. MEMBERS: "Here he is."] I can now doubly reassure my hon. Friend that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is fully informed of the views of the whisky producers on those matters.

Mr. Darling: Does the Minister accept that the Scottish whisky industry needs a constant supply of good quality, cheap water? If water is privatised and a private company has a monopoly, as is the case in respect of the supply of electricity, prices will rise and that will increase the price of whisky. In addition, there will be a constant threat of disconnection for the whisky industry as there is for ordinary members of the public. Does he not accept therefore, that the threat of the privatisation of water is a major threat to the future of the Scotch whisky industry?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman is living in a fantasy world which is even more absurd than that inhabited by most of his hon. Friends. I do not think that that question requires a serious answer.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend contemplate the fact that in order to achieve the glory of the Maastricht union, the French are willing to forgo drinking French wine and we should ensure that we drink our whisky and that they do not drink their wine?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. and learned Friend will no doubt be drinking a toast this evening to the extra £1 million that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced for the Historic Buildings Council in his package this afternoon. With regard to my hon. and learned Friend's more general point, it is worth recording that the Scotch whisky industry was appreciative of the outcome which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer achieved in discussions on the duty regime with his European colleagues earlier this year.

BCCI

16. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on what assistance he will give to local authorities that have lost money in the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Mr. Stewart: Two of the four Scottish authorities that had money deposited in BCCI applied for and were granted borrowing consent to enable them to cope with their losses.

Mr. Vaz: The Minister is no doubt aware that since those arrangements were entered into, the Bingham report has been published which severely criticises the role of the Bank of England. Those criticisms have been accepted by the Government and the Bank of England. Since the publication, the Bank has now decided to issue a health warning with its list of authorised institutions. Bearing in mind the fact that Scottish local authorities relied on that list and that there has been severe criticism, does the Minister agree that there is a compelling and overwhelming case for compensation to be paid to those local authorities? Is it not outrageous that Scottish poll tax payers and future council taxpayers have to pay for the mistakes of the Bank of England?

Mr. Stewart: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's analysis. Only two Scottish authorities requested any assistance. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State granted Western Isles islands council consent to borrow £24 million and Ross and Cromarty district council consent to borrow £1·8 million to help those councils to cope with their losses. On the hon. Gentleman's other point, although the Bingham report makes a number of criticisms of the Bank of England in its supervision of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, it makes it clear that prime responsibility for the losses rests with those who devised, directed and implemented the fraud.

Mr. Macdonald: But compensation was not within the remit of the Bingham inquiry, which leaves the Government as judge and jury of their own case. Does the Minister acknowledge that an independent verdict on compensation for local authorities and all depositors can come only from the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee? Should the Select Committee come up with a new report including a verdict on compensation, will the Government undertake to respect the findings of that report?

Mr. Stewart: Of course the Government will consider most seriously the recommendations of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, as they consider seriously the recommendations of all Select Committees. I must repeat to the hon. Gentleman that, following representations from himself and from the Western Isles islands council, my right hon. Friend granted that council consent to borrow £24 million. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have been sympathetic to the economic case that has been put forward by the Western Isles islands council in relation to the other aspects of the general programmes.

DSS Offices

3.31 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On 2 November, in answer to an oral question about the additional £8 million to local Department of Social Security offices, the Secretary of State for Social Security stated:

> "Details will be placed in the Library in due course."—[*Official Report*, 2 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 1.]

Since that date, I have been asking the Library for that information, but unfortunately it is still not available. I have since found out that the local district offices are now in possession of that information. As late as today, I was told that it will be two weeks before the information will be available to right hon. and hon. Members. Surely that is just not good enough. It is embarrassing for us all. The matter shows that the Secretary of State and his staff are either incompetent or are treating the House with contempt.

Madam Speaker: I hope that Ministers on the Treasury Bench have noted the hon. Gentleman's points so that the matter can be looked at in order to ensure that documents which should be available outside the House are not denied to hon. Members inside.

We now come to the ballot for notices of motion. It would be most helpful if hon. Members would sign outside the Chamber and not at the last minute.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 4 DECEMBER 1992

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend
Mr. Kevin Barron
Mr. Malcolm Moss

Oath of Allegiance

3.34 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I beg to move,

> That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide that persons seeking United Kingdom citizenship should be required to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown.

The present position of permanent residents in Britain is a mess and a muddle. Some of us are full citizens. Other people come from various parts of the world to work here as foreigners. Refugees come to take refuge here. People from many parts of the world come to Britain for other reasons. People are given the right to settle in Britain, and after five years that right becomes a right to live permanently in Britain.

Yet there is no obligation on the part of such people to accept the responsibilities of citizenship as well as the benefits. I know that the Labour party will give its knee-jerk reaction to the Bill, and assume that I am talking about race. I assure them that I am talking of nothing of the sort. My Bill is a cohesive measure which will make people who live here feel that being British means that they are part of the way of life and have a citizenship they enjoy, uphold and are prepared to defend if the necessity arises.

The oath of allegiance is set out in the British Nationality Act 1981. After five years of residence or, in the case of spouses of people who are already citizens, three years of residence, people can apply for full citizenship. However, there is no obligation on them to do so. I believe that that is wrong. It would have a cohesive effect on people to take an oath to the country.

The requirement to take an oath of allegiance is commonplace in other parts of the world. People who settle in America, Australia, Canada and New Zealand —all countries which are extremely generous in allowing newcomers into their society—require that most people, after an appropriate period, take an oath. In the United States, young children swear their oath and salute the flag every day of their school life. An oath makes them think that they are Americans or Australians first and that their country of origin comes second.

I should like all people who settle permanently in Britain to feel that they are British, just as those of us who were born and bred here do. Those of us who are native citizens affirm our citizenship and our dedication to Britain in special circumstances by taking an oath. Members of Parliament do so when they enter Parliament. Judges do so when they take up office. Members of the armed forces take an oath of allegiance. So do bishops in certain circumstances. Therefore, it is not an alien concept even for people who are already acknowledged citizens by birth to affirm their allegiance to Britain when they take up special duties.

In the European legislation which we are currently engaged in debating, we are informed about a new type of citizenship—a citizenship of the union. When I go round the country, I find that many constituents are worried about that type of citizenship. They want to know whether it will interfere with their British citizenship. They want to know how it will affect Britain if a great many people from Europe choose to settle in Britain permanently. Such people would benefit from being in Britain, yet would have no obligations to Britain, for example, in time of war or when questions of treason arise. They would have the benefits but not the obligations.

People in Britain would welcome the requirement that people who reside here permanently accept the obligations which go with that privilege. Therefore, I should like to introduce a Bill which will require those who decide to settle here permanently, as they are able to do after five years of being allowed to reside here, to make a commitment to the Crown, using the oath of allegiance set out in the British Nationality Act 1981. That will have a beneficial effect on our country. We know what happens to societies where people are drawn together under the name of one country, yet feel no allegiance to it. Those countries are fracturing and falling apart, and their people may even be involved in fratricide.

As Britain becomes more open to people from many parts of the world, including Europe, there needs to be a sense that the British nation has an identity—that being British means something to all those people, wherever they come from. By taking an oath, they would have to do no more than they would in other countries which exercise the same sort of generosity as Britain. I beg leave to introduce my Bill.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I understand that Mr. Tony Banks seeks to oppose.

3.40 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I wish to oppose the ten-minute rule application. The hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) is a feisty individual, who has espoused some worthwhile causes in her time, but this is not one of them.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Name one.

Mr. Banks: A woman's right to choose was one very good cause espoused by the hon. Member for Billericay.

I cannot support the measure, because it seems to be a regal variant of Lord Tebbit's cricket test. I oppose the Bill on a number of grounds. First, it is unnecessary. Existing citizens would not be required to take such an oath, as the hon. Lady rightly pointed out. If the Bill got on to the statute book, which it will not, it would create two classes of citizen and would add one further hurdle to the process of application for citizenship, which is already tedious, expensive and time-consuming.

When one thinks about it, the requirement to take an oath of allegiance is not onerous. I imagine that, if it were a requirement of citizenship to stand on one leg and sing a chorus of "My Old Man's a Dustman", most people would do so to secure their objective. Rather than create more obstacles to citizenship, the hon. Lady would do better to use her undoubted energies to propose a fairer and faster method of citizenship application.

Secondly, why should an oath of allegiance be restricted to the Crown? If we were going to insist on such a thing, it would be far more appropriate to take an oath of allegiance to the country. Most of the powers of the Crown, especially in respect of the royal prerogative, have long since passed to the Government of the day and to the Prime Minister—[HON. MEMBERS: "And to Brussels."]—yes, as my hon. Friends say, to Brussels. Perhaps we should take an oath of allegiance to Jacques Delors and the European Commission.

I realise that, since the Prime Minister has so many of the powers of the royal prerogative, it would be attractive to Conservative Members if new citizens had to pledge allegiance to him. Before we move down that road, perhaps they should apply that test to Tory Back Benchers, especially in view of the impending debate on Maastricht, and start with the hon. Member for Billericay.

Finally, what about citizens who hold republican views? This country still passes for a free society, and it is not illegal to believe that, in a proper democracy, the Head of State should be elected and be accountable to the people. To hold such views should not be used as a way to call into question the patriotism of any citizen, new or old. With an oath of allegiance to the Crown alone, people with republican views would be forced either to break their oath or to disown their beliefs. That is an invidious choice, and it should not be imposed on any individual.

The hon. Member for Billericay said that MPs are required to swear such an oath before taking their seats after an election. I find that anachronistic. My allegiance is to the country and to the people who elected me, and to no one else. If oaths are to be taken, they should be to the country, to democracy, the rule of law, civil rights and the liberties of the people. Because the proposal in the Bill is restrictive in extent and limited in application, I beg leave to oppose it.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 64, Noes 135.

Division No. 88] [3.44 pm

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Beggs, Roy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bowden, Andrew
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Cash, William
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Hannam, Sir John
Hawkins, Nick
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Kilfedder, Sir James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Marlow, Tony
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stephen, Michael
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Thomason, Roy
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trimble, David
Watts, John
Whittingdale, John

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Bill Walker and
Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bennett, Andrew F.
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blunkett, David

Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Connarty, Michael
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Enright, Derek
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Flynn, Paul
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron

Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
Madden, Max
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Salmond, Alex
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stern, Michael
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Watson, Mike
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Maxton and
Mr. Keith Vaz.

Question accordingly negatived.

Autumn Statement

[Relevant documents: Minutes of Evidence taken before the Treasury and Civil Service Committee on 16th and 17th November (House of Commons Papers Nos. 250-iii and -iv)].

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. Between the hours of 6 pm and 8 pm, I have imposed a 10-minute limit on speeches, and I ask other right hon. and hon. Members to exercise some voluntary restraint over the length of their speeches.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand that today the staff and unions at AE Technology were advised that the Government have decided to cancel the European fast reactor programme, to which Britain was committed to the tune of £12·87 million. Given that that announcement pre-empts the Government's review of their energy policy, which is on-going as a result of a resolution of the House, is it not out of order for the Government to act in such a way as to put at risk many hundreds of jobs in districts such as Dounreay in Scotland?

Madam Speaker: I find it strange that hon. Members should raise points of order about such documents, which are not of a parliamentary nature, of which I have no knowledge and which I have not seen, and that a point of order which is out of order is used in order to raise the matter.

3.56 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): I beg to move,

> That this House approves the Autumn Statement presented by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer on 12th November; welcomes the Government's continuing commitment to the firm control of public expenditure; supports the new expenditure plans, which honour the Government's commitments and provide protection of capital spending; applauds the specific measures the Government has taken to encourage confidence and foster recovery; and congratulates the Government on achieving a substantial reduction in underlying inflation, which has laid the foundations for sustainable growth.

I welcome the opportunity to have this early debate on the autumn statement. The principal aim of the measures that I announced was to restore confidence and to hasten recovery. To secure that objective I set out four key elements in the Government's strategy for growth: first, spending plans for the next three years which are fully consistent with what the economy can afford; secondly, within that tight overall settlement, special protection for programmes, particularly capital programmes, which strengthen the long-term health of the economy; thirdly, a substantial package of measures to boost activity in particular sectors of the economy; and fourthly, a further reduction in interest rates, following the dramatic progress that we have made in reducing inflation. That is the right strategy for Britain, and it has been warmly welcomed, not just by my right hon. and hon. Friends, but by industry and the country at large.

Conservative Members have never believed that the Government can spend their way out of recession. It is the private sector that generates growth and creates jobs—not the state. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) takes a different view. He believes—as he told a recent press conference—that the state is what he calls the "engine of growth", a view that has been discredited and discarded right across the world. It is not even fashionable today in Albania.

What the Government can, and must, do is to create an environment in which businesses can plan, invest and succeed, and that is exactly what we have done. British business now has an underlying inflation rate below the European Community average, interest rates that are lower than anywhere else in the European Community, one of the lowest rates of corporation tax in the industrialised world, and the best industrial relations record that we have seen in this country for very many years. On top of all that, British exporters are now nearly 15 per cent. more competitive in foreign markets than they were just two months ago. That gives British industry massive new opportunities to win back markets both at home and abroad.

All too often, economic commentators—joined by Opposition Members—talk down the prospects for business and the outlook for the future. Well, in the months and weeks ahead, Conservative Members will be encouraging business men to seize the opportunities provided by the new environment. Low taxes, low inflation and low interest rates—that is what business has been asking for, and that is what it has got.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): While that may be so, are there not two things that business men do not know? One is what will happen to the exchange rate, which they knew—or thought they knew—when we were in the ERM; the other is whether Britain will be in the single currency system or in the forefront of the development of the European Community.

Mr. Lamont: I have repeatedly made it clear that the Government are not operating an exchange rate target, that I believe in a strong currency, and that we will take the exchange rate into account in formulating our anti-inflation policy. The right hon. Gentleman asked about a single currency. We have always made it clear that a decision will be made at a later date. That is the right and appropriate course.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): In the light of the widespread view in business circles and elsewhere that the figures in the autumn statement do not add up, will the Chancellor confirm the briefing given to *The Sunday Times* by "senior Treasury and Downing street sources" that, come what may, the PSBR next year will be kept to 7 per cent.?

Mr. Lamont: I have no idea what the hon. Gentleman means when he says that the figures do not add up. They are set out clearly in the Grey Book. We have published what we believe is a realistic forecast for the PSBR for this year. We do not make a forecast for next year, but we have made an assumption. The PSBR for next year will be set at the right time, which is in the Budget. The hon. Gentleman is concerned about the PSBR, as I am. I should like to know what expenditure Labour intends to cut to bring the PSBR down. I hope that we shall not have any more such talk.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East) *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: I shall give way in a minute.

Economic activity is the product of millions of separate decisions by consumers, investors and business. They are about whether to spend or to save, to invest today, or to wait until tomorrow. Confidence is the key to unlocking that activity, and Governments must do all they can to build and sustain it. That is why I introduced my package of measures in the autumn statement.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East could not raise even half a cheer. However, I was not surprised, because for him every piece of good news is just another page that has to be ripped out of his speech. With his shopping lists and his grim sound bites, the hon. Gentleman likes to seize on a critical report, perhaps from the CBI, or a gloomy report, perhaps from the Institute of Directors.

I look forward to the hon. Gentleman's quotes in this debate from the CBI, which said that the package

> "will rebuild industry's confidence in itself".

The chairman of the CBI's economic affairs committee said:

> "We needed a whole package of measures and that's what we got. The Chancellor has listened to what industry has said to him."

He said that that was what industry needed.

Mr. Brown: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: I shall give way in a minute. I have given way twice.

The Association of British Chambers of Commerce said:

> "Businesses have heard the right messages".

The Institute of Directors said:

> "the Chancellor has given businesses the framework needed to begin the recovery."

Those are the views of the leading business organisations in this country. They speak for British business men and know what is actually happening in industry, and they have all endorsed the measures that I have taken.

Mr. Brown: Will the Chancellor also confirm that Mr. Howard Davies, the director-general of the CBI, said that no one could be sure that these measures are sufficient to take us out of recession? The Engineering Employers Federation said that they did not add up to a coherent strategy. Will the Chancellor look at his own figures and confirm that the autumn statement assumes, first, that unemployment will continue to rise; secondly, that it assumes in the budget to be awarded to the insolvency service that business bankruptcies will continue to rise? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that it also assumes that business investment will stagnate? Does that add up to the recovery that the right hon. Gentleman said he would give us?

Mr. Lamont: It was absolutely predictable that the hon. Gentleman would, as always, come out with his long shopping lists. He did not cite the most significant quotations from the largest, most important, and most representative business organisations. If the hon. Gentleman had quoted Howard Davies, the director-general of the CBI, in full, he would have said that Mr. Davies warmly welcomed my measures. To say that nothing can guarantee what happens in the next year is to say something that is true of all measures. There are no measures without risk and none with complete security attached to them. However, the package was warmly welcomed, and rightly so, throughout British industry.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lamont: No, because I should like to get on a little further.

My autumn statement was based on two fundamental principles—low inflation and tight control of public spending. Those are the key requirements for any lasting economic recovery, and they are the crucial conditions for the sustainable reduction in unemployment that all of us want to see. Opposition Members have never learnt those basic principles. They have never understood that inflation is the enemy of investment and saving, that reckless spending is the route to slump. That is why, in the past two years, we have fought a remorseless battle to get inflation down to the sort of levels that our European partners enjoy—levels that give our exporters the chance to compete abroad, and give consumers the confidence they need to spend rather than to save.

On Friday, we had some more excellent news on inflation. Underlying inflation is now down to just 3·8 per cent.—below the European Community average and the lowest for four years. The dramatic progress that we have made on inflation has allowed me to reduce interest rates since we left the ERM. More than anything else, that relaxation of monetary policy will help get Britain back to work. Interest rates are now at their lowest level for nearly 15 years; they are the lowest anywhere in the European Community, and they have fallen by a full 3 per cent. in the past eight weeks. That is a considerable injection of extra spending power in the economy—£45 a month off the typical mortgage payment, and over £3¾ billion off industry's interest bill. That comes on top of the interest rate reductions that we have seen continuously over the past year.

If we are to keep interest rates down, however, it is vital to maintain firm control over public spending. A prudent approach to spending is important for another reason, too —the more of a burden the state becomes, the less companies and individuals strive and prosper.

That means that we have to hold the growth in spending below the long-term growth level of the economy as a whole. That is why we decided to stick to cash plans for next year and to set tight ceilings for public spending for the following two years. Those ceilings are consistent with growth in the new control total of 1½ per cent. a year on average. Spending will grow in real terms each year, but the new system that I have put in place will ensure that we spend no more each year than the country can afford.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): We have heard about the CBI, and it always has a loud voice, and about the Institute of Directors, and it gets a fair showing in the House. However, the Chancellor fails to recognise that there are 4 million to 5 million low-paid people who he is demanding should have either a pay cut or a pay freeze. Their voice should be heard more often.

I have news for him. If he wants to balance the books, why does he not claw back, through taxation, the £26·2 billion that the richest 1 per cent. in Britain had in the first 10 years of the Tory Government? He should get that back, and then, instead of having a pay freeze for low-paid workers, he could use that money to finance the health service, to pay pensioners and to start building houses again. He should not be calling on low-paid people to clean up the mess created by the Tory Government.

Mr. Lamont: Perhaps I misheard the hon. Gentleman, but I thought that he began by saying something about people with loud voices. No one would accuse him of not having a loud voice. He has what often goes with loud voices—a tendency to get his facts completely wrong. It is not true to say that low-paid people are exclusively or predominantly in the public sector. I am afraid that that does not accord with the facts.

In my Mansion house speech, I made clear that I was determined to protect capital wherever possible within this survey. I have done that in two ways: by giving priority within the new spending plans to capital programmes, and by liberalising the rules on private finance.

The new plans support capital projects across a wide range of programmes. We will invest £6·3 billion on roads in the next three years. That is what we promised at the election, and that is what we will do. We will invest more in British Rail next year than in any year in the 1980s. That means that investment is up by one fifth compared with 1979, even after inflation.

We will invest a record £2·1 billion next year on capital projects in the national health service in England; why do not Opposition Members even begin to welcome that? We shall more than fulfil our election pledge to provide 153,000 homes through the Housing Corporation over three years.

There will be hundreds of capital projects—almost 400 major projects in the NHS; £1·4 billion of channel tunnel-related projects; £170 million on new rolling stock for commuter services in Kent; and twice as many new road starts next year as this.

On top of all that, we have made provision to move ahead quickly with one of the biggest projects that London Transport has put forward for decades—the Jubilee line extension. That means more work for the construction and engineering industries—perhaps as many as 12,000 on one project alone.

Those plans and proposals ensure that, after a rise this year, total public sector investment will be maintained in the year ahead.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): My right hon. Friend is truly to be congratulated on his spending announcements last week and today concerning the Jubilee line—which even Opposition Members must welcome. However, perhaps he will clarify one point that mystifies me. Following last week's statement, London Transport's chairman said the following day that he was aggrieved that core funding is to be cut over the next three years. What is that supposed to mean? My right hon. Friend announced good news for London Transport, so why does its chairman complain?

Mr. Lamont: Investment in London Underground will be at the highest level for 20 years since records began. Even taking out the Jubilee line—which is an extraordinary way of looking at things, as though it were not a major project that must be paid for—investment will be higher than in any year other than the current year. By any standards, that is a major injection of funds into London Underground.

Improving the nation's infrastructure is not just a job for the Government. The radical new approach to private finance that I announced last week will, for the first time, really open up infrastructure projects to the private sector.

I have abolished the need for comparison between private and public projects which used to prevent schemes going ahead. Provided a project is self-financing and conforms with regulatory requirements, there is no reason, in my opinion, why the Government should stand in its way. I have opened the way to more joint ventures between the public and private sectors, and I have liberalised the rules for leasing, so the public sector can make the best use of the capital resources available.

As a start, British Rail will be allowed to lease some £150 million of new rolling stock in the next three years, which will help to develop the leasing market and pave the way to privatisation. That provision comes on top of BR's existing Government funding.

There are now immense opportunities across a wide range of projects. I listed some when I made my statement. The way is now clear for the private sector to come forward with further specific proposals for projects that they would like to carry out in partnership with the Government.

The Green Paper on motorway charging, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will publish in the new year, will be another radical step. Road charging raises many difficult questions, which will need the most careful consideration, but a future decision to proceed with electronic road pricing would open up enormous opportunities for new private sector investment in Britain's roads network.

Of course, the best way of involving the private sector in capital projects is through privatisation directly. The Government have been following that policy for many years, and many successful private companies have been created as a result. Next year, the Government will hold another major sale in one of those companies, British Telecom. That will be done to promote further our policy of wider share ownership.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Does the Chancellor remember telling me on Thursday—this can be found in column 1009 of *Hansard*—that Scotland, or "the territories" as he put it, would gain more from the changes in the Barnett formula than it would otherwise have done? Given that the Scottish Office has since estimated the loss over the next three years at £27 million from this year's block allocation, would the Chancellor care to amend his remarks and bring them closer to reality?

Mr. Lamont: I do not believe that I told the hon. Gentleman anything that was incorrect, but I will have a look at what I said. I was explaining that the consequentials formula for Scotland had been adjusted in line with the results of the latest population census; that strikes me as sensible and, indeed, overdue.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Last week, the Chancellor said that he would recoup the £700 million from the car tax in further taxes for road users. Is he now telling us that his April Budget will feature that plan for all road users? If so, what form will it take?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman would be amazed if I gave the full details; indeed, it would be amazing if I were able to do so. What I said was that the cost of the motor tax abolition would be recouped, and I think that it would be reasonable to expect—*[Interruption.]* I have not made up my mind about which part will be recouped from particular taxes.

Capital spending does not just mean more roads, more hospitals and more rolling stock. The Government have also been determined to invest in the future of our people: that is why, in this very tight public spending round, we have continued to give priority to both education and health. Education spending will rise by 6 per cent. next year, and by 1995-96 it will be £1½ billion higher. That will allow 222,000 more students to enter further education; it will also allow Britain to rise nearer to the top of the international league for participation in education by 16-to-19-year-olds. At the same time, we are providing for a growing proportion of school leavers to take up youth training places.

Spending on the health service will rise in real terms in each of the next three years. Next year, it will rise by 3 per cent., enabling 2½ per cent. more patients to be treated. We have also kept the promises that we made to pensioners and to the less well off, who rely on benefits for their standard of living. That is why child benefit, pensions and other benefits have been indexed in full.

We could not have maintained capital spending, while at the same time focusing on health and education and uprating benefits, unless we had been prepared to adopt a firm stance on public sector pay. If we are to control current spending, the choice comes down to restraining the growth in wage bills or restraining the growth of services. In current circumstances, I judged that a policy of pay restraint in the public sector was the correct response.

I know that the limit of 1½ per cent. for settlements will seem hard to many who work in the public sector, but the facts must be recognised. In the past two years, earnings in the public sector have outstripped those in the private sector, where settlements are now at a 25-year low. Many private sector employees have experienced a pay freeze or a pay cut. I believe that a 1½ per cent. pay ceiling for one year is quite justified in the circumstances, given what it will yield.

The public sector pay bill represents an immense claim on the public finances. Controlling public spending is what we had to do, and what the autumn statement is all about.

I know all too well that the recession has been difficult for businesses and home owners, and particularly for those who have lost their jobs. More recently, the gloomy world background and the blow to confidence caused by the suspension of our ERM membership has raised renewed concern. But the fact is that, over the spring and into the summer, car production rose, being up 19 per cent. in the first half of the year, manufacturing production rose in the first and second quarters, and retail sales rose in the second quarter and again in the third.

Despite the gloomy headlines of the last few months, some of these hopeful indicators have been maintained. Car production again in October was 22 per cent. higher than a year earlier; industrial production rose in the third quarter; and today's new figures show that retail sales were up for the third month in a row, to their highest level for well over two years.

Over the months ahead, we need to see that this progress is consolidated and spread to those sectors, particularly housing and construction, which have been especially hard hit. It was to reviving confidence in those hard-pressed areas that the package of measures that I announced last week was addressed. Those measures, together with the cuts in interest rates, will provide major opportunities for businesses.

First, on the housing market, the Government are providing £750 million in the next four months to remove at least 20,000 empty properties off the market. The more private finance, and the better the terms, that can be

[Mr. Lamont]

secured, the more such properties will come off the market. Housing associations will be looking to builders, building societies and the whole range of lending institutions to get involved. This measure has been warmly welcomed by all those who care about the housing market. The National Association of Estate Agents has already described the move as "a recipe for recovery".

Secondly, as to the construction industry, local authorities now have a one-off opportunity to spend all the receipts they get over the next year. That should boost capital investment by local councils by over £1¾ billion—extra money for house renovations or refurbishing schools. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has taken steps to ensure that the extra investment is spread widely and has the maximum impact. Opposition Members were asking the other day why more could not be done. It can. They should go and tell Labour local authorities to sell their council houses and spend the money on the improvements we all want to see.

Thirdly, I have given exporters new opportunities to compete and succeed. I have increased export credit cover by £700 million for this year and next to help exporters take advantage of their new competitiveness and win new orders in world markets.

Fourthly, in regard to investment, with increased capital allowances and the lowest interest rates in Europe, every company has opportunities to invest. Even today, business investment accounts for a higher share of GDP than at any time during the 1970s. The higher capital allowances that I announced will add to this by giving firms the extra incentive they need to bring their investment plans forward.

Fifthly, the abolition of car tax will provide another major boost to Britain's car industry and to suppliers and component manufacturers throughout the country. That is why the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said:

> "we can now look forward to the motor industry leading the economy out of recession".

British industry, which is the largest purchaser of cars produced in this country, will also benefit. The chairman of Lex Service, the car retailers, said that the abolition of car tax would

> "reinforce the improvement that has already been seen in the new car market in recent months".

As I have said, there have indeed been improvements in the car market in car sales and in car production.

Low interest rates, low inflation, a package to build confidence and recovery—those are the steps which we have taken to tackle unemployment. Governments beat unemployment by encouraging growth and creating the conditions which business needs to invest and prosper. Job creation is a consequence of economic recovery, not its cause. Unemployment cannot be solved simply by letting the state sector grow year by year, as Opposition Members seem to believe.

Indeed, because of their commitment to minimum wages, any Government formed by the Opposition would increase unemployment, not reduce it. That is not just my view. After the election, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) explained it all. He said:

> "I knew that the consequences were that there would be some shake out. Any silly fool knew that."

I repeat:

> "Any silly fool knew that."

Apparently not. No one would accuse the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) of being a silly fool. However, it was the right hon. and learned Member who described Labour's minimum wage plan as

> "an unwavering commitment, not open to negotiation"—

even by any silly old fool. However, Labour's confusion over the minimum wage is nothing compared with the shambles of its tax plans.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): How dare he?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Lady shouts, "How dare he?" Does the hon. Lady mean, how dared we tell the British people at the time of the election, and was it not outrageous for us to do so?

Before the election, Labour's finely tuned, finely targeted answer to the recession was the biggest increase in taxes on incomes since the war. Since the election, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, has been unrepentant. He explained:

> "I strongly defend these proposals."

However, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East takes a different view.

Mr. Gordon Brown *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Lamont: He told a press conference last week:

> "Further tax increases at this time would be a mistake."

So who is right? Is it the leader of the Labour party, or is it the shadow Chancellor? Opposition Members will remember that there is only one way to settle this sort of dispute. They did it before the election and they can do it again: clear the diary; get on the phone; call in the journalists; book a table at Luigi's; and settle down to a bit of spaghetti diplomacy. The fact is that the Labour leader's tax plans have been buried by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. His shadow Budget, launched in such splendour and media hype, has been quietly, thank God, laid to rest.

However, Labour's problems will not go away that quickly. As usual, the Labour party's response to the outcome of the public spending round defies, as it always does, every known law of arithmetic. On pay, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East believes that we have been too tough and he would like more. I should be surprised if he were to deny that. On capital spending, the hon. Gentleman says that we have not spent enough. Again, he would like more. However, when it comes to borrowing, the hon. Gentleman says that it is too high and should come down. On taxes, he says, "No, not today."

It does not even begin to add up. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East does not know how much he would spend; he does not know how much he would tax; he does not know how much he would borrow. *[Interruption.]* We are not talking about next year's Budget. We are talking about the situation today and Labour's response to the plans that we have put forward.

When the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East was asked what was wrong with the Government's plans and what he was proposing, he replied:

> "I'm not prepared to put a figure on it."

He is the first shadow Chancellor to have volunteered for permanent purdah. This afternoon, we on this side, and the country, would like some answers. If the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East wants higher public sector pay, where would he get the money from? Would he take it from patient care in the health service? Would he cut spending on schools? Would he axe the Jubilee line? Would he cancel the hospital building programme? That was the pattern followed by previous Labour Governments. These are the questions that the hon. Gentleman must answer when he seeks to make any points about the statement that I have presented to the House.

The autumn statement is about tight control of public spending, protecting capital programmes and encouraging recovery in key sectors. This party alone has the policies and the determination to achieve those goals. British industry now has its best opportunity in years to attack the markets of its competitors and show what it can do. Low inflation and a competitive pound, the lowest interest rates for nearly 15 years, time-limited tax measures, low rates of tax and good industrial relations all give Britain the edge as a place to invest and to do business.

Yes, we have been firm on public sector pay—firm so that we can build roads, so that we can build hospitals, so that more and more of our young people can have the education that they deserve. We have been firm on what we pay ourselves today so that we can build a more prosperous country for tomorrow.

Now is the time for business leaders and managers to make the most of these opportunities to invest, to export and to build for the future. They can do so in the knowledge that behind them are a Government investing record sums in the nation's infrastructure and in the nation's future.

That is why this statement has given an opportunity to every business man and has set the right course for this nation's spending priorities in the years ahead. It has been warmly welcomed across the country, and it deserves the wholehearted support of this House.

4.29 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'regrets that the Autumn Statement confirms that the recession is continuing and that unemployment and bankruptcies will continue to rise; regrets also that investment which has fallen substantially during the recession will fall again for 1992 and will at best, according to Government forecasts, rise by only one quarter of one per cent. during 1993; deplores the worsening balance of payments and the failure of the Government to recognise the need for a policy for manufacturing and for the regions; demands an emergency employment programme to reduce unemployment and the fear of unemployment and additional investment measures to boost the construction industry and business as a whole; and calls for a long-term industrial and training policy for Britain.'.

When unemployment is approaching 3 million, when long-term unemployment is almost 1 million and when investment is falling, I do not think that the House has heard such a complacent statement from a Chancellor as we have heard this afternoon. If the Chancellor is in any doubt about the problems that British industry faces, will he talk to the Government's own Insolvency Service?

In the autumn statement forecast, the Chancellor assumes a large increase in the budget of the Insolvency Service merely to deal with the problems of business bankruptcies over the next year. Does he agree that the number of bankruptcies—20,000—with which the service dealt two years ago will rise to more than 40,000 in the year to come? Far from redundancies and bankruptcies falling as a result of the autumn statement, they will rise significantly.

Our argument is that last week's autumn statement and the measures that the Chancellor was forced to announce were an admission that his entire previous strategy had failed. He should apologise for three years of recession when measures that he is now being forced to consider were rejected and even ridiculed as unnecessary.

More important, the Chancellor should admit that the policies that he has explained this afternoon do not in any way measure up to the problems that we have at present. Most fundamentally of all—it became clearer and clearer as the Chancellor spoke—the Government still have no long-term industry or economic strategy for rebuilding the industrial base of this country.

The Government are unable to recognise that the fear of unemployment is the biggest barrier to the return of consumer confidence, so they have failed to introduce the employment measures that are urgently needed to bring down unemployment and to reduce the fear of unemployment.

The Government are unable to recognise that a complete policy shift and not just a series of ad hoc, piecemeal measures is necessary for industry. They have, therefore, failed to bring forward the industry strategy that is essential. The result is that the budget for the Department of National Heritage for the preservation of our past will soon surpass the budget of the Department of Trade and Industry for investment in our future. The Government are unable to distinguish between the cosmetic initiatives as a tactic and the real changes that are necessary to make Britain an economic world leader. That is why they have failed to provide a stable, long-term environment for industry.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that his criticisms of Government economic policy would be far more convincing if, last summer, when British industry was being squeezed by excessive interest rates and by an overvalued pound, especially against the dollar, he had joined some Conservative Members in urging the Government to leave the exchange rate mechanism, to float the pound, to reduce interest rates and to have the economic policy that the Chancellor is now putting forward?

Mr. Brown: Who was squeezing British industry? Who was responsible for the rise in interest rates? Who failed by not having an industrial policy for the country? Who was pushing up unemployment? It was none other than the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Given that situation, why did the hon. Gentleman urge the Government to remain in the ERM up to the very last minute?

Mr. Brown: Our policy was not the devaluation of the pound; it became the policy of the Government. Let us be absolutely clear about what has happened over the past three years. The Government told us that they would stay in the exchange rate mechanism. They promised at the election that they would not devalue. I have the election manifesto in which they said that the exchange rate was the cornerstone of their anti-inflation policy. Who left the ERM and devalued? It was none other than the Chancellor.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Would the hon. Gentleman have left the ERM? If he had, would the pound have been devalued?

Mr. Brown: We have said to the Chancellor that he had the option of realigning within the exchange rate mechanism. The Chancellor has failed to give us a convincing answer. I ask him again today: was realignment discussed within the Government—yes or no? Was he not aware that if the Government had put that proposal to the authorities in Europe it would have had a sympathetic hearing? The answer to that is, of course, yes.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): The hon. Gentleman has just said, as many of his colleagues have said in the past, that the pound should have been realigned a week or two before 16 September. What should the central value of sterling have been at that time? What should have been the corresponding rate of interest?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman has the audacity to ask me, when the Government have devalued the pound by 15 per cent. The difference between us and the Government is that we believe in a managed exchange rate. The Chancellor cannot even tell us this afternoon whether he believes in a floating or managed exchange rate.

Let us be absolutely clear about the autumn statement. First, unemployment is going to rise and the Chancellor cannot deny that. Secondly, our industrial capacity will continue to shrink. Thirdly, we are bottom of the league in Europe for investment, employment, output and growth. Fourthly, the Chancellor's figures in the autumn statement admit that, even at the depths of the recession, the balance of payments of this country will worsen and import penetration, even as we fail to grow, will mean that foreign producers will benefit from any sales in the shops and more so than British industry.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I will give way only once more.

Mr. Mans: Does the hon. Gentleman agree with his colleague the shadow transport spokesman who said that any silly fool knows that minimum wages result in lost jobs?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman has taken the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) completely out of context. My hon. Friend was defending a minimum wage. He was not opposing it. He was saying that the abolition of wage control in the wages councils is completely unacceptable and would even have been offensive to Winston Churchill who brought them in. It is obscene that Conservative Members continue to tell us that there is no floor below which wages should not fall, while they have been absolutely silent when some executives in British industry have awarded themselves huge pay rises above £10,000 a week—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. While I fully appreciate from the Chair the advantage of interventions in debate, I will never tolerate a deliberate policy on either side of the House of shouting speakers down.

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not know whether the interventions are voluntary or as a result of arm twisting on the Conservative Benches. However, I am happy to deal with Conservative Members whether they intervene from a desire to do so on their part or because of prodding from the Whips.

Let us consider the autumn statement. Last Thursday, Conservative Members not only cheered and waved their Order Papers; they stood and congratulated the Chancellor on his autumn statement. I can tell the Chancellor now that they were cheering his admission that the housing market would not recover of itself; that industry would not revive of itself unaided by the Government; and that investment would continue to decline without special measures. They were cheering the admission that simply waiting for free market forces to work was simply not enough.

When the Chancellor introduced the investment incentives that he himself once called phoney, which the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry before the election called vague and misplaced and which the Conservative election briefing called misdirected, and when the Government said that the use of capital receipts that the housing Minister once called fool's gold were acceptable forms of intervention in the marketplace, what we saw from Conservative Members was the belated and enforced admission of the failure of all that they had held most dear—the experiment of the 1980s in a free-for-all economy. That admission should lead them to apologise to the thousands of people who have lost their jobs, their homes and their businesses over three years of recession when the Government were, by their own admission now, pursuing the wrong policy.

Let us remember what happened at the election when the Prime Minister said not that a recovery programme was needed but that all that was needed was a Conservative election victory to bring about recovery. He said:

> "Our re-election will make recovery certain. Don't let anyone tell you that the recovery isn't there for the taking. The return of a Conservative Government is the remaining ingredient to ensure a return to growth."

In a speech called "Thumbs up for Recovery", he said:

> "All Britain is waiting for is the confidence a Conservative victory will bring."

Such phrases show that the election was not so much about the representation of the people as about misrepresentation to the people about Conservative views. At the election, when the Prime Minister was asked about a recovery programme, he said:

> "£1 billion on a recovery programme"—

roughly what the Chancellor is giving in the recovery measures—

> "any economist will tell you that that will make no impact whatsoever."

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I am not giving way.

The Prime Minister said:

> "It is sticking-plaster over the lack of policy. I have never heard such ludicrous nonsense in my life."

Mr. Oppenheim: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I am not giving way.

Last Thursday, we witnessed the final——

Mr. Lamont *rose*——

Mr. Brown: Every time I give way to the right hon. Gentleman I have to remind him of the promises that he made in his party's manifesto that he was never able to fulfil.

Mr. Lamont: We all know what the hon. Gentleman was promising at the election—it was very large tax increases. If Labour had won the election, presumably the hon. Gentleman would have implemented those tax increases which he now thinks should not have been implemented. What has caused him to change his mind? Why is his view today different from what it was at the election?

Mr. Brown: I thought that it should have been obvious to the Chancellor that the recession has become a slump. British industry is faced with problems that it cannot of itself solve, and that is why the Chancellor has had to introduce a recovery programme.

Last Thursday we witnessed the final recognition of how wrong it was to say that the recession would end of itself and that recovery was inevitable and how wrong it was to assume a spontaneous free market end to the recession. Let us remember what the Chancellor said: he is reminding other people of what they said. In a speech on 27 June, 1990, as the recession began, he said:

> "The real test of Thatcherite economics is only now beginning. The slow-down in prospect will put to the test the new-found flexibility and resilience of the economy and the effectiveness of the labour market reforms. It looks as if we may now be seeing the beginning of a reverse of the long-running trend which has seen the share of manufacturing in GDP fall. I feel that the resurgence that we have seen so far is nothing like the resurgence that we are about to see."

That was the Chancellor speaking just before the recession finally got going. But the problem that the Government face is that, having had to admit that past policies have been wrong, and having had to admit, as they cheered, that the free market solution was insufficient, they have not in any way measured up to the scale of the problems that they themselves have created by their policies.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I am not giving way.

As with the coal crisis, the Government are wrong and have been shown to be wrong. As with the coal crisis, they have modified their policies in the light of being shown to be wrong. But my fear is that, as with the coal crisis, they are doing the right thing belatedly, half-heartedly and with the continuing intention, as soon as circumstances allow, of reverting to their original destructive course of action.

Let us look at the scale of the problems that the Chancellor should have dealt with—the seventh quarter of recession, the longest recession since the 1930s, £30 billion lost output, unemployment rising for many months to come, manufacturing investment down 20 per cent., and business saying that industrial capacity is becoming so small that some people doubt whether in key sectors British industry will be able to benefit from recovery.

What do the Government's proposals achieve? Even if the Chancellor's forecasts were right, having lost 7 per cent. of our industrial output during the recession, he assumes that we can win only 1 per cent. of it back next year. Having lost 20 per cent. of our manufacturing investment, his proposals assume that we will recover none of that over the next year. Investment in our manufacturing future is 20 per cent. lower than when the recession began—no wonder many people are doubting whether the autumn statement in any way measures up to the problems that we face.

If the Government's forecasts are right, we will reach a position by the end of 1993 when national income in recession-hit America will have risen by 4 per cent. since 1990, in Italy by 4 per cent., in Canada by 5 per cent., in Germany by 5 per cent., in Japan by 10 per cent., even in Greece by 8 per cent., and in Spain by 5 per cent., but will have fallen by 2·5 per cent. in Britain. That is the scale of our problems in comparison with other countries.

As everyone knows, the question is whether the test of the sincerity of the Chancellor's conversion from the failure of his previous policies can be seen in the actions that he proposes in the autumn statement. Let us look at what it adds up to in practice. We know that the Jubilee line, which was announced and then re-announced and which was in the election manifesto, has still to secure a starting date. We know also that many of the other projects that the right hon. Gentleman put before us last Thursday have no starting dates at all—for example, the proposals that were going to help us with new public-private partnerships for investment and the east-west crossrail which he mentioned in his autumn statement. Of course, that project was first announced in 1989, but construction cannot begin until 1 April 1996.

The central Scotland fast link that the right hon. Gentleman mentioned on Thursday—again, first announced not by him but several months ago—has an earliest possible starting date of 1996. The Birmingham west orbital road, again announced some time ago, has a first possible starting date of 1996. The channel tunnel rail link, which was announced in October 1989, has a first starting date of 1996. Perhaps the Government plan to help with the next Tory recession—they will make absolutely no difference to the current Tory recession, because not one truly new capital investment programme was announced last week for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland or the west of England.

It is not so much an autumn statement as an autumn restatement of projects that were previously announced and have been repackaged by the Chancellor. We must take into account the facts that transport expenditure is to be cut by 20 per cent. in real terms by 1996, that, as has been mentioned by a Conservative Member—the Chancellor did not deny it—London Underground financing will be in difficulties over the next few years, and that, whatever people say about the roads programme, the one thing that is absolutely certain is that roads that need urgent repairs will not be repaired. The promise of action is not for now, in the depth of the recession, but for a long time into the future.

Last week, Conservative Members were cheering not action now but the possibility that, at a later date if funds become available, things might be done long into the future—when we needed, in addition to the housing measures that the right hon. Gentleman announced, a home owners' rescue scheme and a direct boost to building houses, when we needed the construction industry to be directly assisted, when we needed the release of capital receipts that had been accumulated by the sales of the past, and not those receipts that local authorities do not even possess in most cases for the future and that are certainly likely to be far lower than the Chancellor's figures. People will see that the measures that the Chancellor announced

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last week were limited, too little too late, and of course they will not deal with the substantial problems of homelessness.

Let us examine the Government's car industry initiatives. Some people might be excused for feeling a little cynical. The Chancellor looked at the problems facing 3 million unemployed, the financial difficulties of 5 million people on public sector pay who will have a pay cut, and the utter hardship of a quarter of a million people whose homes have been repossessed. He decided that, of all the measures that he proposed, the most generously funded would be the £400 off the price of the average new car. That measure could not bring joy to the unemployed miner or the underpaid home help who will receive an increase of at best £1·50 a week. As a result of the Government's policies, such people cannot even contemplate buying a second hand car, let alone a new car.

Let us examine the abolition of the car tax. I welcome it, but the measure has to be part of a full national recovery programme. The measure will cost the Treasury £750 million. The motor traders predict that, such is the recession in the economy, only 70,000 additional cars will be sold next year as a result of the initiative. That means that the cost to the Treasury of each additional car sold will be £10,500. Yet the average car costs less than £10,000. *[Interruption.]* It is absolutely right.

As the Chancellor has failed to contemplate additional measures to ensure industrial recovery and make it possible for people to afford to buy cars, it would have been cheaper to give cars away to 70,000 people. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may laugh but if 70,000 additional cars will be sold in the next year as a result of the expenditure of £750 million, it works out at almost £10,500 per car sold. The Chancellor would have been more sensible if he had spent the money on the first hand-out from the national lottery. That would have been a more sensible central element of his recovery programme.

The point that I make illustrates—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members claim that they know how to add up, but the fact is that the measure costs £10,500 per car. Such is the false economics of isolated random and assorted measures. If they are not part of a co-ordinated recovery strategy——

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Have you had any request from the Opposition to lay a paper before the House which explains that if 70,000 additional cars are sold, additional moneys will be earned through VAT and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is a frivolous point of order and the hon. Gentleman knows it.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: No, I shall not give way. I have given way quite enough.

Conservative Members do not seem to understand that if the Chancellor does not introduce a full national recovery programme which includes investment, housing, industry and employment measures, the isolated measures that he takes will be costly and will not yield the benefit that he expects. The main point is that so long as people are afraid of losing their job, and so long as the Chancellor fails to recognise that fact, an isolated gesture will achieve far less than it should. It becomes a huge cost which does not achieve great benefit for the country.

Let us summarise the net effect of the Chancellor's measures. He expects £300 million in additional investment in the next year. He expects investment to rise from slightly less than £71 billion to slightly more than £71 billion. He expects a 0·25 per cent. boost in investment. Let us examine the shortfall since the recession began. Investment has fallen from £80 billion to £71 billion—an 11 per cent. fall.

The best that the Chancellor can hope for as a result of his car tax and other measures in the next few months is that a £9,000 million fall in investment will be made up by only a £300 million increase. In other words, for every £100 in investment lost to the economy during the recession since 1990, only £3 will be put back in the next year. Investment will be a smaller share of the economy at the end of next year than at the beginning. Far from the investment-led recovery which the Chancellor argued that he would bring about, we have the opposite: Britain's share of investment in its economy will fall.

The problem is that, while the Chancellor admitted under pressure that he was wrong to pursue a wholly free market solution in the past few years, through lack of conviction he has failed to apply the remedies that we need. The first element that he should have considered was an industry policy for Britain. Germany, Italy, Japan and France are introducing programmes for manufacturing and technology. France and Italy are using this period to boost their computer and information technology industries. Japan has announced special measures for small businesses, technology and the new generation industries of the future. In Germany special action has been taken for engineering and technology. America is preparing to introduce an industry policy of its own.

Yet here in Britain, the Chancellor is happy to contemplate Britain producing fewer ships than Norway, Denmark or China, fewer cars than Spain, fewer commercial vehicles than South Korea, less steel than Brazil, fewer computers than Taiwan and a quarter of the machine tools that Germany produces. We import some of the most basic consumer goods which we could produce here. Is it right that the Government are prepared to preside over a massive cut in our industrial capacity? Worse than that, the autumn statement figures reveal that the Government propose to cut support for industry, technology, regional aid, small businesses and research and development.

The only budget increase of any significance at the Department of Trade and Industry is for the closure of coal mines. Yet the Government should build an energy policy that will make coal an essential element in our planning for the future.

The second element missing from the Chancellor's autumn statement is vital to the economic future of Britain. It is a long-term strategy for investment in people. We have fewer students at universities and colleges than Taiwan or Korea. The autumn statement admitted that, although there are more qualified people, only the same number of people could expect college places. Is not the net effect of the predictions in the autumn statement that training, which is central to our future, will be cut? The training and enterprise councils will have smaller budgets at a time when they have even greater need.

What does the Government's strategy add up to? We hear nothing now about zero inflation, nothing about the British economic miracle, nothing about the pound replacing the deutschmark as Europe's central currency and nothing about the first green shoots of spring which the Chancellor saw before. The Chancellor now tells us that he discounts forecasts. But for the past two years he has predicted month in month out that we will recover from recession.

What is the basis of the Government's economic strategy now? They have given up the medium-term financial strategy; they have given up shadowing the deutschmark; they have given up membership of the exchange rate mechanism. What does the policy now rest on? The Chancellor told the Treasury Select Committee that the economic policy rested on none of those strategies but simply on the Chancellor's judgment.

We have come through M0, M3 and sterling M3, the medium-term financial strategy and membership of the ERM. Now, after 13 years of experimentation and all the pain of it, we have the answer that economic policy, interest rate considerations and what happens to inflation must rest on the soundness of the Chancellor's judgment. "Lamont puts faith in judgment", as *The Daily Telegraph* put it on Friday 9 October. The Chancellor said:

> "My aim will be to reach a judgment on inflationary trends."

The Chancellor intends to build an economic strategy on the element which no one can claim is credible with the City or the country—the soundness of the Chancellor's judgment. He will bypass the relative certainties of astrology, reading the tea leaves, palmistry and cutting a pack of cards. The Chancellor's judgment is to be the central element of economic policy in Britain.

I suppose that each day, the Chancellor wakes up and reads the newspapers; he gets into his bath and sings, or not, as the case may be; he looks out of the window and sees, or does not see, the green shoots of spring; he hears, or does not hear, vague stirrings; and then he considers the economic issues of the day and what the judgment should be on inflation and interest rates. Every day is judgment day—the Chancellor's judgment—Norman's wisdom. That is the basis of economic policy—unsound before breakfast, unsound before lunch and unsound before dinner.

This is the Chancellor who told us that there would be no recession, and there was. He told us that there would be a recovery two years ago, six months ago, at the election, and after it. He told us that he would not devalue, and he did. He said that he would not leave the exchange rate mechanism, and he did. He told us that he would give us a new economic strategy, and now we find that it does not add up to much. That is the problem which the economy faces.

Mr. Lamont: Since the hon. Gentleman has talked about adding up, will he tell us precisely where he thinks the funds for all the programmes that he has put forward would come from? He told us that, although the 1988 to 1995 roads programme is to double, it is inadequate. He told us that, although London Underground's investment is to be the highest for 20 years, it is inadequate. He told us that the Department of Trade and Industry budget is inadequate, and that the budget for training is inadequate even though it will increase next year. Can he tell us whether he is proposing to fund his programme by more borrowing, more taxes, or a combination of both?

Mr. Brown: The Chancellor does not understand that the public sector borrowing requirement is rising because of the recession and unemployment. Policies for growth will bring it down—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer!"] I have set out a number of measures that the Chancellor could take. One includes a public dividend on the utilities that have made excess profits, which Conservative Members have defended, throughout the recession.

If the Chancellor could achieve proper growth in the economy, the cost of unemployment would fall and the investment that we would make in the economy would yield the necessary results.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does the hon. Gentleman think that his projected tax on utilities will increase investment? Does he really believe that?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman does not seem to have considered the fact that the utilities have huge amounts of cash in the bank which they are not using productively in the economy. He does not seem to realise that during the past three years, when the Government have done little to regulate them, the utilities' profits have exceeded £20,000 million, which is roughly £800 for every family in the country. I shall ask him and his hon. Friends a question: do they believe that the utilities have made excess profits during the past three years? I do not think that anyone is in any doubt that that is what has happened.

My argument is that the country can have little confidence in the economic leadership of men and Ministers whose every prediction has failed and whose every promise has been broken. Having told us that a recovery programme was not necessary for recovery, they now tell us that it is a prerequisite. Having promised year-on-year tax cuts, which is what the Prime Minister did to win the election, they are saying that tax increases can neither be ruled in nor out. Having promised balanced budgets—initially annually, when the Prime Minister was Chancellor of the Exchequer, then over the trade cycle—they have redefined what they mean by a balanced budget. Because of the vast cost of unemployment and recession, they have retreated to the assertion that the best that they can promise is to balance the budget in one or two years of the cycle.

Having told us that a pay policy in the public sector was inflexible and unnecessary—the Prime Minister said that specifically—and would mean recruitment and retention of staff difficulties and make it difficult to offer incentives, the Government now tell us that a pay policy that hits the poorest and weakest hardest is essential for the economy. Having been told that wage norms were unnecessary in a free market, two nights ago—when everyone expected a speech on foreign policy—we are now told that a wages policy is part of the economic policy for the private sector as well. Having promised a classless society, opportunity for all and a nation at ease with itself, the Government, by underfunding the health service, allowing waiting lists to rise and allowing huge increases in poverty, inequality, deprivation and homelessness, have reneged on any promise that opportunity for all was ever possible under such a Government.

What is at stake is not merely the Chancellor's personal fate—that has long since been decided—or the political

[Mr. Brown]

fate of the Conservative party. What worries me is the economic fate of millions of people who cannot depend on any consistency in economic policy while the Conservative party is in power. How can people spend with confidence or plan ahead? How can people move home? How can businesses invest when they do not know from week to week what Government policy will be and whether they will have the guts to stick with it? That is why it is the Government who have become the obstacle to economic recovery; people do not have any confidence in them.

The Conservative party is fond of comparing everything to what happens in business. Let it be clear that if the senior executives of any company had been responsible for the Government's mistakes; if they had consistently misrepresented the true state of their finances; if they had recklessly entered into promises that they were never able to keep; if they had published a series of false prospectuses and said that they stood wholeheartedly behind them and would not change; if they had lost billions off the reserves in a few days as a result of speculation; if they had presided over the rundown of core manufacturing activities, with more goods having to be imported from abroad; if they had to say that all past statements that they had made were virtually inoperative, as the Government did on 16 September; and if they had been found responsible for errors and misjudgments on the scale that the Government have made them, would there not have been a boardroom coup? Would not those people intimately associated with the company have demanded big changes and resignations? Would not those executives have resigned as the error of their ways had been exposed?

The Government's philosophy seems to be to make excuses and stay. The Government have been forced by events to admit that they have been habitually wrong on a massive scale for a long time. Yet even now they cannot get it right. The Chancellor says that he is going for growth. He should be going now, so that growth can succeed.

5.7 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): I always enjoy the speeches of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). He has all the fervour and moral zeal of the manse, and that was evident this afternoon. I confess that I bring different qualities to the debate—philosophic doubt and general agnosticism.

I am anxious for those who believe that one can handle the components of spending, income, and borrowing as though they were mechanical levers which can produce a predetermined end to the recession. If we look across the western world—in particular, this week, at Germany—we find other economies, with different economic philosophies, thrust into the miserable experiences that we enjoy. In that context, I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on the reception that his autumn statement received within the Conservative party—because it was an important component in the restoration of confidence—and in the business community. I hope that the confidence shown can be vindicated.

My enthusiasm centred around the decision which preceded the autumn statement to allow our exchange rate to find a more realistic level. It is now 15 per cent. below its ERM rate. For all those people who talked about a managed devaluation, especially the Opposition Front Bench, were any of them thinking of managing it to the level that has proved to be the economic reality? No. They would have chosen a lesser figure. It could have been managed initially at that level but speculation would have recommenced after a short time. I am delighted that we now have that particular freedom and the consequent lower interest rates. I wish my right hon. Friend well in the pursuit of those policies, because I believe that the more we expose ourselves to underlying and prudent reality in the economy, the more likely we are able to trace our steps back to a happier economic situation.

I must tell my right hon. Friend that that marks the end of those of my words which will come gladly to him. What I say hereafter he may well support in his bosom, but I suspect that he might feel that there are other occasions when they could be said more appropriately. I happen to think, however, that one's job in the House of Commons is to offer good-natured advice and that I will now do.

I shall concentrate my remarks on three matters: borrowing, incomes policy—I prefer to identify it by what can be familiarly understood—and taxation. My right hon. Friend has, understandably, pursued a high level of public spending. I welcome the figures contained in the statement, particularly in terms of the protective areas of state activity such as health, education and social services. Of course, as a consequence, public borrowing is now at substantial levels—£37 billion for the year 1992-93, or 6¼ per cent. of the gross domestic product. I do not dismiss the *Financial Times* or *The Daily Telegraph* as the more radical elements of the press and they have calculated that, in the following year, public borrowing could rise to between £44 billion and £45 billion, or between 7 and 7¼ per cent. of GDP.

For those who just have a sense of history, I remind them that the last time that we had a PSBR higher than that was in 1975-76, back in the territory of the International Monetary Fund and Mr. Witteveen. Those hallowed memories inevitably diminish over time and it is just as well that we remind ourselves of them.

The figures for public borrowing are quite formidable and the point must be made—not least in the context that we are all concentrating our minds upon Maastricht—that in article 104C—I put in a detailed reference for the benefit of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary—the borrowing threshold for excessive deficit is triggered at 3 per cent.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor needs no reminding that we provide the shock troops who seek to serve him. The public borrowing figures represent a potential future inflationary timebomb. The recovery may come unexpectedly fast; the truth is that none of us knows about the timing of that recovery. The confident assertions that seem to be the stock-in-trade of economic debate not merely in the House of Commons but outside is extremely depressing. We cannot prudently contemplate borrowing of that magnitude without realising that, even with a modest recovery, there may be great difficulties in funding that borrowing other than in an inflationary fashion. We would then be back on another treadmill, having just escaped from one.

In that context, I should like to consider incomes policy. Given the current level of public borrowing, the Government, quite naturally, wish to minimise their spending and in as painless a way as possible. So a formula has been developed, a crude 1½ per cent. across the board limit on pay increases in the public sector, just for one year.

I am not going to be so hypersensitive as to cavil about the circumstances that persuaded the Chancellor to make that judgment, but other considerations should be put on the scales.

For a long time we have been trying to disaggregate the public sector through the operation of performance pay and a host of other techniques to try to bring about a much more open system of payment. We persuaded ourselves that that was a prime requirement. Let there be no misunderstanding: to go for the flat rate approach will make that objective a good deal more difficult. I suspect, however, that that approach will still persist, which will make the actual implementation of the 1½ per cent. limit more and more partial and will therefore give rise to more and more resentment. I say that not looking into the crystal, but merely reading the book of the 1960s, when we went through all this.

One may start with the hope that the decision is a rather clever wheeze to keep public spending under better control than would otherwise be the case, but it begins to get out of hand. We have already seen how the private sector is being invited to take part in this great exercise. The Prime Minister wheeled out his wayside pulpit and took it down to Mansion house where he gave a little lecture about the 1½ per cent. limit to the private sector. If wealth creation means anything, it means striving. It means rewards for the successful. Those efforts should not merely be disparaged by ministerial rhetoric—for it is no more than that. As for the weekend lectures, the language of senior Government politicians is far too valuable to be squandered on that kind of exercise because it merely devalues their general currency.

Given that I have an anxiety about the level of borrowing and that I do not believe that one can have restraints on the public sector in the form of a 1½ per cent. pay settlement—certainly not beyond one year—which is now being promulgated, it is important to consider the debate in the global sense. I started my speech by referring to what has happened to other countries in the western world. I do not think that President Bush did himself or the United States that much good when he said, "Watch these lips, no more taxes". I do not think that Kohl did himself much good by foreswearing the use of taxation to deal with the unification of Germany and rather to depend heavily on monetary weapons. We have to be prepared to see increases in taxes in the coming Budget as complementary to what is now being elaborated in the Government's spending and borrowing programmes.

I am not for one moment going to suggest what kind of taxes are appropriate, but I believe that it would be better to devise a tax system that bore upon people as they spent rather than as they earned. In that way we will gradually downgrade the impact of so many of the items that are set against tax liability, which has bedevilled a good deal of tax planning and tax management.

I do not believe that the policy to get a measured and I hope successful emergence of Britain from the miseries of the recession can possibly succeed unless all the major elements of policy have some realistic relationship with each other. In that context I believe that taxation has a part to play, and that comes not happily from my lips when I say that it must mean an increase in taxes.

5.18 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) has given the Chancellor much food for thought. I want to draw attention to something that he said at the beginning of his speech, when he referred to the reception that the autumn statement got from those on the Government Back Benches.

That reception was indeed a warm and enthusiastic one, but it seems to have faded a little. However, the point is that the Chancellor should not look to his Back Benchers to assess the value of his policies. The fact that he has a great need to do just that because of recent events, and the fact that those who delivered that reception have, primarily, short-term considerations because of recent events, are bad pointers for economic policy. The pursuit of an economic policy based on judgment will not be assisted if the test of that judgment on the day is how pleased the people sitting behind the Chancellor are. I hope that he will bear that in mind in the future.

First, I wish to enter a complaint that we are having this debate so soon after the autumn statement. Our normal practice has been to give the Treasury Select Committee time to prepare a report and take evidence. The Chancellor and the Chief Secretary have made it their business to come along to the Committee during the short interval, but there has not been enough time for hon. Members to study the contents of the autumn statement, which makes me suspicious that the Government did not want us to have time to consider the details before this debate.

Usually, the statement, together with an avalanche of press releases from Departments, can bear a different interpretation when studied more closely. Even Conservative Governments juggle and emphasise the figures in order to give the impression that they are spending more new money than they really are. It is sometimes surprising that Conservative Governments should want to give that impression. Time to study the detail is necessary.

Time is also needed for the Secretary of State for the Environment's statement on what will happen to local government finance and what the standard spending assessments will be. The Government clearly promised that this year the same mistake would not be made. We were told that the Secretary of State for the Environment would probably make his statement by the end of October, and that we would be able to consider in this debate not only central Government but local government finance. We are being denied that opportunity, because that statement has not yet been made.

When the figures are studied in more detail, they become interesting. For example, the Government seek to argue that they have done well in protecting the overseas aid budget, but the figures are constant for the two years after next year, at £1·9 billion, which implies a real cut of 6 per cent. over those years using the autumn statement's assumptions on inflation—the GDP deflator.

The increase in overseas aid to take place in the coming year is effectively dedicated to aid to eastern Europe. I strongly support helping eastern European democracies and economies to develop, but the Government have always asserted that that would not be done at the expense of aid to developing countries. Therefore, the figures for aid to developing countries turn out to be less rosy than the Government suggest.

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

Transport expenditure had a significant boost in the spending plans that were already in place, but it becomes apparent that there is not really a further increase. The extra money for British Rail next year—£130 million—buys only the new Networker trains promised before the election. The extra £100 million for 1994-95 is only for channel tunnel expenditure.

London Underground is complaining vociferously about the effect of the Government's plans for it, because, although the Jubilee line is in—despite not yet having been finally agreed—modernisation of the Northern line goes out as a consequence. None of the key projects that British Rail has planned, from modernisation of the north-west line to smaller routine maintenance projects or further electrification, finds a place.

The Government have said that they are protecting existing capital expenditure. To that extent, they have been clear about what they have done for most of the time. We argue that additional capital expenditure is needed if this is to be the route to economic recovery. I think that the Government feel that, by protecting capital expenditure, they have assisted the dash for growth, to which the Prime Minister referred in his recent remarks. If it is to be a dash for growth, it will require additional capital spending.

One of the most confusing areas is local authority capital spending.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): Will the right hon. Gentleman repair the omission by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown)—he would not answer the question put by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor—as it appears that the Liberal Democrats, too, would like to see much more spending in those areas? If the right hon. Gentleman favours more spending on capital projects, would he pay for it by cutting current spending on, say, pensions or would he raise taxes?

Mr. Beith: I shall come to financing before the end of my speech, if the hon. Gentleman will wait that long. I shall not make the same mistake as Labour Members in not saying how they propose to finance their suggestions—or, to be fairer to them, by having a smaller programme of additional expenditure than some of their rhetoric suggests. That would be a fairer criticism, and that is what the Chancellor said.

The Government have chosen to allow local authorities to increase their capital spending on the basis of the sales of capital which they undertake from now on. They have closed off the route of using previous sales of assets for that purpose. Their argument for doing that is that they do not want to reward local authorities that hung on to money and failed to repay debt.

When pressed, as Ministers were before the Treasury Select Committee, to explain how local authorities would achieve those sales in a depressed market, Ministers said that it was all right, because some local authorities had dragged their feet over council house sales. So the authorities that will be able to spend—those that will be rewarded—are those that have dragged their feet over council house sales. I do not see the logic of that. What sense does it make as an incentive?

An even more perverse incentive—to use the Chief Secretary's phrase—is to tell local authorities to go out now and achieve sales of assets, when the market is in its worst possible condition, when the price achievable will be the worst possible, when the effect on the market for everybody else will be as bad as it can be and when they will be unable to start their capital projects until they have achieved those sales. There can be no rapid or early action, because local authorities cannot undertake that capital expenditure until they have carried out the sales.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Rewarding local authorities is one of the arguments that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary used, but there was a more fundamental one, which the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge. The total of Government borrowing as a proportion of GDP is an important economic factor.

Being committed to Maastricht, the right hon. Gentleman would not wish to see the British economy diverge too far from those criteria. Does he not accept that there is a fundamental difference between releasing past receipts that are currently treated as reducing growth borrowing to get to the net figure of general Government indebtedness, which adds to total borrowing, and allowing the full use of future receipts, which are self-financing? When a local authority sells an asset and receives funds from the private sector, there is no net additional Government borrowing.

Mr. Beith: If the hon. Gentleman is right, capital expenditure by local authorities on a self-financing basis would have been acceptable had the Government allowed it before now, so I do not understand how the hon. Gentleman can advance that argument. The question is simply how much of it we think that the economy can stand. The Government think that the economy can stand £1·8 billion of it over three and a half years, and prefer to see it financed from new asset sales. I doubt whether that figure will be achieved, because local authorities will be unable to achieve those sales, particularly in the earlier part of the period, when it is most necessary for the capital expenditure to take place.

I do not need to dwell on the needs that that capital expenditure could meet in terms of housing, school repairs and other improvements to the stock of things that help the community and industry. There is considerable doubt whether the Government's objective of increasing capital spending by local authorities will be met.

The Chancellor has taken a significant change in direction on fiscal measures. He used to be opposed to fiscal fine tuning and any measures that smacked of that. He has now accepted that changes in car tax and capital allowances, housing market intervention and the spending of capital receipts are desirable, although he found them undesirable earlier in the year.

A number of those measures are welcome, but they do not add up to much. If the Chancellor has accepted the case for fiscal stimulus, why does he not do the job properly, instead of stinting on capital receipts and making no additional funds available? The reflationary impact of his small fiscal package may be more than offset by the deflationary impact of public sector pay curbs.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North mentioned incomes policy. It is a confused area. In the public sector, there is to be a 1·5 per cent. ceiling, although that does not mean that no individual will get more than 1·5 per cent.—it would not be possible under the increasingly decentralised mechanism. It is supposed to mean that no Department or major area of activity could achieve more than 1·5 per cent.

What is to happen in the private sector? According to the Prime Minister, the private sector must take note and respond, but the Treasury forecasts for the economy assume higher real personal disposable incomes of about 1·5 per cent., while the public sector is expected to suffer a cut in real incomes. What is the Prime Minister saying to the private sector? Is he saying, "Don't achieve an increase in real disposable incomes or our recovery plans will not work"? That seems to be the Government's dilemma.

If the private sector does not receive a substantial increase in real incomes, the money will not be available in the form of spending power to bring about recovery. It is possible that some of that money, if not paid in wages, might be paid in industrial investment and enter the economy by another route. However, a significant part of that money might well stay in industrial saving—it would not be spent in the short term, the period about which we are most concerned.

Should the private sector listen to the Prime Minister and obey the instruction to model itself on the 1·5 per cent. limit, or ignore it and follow the message contained in the Treasury's forecasts? There is great confusion about the Government's overall objectives.

All those factors seem to add up to the fact that the Chancellor has become an honorary member of the Cambridge Economic Group. We have devaluation, a fiscal boost and an incomes policy—the tripartite policy of the Cambridge group. The Chancellor has bought the lot. He has given a limited fiscal boost; he has introduced an incomes policy in a traditional Conservative way, starting with the public sector and asking the private sector to follow.

Do Conservative Members believe that there will be only one year of incomes policy? What will happen in a year's time, when the Chancellor—whoever he may be by then—has to say to the public sector that it cannot have wage increases of much beyond 1·5 per cent. and to the private sector that it must continue to exercise restraint? We seem to be re-entering a familiar period, which some of us who have been in the House for some time can remember.

The policy marks a significant change of direction, but I do not believe that it is the right one. Some people, including Conservative Members, suggested that the Chancellor had to make a choice—to adopt a cautious policy or to take considerable risks by undertaking additional borrowing to stimulate the economy. They suggested that the Chancellor had a choice between caution and risk, but there is no such choice. There is a choice of two risks. The first is to borrow in order to invest in measures that create employment and help to bring about recovery. The second risk is that there is no recovery and the borrowing requirement goes up and up because of the costs of recession.

The Government did not acquire their present high public sector borrowing requirement through a conscious desire to bring it about, and their objective was not to invest through borrowing. They acquired the high PSBR because of the recession. The borrowing requirement exists to pay for unemployment benefit and social benefits, and replace forgone tax revenue. That pattern will continue if we do not have a recovery.

We believe that the package proposed will be insufficient to bring about recovery. Our alternative would be to give a substantial boost to capital spending, funded by additional borrowing. That would be combined with a sound basis for monetary policy by means of an independent central bank and direct help to business.

We also argue that it might have been more sensible in the current circumstances to help those businesses which would otherwise go to the wall, by providing a cut or holiday in the uniform business rate, rather than introducing a capital allowance scheme that helps only those businesses that expect to pay significant amounts of tax, against which they can use an allowance. Many businesses are not in that position; what they fear is not paying tax, but going bankrupt. That is particularly true of many small businesses.

We would also like to have seen a significant expansion in training, which is quite out of the question under the projections given in the autumn statement figures. Instead of those measures to bring about recovery——

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Beith: No, I shall not give way; I am coming to a conclusion.

The Prime Minister thinks that he has changed his policy in favour of a dash for growth, but the Chancellor thinks that the policy is unchanged, except for the consequences of black Wednesday, which meant a change in interest rate policy. The current method of economic management, which is based entirely on judgment, is in the hands of a Government who have made all the wrong judgments. They have introduced a package which is supposedly dedicated to recovery, but which is insufficient to bring it about.

5.36 pm

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): I mean to be brief, but I hope that I shall be forgiven if I join my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) in congratulating my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on his autumn statement. I particularly welcome one part of the statement that has not yet been mentioned today: the undertaking given in column 994 of *Hansard* for 12 November that the Government would bring before the House a resolution to apply to Members' pay the same limits as they intend to apply to the public sector. That will be widely welcomed outside the House and, I hope, supported inside the House.

The problem has a long history, which I do not intend to rehearse today. I believe, and always have believed, that hon. Members should never shuffle off responsibility for fixing their own salaries. It would be an abdication of responsibility to do so. The temptation to do so has not always been resisted in the past, and the way that salaries have been decided has not always been satisfactory.

Therefore, I am pleased to see a return to previous practice, and I hope that it will herald a change in the basic approach to the matter, for which I have always argued and which I hope to see introduced now. Whatever is judged to be the appropriate salary for a Member of Parliament should be fixed by an outgoing Parliament before a general election, so that the incoming Members of

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Parliament know what their salary is, never have to pass judgment on it, and need not expect it to be increased during the life of that Parliament.

Mr. Salmond: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Onslow: No; I intend to be brief.

I hope that we can move towards such a policy, which is the only sensible and honourable way to tackle that difficult matter.

I can identify two sectors of our society where a change of attitude will be needed if the Chancellor's proposed measures are to work as well as he intends. The first is the banks. I do not think that any banker could deny the charge that banks have made a number of serious mistakes in policy judgment in recent years. They have made lending mistakes on an international and domestic level.

If I am rightly informed, between 1987 and 1989, the remuneration of an average bank manager was fixed on the basis of the amount of money he lent. It was based not on the quality but on the quantity of money that he managed to lend. It is not surprising that many of our fellow citizens in business found themselves encouraged to take on risks that, with better advice, they might have been encouraged to avoid. That was done in the name of market share among the major clearing banks. The consequences of that policy have been extremely unfortunate and regrettable.

I should like to think that we shall now see a change in attitude on the part of the banks—a much more positive, supportive and understanding approach, particularly to small businesses. I am afraid that, to judge from present evidence, that seems unlikely to happen. The press has recently had many stories about small business men being harshly treated by bankers. The House will have great sympathy with small business men, and much less sympathy with the banks.

I have recently been visited by a constituent in connection with this subject—as no doubt have many other hon. Members. My constituent brought to my surgery a letter that he had received from his bank undertaking to grant him a £75,000 overdraft. But the small print of the letter stated that the interest on the overdraft would be 4 per cent. above the bank's base rate, and subject to a minimum rate of 11 per cent. per annum no matter what happened. Not unnaturally, my constituent wrote back and said that the conditions seemed unfair, as they meant that he was unlikely to share in the full advantage of any prospective interest rate cuts. He asked how the bank could justify its policy.

The letter that he received in reply stated:

> "The Bank has taken the view that, in all but the largest lendings, as base rates fall there comes a stage where it is not cost-effective for us to continue to pass on these reductions. The minimum interest rate is the Bank's way of overcoming this."

I am sure that the bank manager who wrote that thought that his head office would approve and may even have thought that he had put himself in line for promotion. However, as a contribution to the revival of the economy it counts for nothing. It does nothing for the confidence of the small business man, and seems to embody much of what is wrong with the banking sector.

I hope that, when the Chancellor next has an opportunity to speak to, whisper in the ear of or shout at the chairmen of our leading banks, he will tell them that a change in attitude on their part is an essential ingredient of economic revival.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the fact that banks can get away with imposing such conditions on their customers at a time of recession, when there is falling demand for loans, poses questions about the degree to which there is a genuinely competitive market in banking? Some 90 per cent. of the corporate lending business in England is in the hands of four lenders. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is prima facie evidence of oligopoly, which should be examined by the competent authorities sooner rather than later?

Mr. Onslow: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. I forecast that, when economic conditions change and borrowers are in a stronger position vis-a-vis their current enslavement, there will be a fundamental change in the structure and composition of the banking system. Some of the principal banks may be displaced by incomers who will adopt a different approach and to whom would-be lenders will be almost irresistibly drawn. That will not be good for the banks.

The second change of attitude that the country and the Chancellor needs if his policies are fully to work must be made by the media. It is a long time since I suggested in the House that the "Today" programme was totally dedicated to getting the nation out of bed on the wrong side, and since then I have not noticed much change. However, it would be unfair to single out that programme, because the tendency is widespread. Shortly after the autumn statement, a "PM" programme thought it worth carrying a report from someone sent to the nearest high street to ask whether the autumn statement had led to any sign of a spending spree, as if that was an informed judgment and a fair test of the Chancellor's measures.

The concept that the effect of economic policy can be judged only by its impact on retail sales is fairly over-simplistic. However, it would be unfair to single out the BBC for criticism. To correct the balance, I need to look back only to last Sunday and quote the extraordinary episode on Brian Walden's programme.

The Secretary of State for Transport had been invited to be interviewed by Mr. Walden about the autumn statement, with particular reference to its impact on the Department's spending plans, which, of course, is a relevant matter. My right hon. Friend had been warned that in passing he might be asked one or two questions about other topical subjects such as Maastricht. But once in front of the camera, my right hon. Friend found himself subjected to an increasingly hysterical tirade by Mr. Walden because he refused to answer questions about Matrix Churchill, a matter totally outside my right hon. Friend's area of responsibility and totally outside the area upon which he had been led to expect he would be invited to answer questions. That is a thoroughly irresponsible way to conduct a current affairs programme.

It would still be unfair to imply that only radio or television are exclusively preoccupied with dishing out daily doses of doom and gloom. Any newspaper on any day will show that, generally, reporting is as negative as possible. The cumulative effect on the nation's morale cannot be ignored—and I am speaking about the effect not on the Government's standing but on national morale. Perhaps too many current affairs programmes and too many newspapers and journalists are competing for sensational news in the progress of a circulation war. The media leaders should ask themselves how they expect confidence in Britain, at home or abroad, to revive when they ceaselessly accentuate the negative.

The positive elements in the autumn statement have been well listed in the CBI's reaction, part of which has been quoted. I shall rehearse them briefly. There is to be a significant increase in the transport network, not just in the construction of the Jubilee line but nationally in road building. That is right.

The change in the treatment of capital receipts is especially welcome. Unlike the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), I do not think that it should be impossible for local authorities to meet the Chancellor's target, especially if they look not only at house property but at industrial estates. Many councils should long ago have left the business of investing in such estates, and should have realised those assets and applied the money to more constructive uses.

The reduction in interest rates is welcomed by everyone, and the treatment of capital allowances and the stimulus to housing have been sought by many people, who will be glad to see those measures.

I must make one qualification. Although it is important to stimulate the housing market and to rescue many of my constituents from the negative equity trap, it cannot be sensible to try to drive house prices back to the peak of the late 1980s. That would make no sense and do no good. It would benefit estate agents, but eventually it would force up the price of development land, which is an artificially restricted commodity. Such an increase has no lasting value for any economy.

I hope that the Chancellor will bear that in mind, and that he will constantly seek to shift the emphasis on saving and wealth accumulation towards investment in productive industry and commerce and the creation of real national wealth.

I welcome the autumn statement. The country has welcomed it, and I hope that the House will also do so.

5.47 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I agree with the right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) that Members of Parliament should be responsible about their salaries. However, I am worried that some hon. Members are more equal than others and by the failure to consider remuneration from outside sources that is so prevalent among Conservative Members.

The autumn statement has been coloured by black Wednesday and our withdrawal from the exchange rate mechanism. Our problems have been exacerbated by the increasing depth of the recession. As unemployment approaches 3 million, the need to put people back to work is being increasingly recognised. The cost of state benefit for 3 million people must be enormous. It is like a tap left running—a complete waste.

To meet this situation, all that we had at first was a smokescreen, with all manner of horrors being suggested—increases in national insurance contributions, savage cuts in social security benefits and tax increases, all this amidst the worst recession in the past 60 years. None of these horrors materialised. What we got was a crackdown on the pay of public sector workers, many of them poor and needy. The policy will mean that a hospital domestic will get only £1·80 a week extra and a staff nurse only £2·38. There is not much justice there when we think of the many thousands awarded to the chairmen of public companies, particularly those of the former public utilities—water, gas, electricity and British Telecom—and the cool half a million or so that is going to the chairman of British Airways. As for the chairmen of supermarket chains, they seem to have a licence to print their own money.

We have been told that the economy is suffering from a lack of effective demand. People are just not buying houses, cars, washing machines and so on. That is a classic Keynesian situation. The wages of the lowly paid public sector workers are to be restrained, yet they tend to spend what they earn, for their income is stretched to the limit. To restrict their wages could have the effect of further depressing the economy. Therefore, not only is it morally wrong to knock poor people in this way but it does not make economic sense.

The Chancellor has succeeded in keeping Government spending within the £244·5 billion ceiling fixed in advance, but only just. However, the PSBR has risen for the current year to £37 billion and is likely to be £44 billion next year. Conservative spokesmen had said that such figures spelt the horror that was likely to ensue if Britain elected a Labour Government in the spring of this year. Some of us are accustomed to such hypocrisy on the part of the Conservative Government.

The 1 per cent. cut in interest rates—a policy that has long been advocated by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), the Leader of the Opposition, and my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), the shadow Chancellor—is welcome. It will benefit home owners and generally help to restore confidence. However, there is only limited help for the construction industry. Capital receipts accruing to local authorities from now until the end of 1993 can be spent over the next three years. If the Government really wanted to assist the construction industry, improve the quality of housing and increase the amount of affordable housing, they would have unlocked the £5·1 billion in accumulated receipts and directed it to a housing investment programme. Such a decision would have been a major factor in providing urgently needed housing as well as in creating jobs, since the benefit of a boost to the construction industry would be that it would put back to work not only unskilled workers and tradesmen but highly trained architects.

The Chancellor also ended car tax—a move that I warmly welcome. The construction industry and the motor industry could be the engine of our economic recovery. I have long been an unashamed supporter of the motor industry. Personal transport has been a great boon to ordinary families. Apart from the immediate facility, for them the car has opened up new horizons. It is used to travel to work, and more and more housewives take the car to the supermarket when they purchase the week's necessities. I appreciate that there are the problems of congestion and pollution, but these are issues that must be, and are being, tackled.

Another aspect of the industry is that, unfortunately, slightly over half of new cars coming on to British roads are assembled overseas. For at least a quarter of a century, the Volkswagens, the Mercedes and the BMWs from Germany, together with the Renaults from France and the

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Fiats from Italy, have had a field day in the British market. Despite all the EC regulations, I want the Government to use their ingenuity to boost our car industry.

British cars are now first class. If we increase their share of the market, we shall ease our balance of trade problems and put our people back to work. The growth of the motor components industry has been heartening news. Wales relies heavily upon it, with companies such as Ford engines at Bridgend, Lucas Girling at Cwmbran and many other major firms. From a Welsh point of view, stimulus of the car industry will assist our steel industry, which is suffering badly from the effects of the recession.

Having said that, I should also say to my many friends in the motor industry that they should beware of a Shetlander bearing gifts. The Chancellor has already said that the £750 million lost through the decision to end car tax is to be recouped in the Budget through an increase in other forms of motor taxation. Yet the fact is that, of the £19 billion collected annually in motor tax, just over 20 per cent. is spent on roads. The Government are said to be seriously considering putting tolls on motorways. Wales already has tolls, on the short stretch of the M4 that runs over the Severn bridge. From 1 January, any heavy vehicle bringing vital goods and supplies into south Wales on the M4 will pay a toll of £9·30.

Any outside observer would imagine that Wales had an overheated economy. In fact, we have heavy unemployment. There is terrible deprivation in some areas, particularly in those badly affected by pit closures and steel redundancies. These tolls are a disgrace. What is more, the Government had no business to hand over the Severn bridge, together with construction of the second Severn crossing, to a French-American backed consortium, which is determined to extract the last penny. Tolls are an anachronism and for the Government even to be considering them on other motorways is the height of folly.

The matter does not end there. Some weeks ago, on 12 October, I challenged the Secretaries of State for Transport and for Wales to deny reports that the contract for the steel structure of the second Severn crossing was to be handed over to a foreign company. In reply, both said that the contract had not yet been awarded.

That answer was evasive, to say the least. A report on page 11 of yesterday's *Financial Times* clearly revealed that the £7 million contract is to be awarded to Cimolai—an Italian company that allegedly entered the lowest tender. I bet my bottom dollar that there is a hidden subsidy involved in that Italian tender. Britain has an efficient steel industry, and right by the Severn crossing is a company named Fairfield Mabey, which specialises in the construction of the steel works required for new bridges. A host of expertise in that type of work is available among the people of Severnside, but many there are out of work.

The President of the Board of Trade should keep his promise to the Conservative party conference to intervene before breakfast, before lunch, before tea, and before dinner on behalf of British industry. There is an urgent need for that, and I call on the right hon. Gentleman to act without further delay.

The Chancellor has taken a few short steps in the right direction, but there is a sleight of hand in it. One commentator remarked that the autumn statement is stimulus by magic mirrors. It anticipates and embodies a growth rate of 1 per cent., yet to make any impact on unemployment Britain needs growth of at least 2·5 per cent. The autumn statement deserves to be judged in the way I suggest.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that Madam Speaker has imposed a limit of 10 minutes on speeches made between now and 8 o'clock.

6.1 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): I welcome the autumn statement, as other of my right hon. and hon. Friends have done, and was intrigued by the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen)—particularly in respect of incomes policy. As to the salaries of Members of Parliament, I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow).

I am only sorry that the autumn statement was not made two months ago, on the day that Britain left the exchange rate mechanism. We seem to have wasted two months finding a distinctive alternative policy. I have no belief in the ERM, which is something like GCSE economics grade seven. Schoolchildren run three-legged races, but the ERM was a 12-legged race, and all the runners fell down. It has been said that it is easier to foretell the winner of the Derby in the year 2000 than to know the value of a country's currency next year, because it is a judgment by the rest of the world as to the economy behind it.

I am glad that Britain has left the ERM, and that we now have a policy of moving towards lower interest rates. Again, it would have been better to take that action earlier and in larger dollops. That would have helped the housing market and those who pay mortgages—many of whose businesses are dependent on their properties. It would also have helped business men and encouraged people to borrow more.

Interest rates will have to fall still lower before we move out of the recession. When we left the gold standard in 1931, interest rates fell to almost a negative level before growth occurred again. No growth came between 1925 and 1931, because the pound was over-valued on the 1914 gold standard parity. With low interest rates between 1931 and 1937, Britain enjoyed the fastest economic growth of any power in the world—far ahead of America and even of Germany. In 1939, we had the economy to be able to stand up to Germany, and low interest rates are the only way of achieving growth again.

I welcome the emphasis on the construction industry and particularly on the Jubilee line investment, which will create employment for 12,000 people. Without it, the whole of docklands would have become a ghost town and a depressed area. The sooner that the Jubilee line is built, the better. However, I share the concern expressed by London Transport's chairman about lack of investment in the capital's other tube lines. My right hon. Friend the Minister should travel on the Northern line early in the morning and late at night to appreciate the agony that commuters suffer.

A number of lines run through my constituency, and they are used by those who commute to the City. Regular delays and breakdowns mean that travellers must leave home 15 or 30 minutes earlier in the morning—and can never tell when they will arrive home. That has created the sandwich society, because the wife has no chance of knowing when to have a hot meal ready for her husband's return.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: No, because I am under the ten-minute speech rule.

I have lived in London since 1962 and have represented a London constituency since 1974, and I believe that if it is to remain a major capital city, three important factors must be considered. One is transport. We are living still on the capital investment of the Victorians and Edwardians. Present investment is nothing compared with that which must be made to give the capital a proper transport system.

The second is London's theatres, and the third is its museums. I am sorry that cuts have been made there, because our capital has some of the best museums in the world. We must keep them up to standard, because many tourists come to London not just for its theatres but for its museums. They certainly do not come here for the tube travel.

I am suspicious and alarmed at the prospect of spending three quarters of a billion pounds on acquiring 20,000 repossessed houses. It would be better to help people to remain in the homes that they have. Why wait until home owners have lost their houses, local schooling, churches, and neighbours and then hand them over to a housing association? If that is not something out of "Alice in Wonderland" I do not know what is. Money available should be used to help people pay their mortgages, particularly at a time when the interest rates are being reduced so that they can remain in their homes.

I await the result of the council tax in London and the south east. If it costs no more per household than the community charge, I and my constituents will be happy. If it costs more, I shall not be happy—any more than my constituents. We are threatened again with a rates system from Labour, but householders will compare the council tax with the community charge that they have paid for the last three years. Anything new must be comparable.

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): The council tax will not, on average, be more than the community charge.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: My hon. Friend puts his head on the block, but obviously he has specialist knowledge that will make headlines in tomorrow's newspapers. I know that he is a very wealthy man, so if my council tax is more, he can make it up. I welcome his gesture. It is one of the finest gestures that I have known for some time.

As to defence, I am increasingly concerned about this country's safety and that of the world. We will look back at the balance of power between the NATO countries and the communist bloc as the most peaceful of our lifetimes. All the wars that are being fought around the world today will escalate and threaten us. I do not want any more cuts in this country's defence, for two reasons. First, I want the safety of this island of ours to be preserved; secondly, I think that the organisation of the armed services is one of the things that we still do well.

We are good at training. I would like to see a lot of short-service commissions, along with training for other ranks before they move into civilian life. I mentioned the underground earlier. I think that a general should be put in charge of tube trains: he could be told that he will be made a lord if he makes them run in a year, and that if he does not his head will be chopped off. That, I think, would be a very effective sanction. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) would prefer to offer alternative financial incentives—if, that is, any money is left after my constituency receives the subsidies due to it.

I welcome the autumn statement, because it seems that we have a policy at last. I am sorry that it came rather late, but I am glad that we have it. I hope that interest rates will be reduced further, and quickly, so that we can get the country going; I do not think that any other course will help. I also think that the construction industry is the key to recovery. It is not a question just of the extension of the Jubilee line; something must be done about the rest of London's tube network. We should provide incentives where we can.

Having said that, let me add that I am much happier than I was before I heard the autumn statement—although I hope that I shall be even happier on the day when the council tax is announced.

6.11 pm

Mr. Alan Milburn (Darlington): The autumn statement will probably go down in history as a missed opportunity. To Opposition Members, it seemed a very eclectic statement: it managed to steal a little from the CBI, a little from the House-Builders Federation and even a little from the Labour party. We were presented with a veritable pot-pourri of initiatives and ideas. Given the Government from whom the statement emanated, however, it still managed to come out reeking of free market failure; after all, a pot-pourri of initiatives does not add up to a strategy for growth.

It has been said that there is no strategy behind the autumn statement. There is a strategy; the problem is that it is concerned more with digging the Chancellor and the Government out of a hole than with rebuilding the British economy. It is precisely because the autumn statement was so geared to the short term, rather than to the long-term, deep-rooted crisis into which the economy has been plunged, that it will ultimately fail to return either long-term prosperity or growth to the country.

In many respects, the autumn statement constitutes an admission—an admission that many of the economic icons that Conservative Members have worshipped so long and with such affection have been destroyed. Whatever happened, for example, to the hostile attitude to borrowing? The public sector borrowing requirement is now set to spiral not to £40 billion but to £60 billion by 1994-95, and it may be even higher if we fail to achieve growth of 2·5 per cent. per annum.

The autumn statement is hardly confidence-inspiring in itself. It promises growth of just 1 per cent. next year; that hardly suggests that the Treasury believes its own claims about the statement's potential. It also fails to answer the question that the whole country is asking: when will unemployment stop rising? That is not an incidental issue. Without a reduction in unemployment, there will be no return of consumer confidence. The Henley Centre for Forecasting recently announced that some 6 million households were failing to spend because they feared that an increase in joblessness would affect them directly.

[Mr. Alan Milburn]

I am afraid that the increase in unemployment will not abate, because the Government have not done enough to make a real difference. Over the past two weeks, two major engineering firms in my constituency—Torringtons, and Darlington and Stockton Rolling Mills—have announced that 80 skilled workers are to be made redundant. Perhaps equally worrying is the fact that the redundancy announcements were accompanied by dire warnings that there would be no recovery in the market for the foreseeable future. The measures in the autumn statement will not hasten the recovery of first-class companies like those, because they fail to acknowledge the depth of the problem and do not tackle the three performance gaps that currently hinder the British economy: the gaps in manufacturing investment, training and support for the regions.

The temporary capital allowance incentive scheme for industry is all very well, but a sum of between £200 million and £300 million is hardly likely to close the investment gap between the United Kingdom and its competitors. Our industries are having to struggle for international markets with competitors that possess much better and more up-to-date plant and equipment. Between 1980 and 1989, this country spent less than £2,000 a year per employee on manufacturing investment; Germany spent nearly £3,000 a year, and Japan more than £5,000. That is not a temporary problem, and temporary solutions simply are not good enough.

The CBI's report "Making it in Britain" calls for a doubling of investment in plant and machinery by the end of the decade to enable United Kingdom companies to compete more effectively in the international market. The Government have ducked their responsibility to encourage industry to invest and to provide the necessary incentives.

The same applies to the Government's attitude to the United Kingdom's training deficit. It is universally acknowledged that the United Kingdom has the worst-trained work force in Europe: we have fewer workers with occupational skills than any other European country. Yet—as hon. Members will see when they read the fine detail in the autumn statement—our training budget is to be cut in real terms. Already this year, 500,000 fewer employment training places are being made available; the ET budget has been cut by £30 million, and almost half our training and enterprise councils are worse off in this financial year than they were in the last.

In regional terms, my region is the biggest loser. The north has lost £21 million. My TEC, Durham, has been cut by nearly £6 million. It would be an understatement to suggest that it is economically illiterate to cut training programmes in the region that has the highest unemployment in mainland Britain: in my view, that is plain daft.

Not only do we have a Chancellor and a Prime Minister who have destroyed more than 1 million jobs since getting theirs; they have cut the funds for those who are desperately trying to return to work. By cutting training budgets still further, the Chancellor is not only writing off the unemployed in the north, but weakening the whole country's competitive position.

The autumn statement as a whole spells further decline for the regions. The industry budget is to be cut by almost half between now and the middle of the decade—and, if the experience of the last 13 years is anything to go by, we are in for severe problems. Since 1979, the budget for assistance to industry in the regions has fallen by 70 per cent., and in my region it has fallen by 85 per cent. That amounts to a massive withdrawal of funds. Many hon. Members whose seats are currently part of the assisted areas map fear that the cuts in the industry budget will bring about a loss of assisted areas status, a loss of new investment and a loss of new job potential in our towns and cities.

It is not as though areas such as Darlington—or, indeed, the north-east as a whole—do not have a potential for growth, but I fear that, without assisted area status, companies intending to invest in the north-east will begin to look elsewhere for the establishment of their new factories. This is not just special pleading for the north; it makes good economic sense for the Government to invest in all the manufacturing regions. As we saw in the middle of the last decade, free market regional policies inevitably mean overheating in one part of the country, usually the south, followed by an icy recession across the whole country.

Returning to the spending on the regions that we saw in the early 1980s would be relatively negligible in European terms. Indeed, it would cost the equivalent of one and a half extra lanes on the M25. Many Members from northern constituencies welcome the commitment to the Jubilee line, but we are concerned about the potential impact on our regions of cuts in the transport budget. There is great concern that those cuts will be felt most deeply in regions whose position on the periphery of the single European market should cry out for more, not less, investment in infrastructure.

The autumn statement is a missed opportunity to put Britain in Europe's fast lane. Instead, free market dogma has been set aside temporarily on a few high-profile projects, presumably until the Government think that their current troubles are over. Then it will be back to business as usual. There will be no partnership with industry, no attempt to tackle our training and regional deficits, and, worst of all, no ambition to help British industry succeed. It is a cost which the Government are happy to bear.

6.21 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): The hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) drew comfort from the statement from the Henley Centre for Forecasting. His comments might have been more valuable if he had not picked that body, whose forecasts in the past have been even less reliable than those of the Treasury.

In the 10 minutes available to me, I wish to concentrate on a small section of the autumn statement—its effects on the property market. In the autumn statement, which I sincerely welcome, my right hon. Friend underlined the point that the housing market remains depressed. It is not just the housing market that is depressed, but the commercial and industrial property market as well. The measures which my right hon. Friend has taken, which will affect the whole property market, are therefore doubly welcome.

The extent to which property values underpin so much of our economic and social activity is a peculiarity of the British economic system. A strong housing market is the only key to mobility of industry and labour. A strong property market generally underpins the whole banking system, and by and large British banking cannot lead without reliable property values. The property market as a whole is the basis for the confidence which will be needed to enable the autumn statement to provide the take-off for growth which we all hope and believe will result from it.

In the context of the housing market, many of us who represent stressed inner or outer-city estates will know of the problems caused by what are now seen as the over-expectations of property values in the late 1980s, and the reaction from them.

I have only to go to Southmead in my constituency to see the boarded-up houses that are the result of people buying not from the council but from those who had bought from the council at what seemed proper values at the time, and who had found that, with declining income, perhaps because of unemployment or cyclical adjustments, they could no longer afford their mortgages. However, their properties were unsaleable. Even if they had sold, they would never have been able to buy another property because of the negative equity that they would thereby have realised.

In that context, I underline my gratitude to the Government for having recently altered the rules on negative equity so that that trap no longer applies. Therefore, people who still desperately want to own their own homes, since that is their preferred form of housing, will no longer be locked out of the market because of one mistake.

I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to one other aspect of the housing market. We hope that the reduction in interest rates will help to revive the housing market, but he could do something else. Over the years, there has been much discussion in the House of the value of MIRAS, the system of tax relief on mortgages. Opinion on both sides of the House is divided on MIRAS, but I believe in it. It is not reasonable to expect a revival in the housing market over the next few years, even to the extent of price stability, if the MIRAS system remains under threat.

While I would not ask my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General to recommend to the Chancellor any statement about the long-term future of MIRAS, I should like to hear that, at least in the short term, there will be no downward adjustment in its value. If such an adjustment were still feared, it would act as a negative factor in the housing market. In replying to the debate, I hope that my right hon. Friend will underline the need to retain MIRAS for the foreseeable future.

The commercial property market is equally a key to future prosperity, and will also benefit substantially from the reduction in interest rates that the autumn statement brought. As I said, commercial and industrial property is a key to banking, to the ability of new business to start and to the ability of existing business to expand. Therefore, we must be as careful to underpin property values in the commercial and industrial sector as we are in the housing sector.

One great barrier to a revival in business confidence is the fact that it is almost impossible to put a value on much commercial property. What my right hon. Friend has done will go some way to overcome that, but other supply side measures could have an equal effect on the commercial property market.

Many of us have seen the effects in our constituencies when someone in business who assigned a lease of, say, 25 years many years later finds the original landlord knocking on his door because all subsequent tenants have defaulted. That cannot encourage people to sign leases to start in business or to expand their businesses. My right hon. Friend should encourage his noble Friend the Lord Chancellor to re-examine that aspect of the law to see what can be done at least to limit the liability of an assignor.

A further aspect of commercial leases which acts as a barrier to the person who is starting or expanding a business is the ratchet effect on rent renewals when the renewal can only be upwards. There has grown up within the banking sector a belief that the only suitable security for a leasehold property is a lease with a guaranteed increase in rent. The result is that, where rents have got too high—for example, in a shopping centre—the only way in which that shopping centre can be revived is through the bankruptcy of every tenant, so that leases can be torn up and they can start again.

That may be a slight exaggeration; occasionally, despite the terms of the lease, downward rent reviews are agreed, because that is the only available alternative. The fact is that the barriers to downward rent reviews, where the circumstances in a particular property market have changed, are too great, and must be relieved. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer can help in this relief by making sure, through discussions with the Bank of England, that the banks and insurance markets —which will lend, as security, only on commercial leases with an upward-only rent review—are encouraged to reconsider their attitude to leasehold property so that they themselves do not act as a barrier to a truly mobile market in commercial property.

I have focused on one aspect in what I believe was a major autumn statement. When he summed it up, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that its purpose was to make the markets work better. I believe that he will succeed, but a number of supply side measures can still be taken that will aid my right hon. Friend in making the markets work better and creating the recovery and growth that this country needs.

6.30 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) will forgive me if I do not follow the line of argument that he pursued in his thoughtful speech. Instead, I shall concentrate on other matters that concern me and the people of Northern Ireland.

In a most vigorous speech, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) attacked, among other things, the speech that the Chancellor of the Exchequer made in June or July of 1990 about the situation that prevailed in our country at that time—especially the economic life of the nation. I noticed that the Chancellor smiled. I wonder whether he, like me, recalled that, at that time in 1990, this nation had not entered the exchange rate mechanism, and that we did not do so until considerably later in the year.

In his autumn statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer told the nation that our membership of the exchange rate mechanism was wrong. Admittedly, he did not say so in so many words, but that was what he implied. He suggested that, when we were in the ERM, monetary policy was tighter than it needed to be, and that now, with a floating pound, he has been able to cut interest rates by 3 per cent.—interest rates now being set according to British monetary conditions. The implication was that,

[Mr. William Ross]

when we were in the ERM, interest rates were set according to monetary conditions that prevailed elsewhere.

Another speaker in the debate inaccurately described the day we left the exchange rate mechanism as black Wednesday. I do not consider it to have been at all black: I think of it as the day when the chains that bound our nation were cut. I welcome the fact that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is now free to act in the interests of the United Kingdom, and I sincerely hope that we stay in that happy position.

When he made his autumn statement, the Chancellor confirmed that the public sector borrowing requirement had increased by a third from his forecast in March of this year. Given that the sum is £37 billion for this year and that it is to rise next year to a figure that the Chancellor dared not forecast, the question that I asked last year—whether the Government had abandoned the concept of the balanced budget—was one with which I did not care to embarrass the Treasury Bench last Thursday.

However, that question will keep coming back, because the level of the PSBR does matter, as the Chancellor admitted when expressing his concern about the sums that he now has to find for interest payments. I understand that that sum is about £18 billion or £19 billion a year. I feel fairly sure that, if the Chancellor had that sum to play around with now, he would be a very happy individual.

The real concern is that the £37 billion that has been borrowed is being used not for capital expenditure but for current expenditure. The Chancellor said in his statement that social security benefits—which is another term for unemployment—were the cause of much of the increase in the PSBR. However, in answer to a question from me, the Chancellor said that the PSBR had increased because of falling tax revenues—another way of saying that it was because of unemployment.

The Chancellor then told us that he expected the PSBR to decline over time. I noticed that he was careful to say that it would decline as a percentage of gross domestic product, not of the total sum. He is therefore clearly not thinking of the situation in which we found ourselves a year or two ago, when we were able to repay debt. The PSBR sum can decline only if employment prospects improve quickly, or if the Chancellor increases taxes.

On this occasion, the Chancellor was kind enough to forgo the revenue he could have gained by raising national insurance contributions, or taxes and other fees, but the reality is that he has only postponed that action. I believe that he will be unable to avoid tax increases over a fairly wide base next March if he hopes to get the PSBR back under firm control. He will have to keep firmly in mind the fact that, with a £37 billion deficit, the debt total for the nation will soon be over 50 per cent. of gross domestic product. Neither the Chancellor nor any other hon. Member would welcome that.

In the present economic climate, the Chancellor has tried to ring-fence capital projects in order to provide employment. Many projects in every part of the United Kingdom are waiting for the go-ahead. I shall mention but two, one of which I consider to be absolutely vital to the long-term infrastructure and welfare of Northern Ireland—the upgrading of the Belfast-Larne road. The other is in my constituency—the Limavady bypass. Those are small matters for the House as a whole, but I hope that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will bear them in mind whenever he is considering what he can do under the Government's changed expenditure plans.

The help that has been offered for housing, in one form or another, is of more value than road building. Most road building is done with machinery and very few people. The construction of all sorts of buildings leads to the employment of large numbers of people. Anything that increases the number of folk employed in the construction industry is to be welcomed. The problem, however, is that many of the fixtures and fittings for houses now have to be imported; they are no longer produced here.

Another aspect of the construction industry in Northern Ireland concerns the rebuilding that has to take place after terrorist violence. Coleraine, the principal town in my constituency, has a heck of a lot of that to do after last Friday night. I am pleased that London was spared that day the attention of the bombers. We are grateful to the security forces for having managed to intercept those people before they were able to commit their evil deeds. My town was not quite so fortunate.

The Government clearly accept that there is a need to build confidence in the nation and in the community at large in order to move us forward out of the recession. The Paymaster General will appreciate that the same inspiration and confidence is needed by an individual who has suffered as a result of terrorist action.

If the Government bear that in mind, greater help will be provided for businesses in Northern Ireland that suffer as a result of terrorist violence. The cost of security and the cost of restoration after bomb damage is high in terms of the public purse, but the alternative, if we think about it logically, leads to anarchy. No one wants that.

The Government motion asks us to approve the autumn statement. We are asked to welcome the control of public expenditure, which is a doubtful claim, but hopefully there will be better news next March. The motion also asks us to congratulate the Government on the reduction in underlying inflation, congratulations that we sincerely offer. We are being asked to thank the Government for their attempts to get us back on to the path of duty, which has been somewhat neglected in the past few years.

The Opposition amendment, on the other hand, regrets that the harsh truth was told by the Government in the autumn statement, but they do not spell out their alternative in any detail. Therefore, I regret having to tell the Opposition that, since they have not been more positive, we cannot support their amendment.

6.38 pm

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): Having listened to speeches by Opposition Members—the speech by the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) was an exception—it is clear why more than 14 million people did not put their trust in the Opposition in the general election. The Opposition have plans to go on and on spending without having any proper way in which to pay for it.

Serious as our position is, we are not in the kind of crisis that previous Labour Governments, with or without Liberal support, failed to tackle. In present circumstances, with their present leadership and with their present policies, Labour would fail again.

I have no doubt that the first priority in my right hon. Friend's mind in fashioning the autumn statement was the correctly identified need to build up confidence in our economic future as rapidly as possible. Some have criticised my right hon. Friend for not starting that task earlier. I have some sympathy for my right hon. Friend. He is like a man who inherited a house that was fully furnished by two predecessors in title whom he had understudied for some years. The last piece added was membership of the exchange rate mechanism. From then on, the contents were treated like heirlooms, to be preserved in their inherited condition. That was the position until the vandals rudely and abruptly broke in on so-called "black Wednesday" and the defences against them were raised in vain. When the vandals left, much was in disarray.

Many around the Chancellor were at first like Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted. It was rumoured that my right hon. Friend was not joining in the weeping. He was, no doubt, recollecting the wise words of the great Lord Salisbury that one of the commonest errors in politics is sticking to the carcases of dead policies.

A month later, the Prime Minister raised before our eyes the high road to recovery and growth—the British way. The energy and imagination with which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, ably helped by the Treasury team, have set about furthering that policy are clear from his proposals and from the politically skilful way in which he presented them to the House last Thursday. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor will need all that skill—I wish him luck in his task—in fashioning part two, which is the Budget next March in which he will set out more detailed measures by means of which the large existing and even larger projected Budget deficit for future years is credibly to be financed.

If we are to get out of the recession with sustainable real growth, low inflation, low interest rates and the creation of the jobs required, I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend will need the spirit of 1981 and of the noble Lord Howe rather than the ghost of the late Lord Keynes. Public borrowing as a proportion of national income must be reduced. If we choose to support high levels of public spending and growth—we hope for growth which may or may not pay for such public spending in the future—we must support the taxation and other measures necessary to fund them. That was the essence of the spirit of 1981. There was then no belief——

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Look where that got us.

Mr. Martin: I shall explain in a moment where it got us. There was then no belief in greatly increased public sector spending being the vehicle of growth, in pay norms and in pay freezes. We were too close to the memory of the Opposition's failures in the 1960s and 1970s, including the damaging industrial unrest, the bottling up of inflationary pressures, and the feeling that every pay claim was decided in Downing street and that every breach of the norm was a victory against Downing street. We have spent many successful years putting a distance between ourselves and those notions.

In 1981—here I come to where it got us—in the teeth, famously, of 364 economists and others who said that it was all impossible, the noble Lord Howe courageously laid the foundations for six years of sustained growth, low inflation, falling unemployment, record numbers of jobs and ever increasing prosperity. My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) reminded us about the 1930s. Those six years were the longest such period for 50 years—since the 1930s. That was Conservative government at its best. There was a genuine break from the failures and the retreats of the past in the teeth of misguided calls to change gear. It was also electorally rather popular.

By 1988, we had public sector debt repayments, not a public sector borrowing requirement. What happened from 1988 onwards was not the result of economic policy faults related to those earlier years. I confess that I rather hanker after those times. I have not yet been sufficiently educated or politically corrected. These days, in my rather melancholy moments, I feel like the poet Thomas Moore who said:

> "I feel like one
> Who treads alone
> Some banquet-hall deserted,
> Whose lights are fled,
> Whose garlands dead,
> And all but he departed!"

I felt that today until I heard the speeches by my right hon. Friends the Members for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) and for Brent, North. They are lurking somewhere in the corners of that banqueting hall.

We must all look ahead. Under my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, we have the lowest interest rates since 1978. We have an obviously competitive pound, we have low tax rates and we have special incentives for investment. Those are firm foundations, one hopes. With the necessary Budget measures next March, we have a chance to enjoy in the 1990s the economic confidence, the rising prosperity, and the hope that we enjoyed in the mid-1980s. In bringing about that happy series of events, my right hon. Friend will have my support, 242 majority and all.

6.45 pm

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): In the speeches so far, apart, perhaps, from that of the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin)—who seemed to find little wrong in the economy, although his perceptions and his departure from actualité may be influenced by the fact that he was previously a Parliamentary Private Secretary to Mr. Alan Clark—a clear recognition is emerging that the biggest barrier to economic recovery is the lack of confidence in the economy, and that the biggest barrier to confidence is the length, extent and nature of unemployment in our country.

That is why I say that jobs, jobs and jobs should have been at the heart of the autumn statement. That should have been the overwhelming impact and effect of the Chancellor's measures. It is in the Chancellor's failure to tackle the need to create jobs directly, swiftly and where they are needed that the statement's failure lies.

In his speech today, the Chancellor seemed to recognise the logic of what I am saying. He said that confidence was the key to unlocking recovery, and that confidence was the essential condition for increased spending in the economy. The problem is that, while wishing the ends and desiring to see confidence grow, the Chancellor is, tragically, apparently not prepared to take the necessary action to lift that confidence and to ensure that recovery comes quickly.

A serious absence from the statement and the one thing that would immediately give a tremendous boost to

[Mr. Peter Mandelson]

economic recovery by reducing the fear of unemployment, lifting confidence quickly in our economy and making such a difference to millions of people and families blighted by unemployment throughout the country would be the introduction of a new Government programme of work to tackle mass unemployment—a programme to allow people who are unemployed once again to work in their communities.

As everyone recognises, the recession is now so deep that the private sector, it must be manifestly clear to all hon. Members, cannot by itself, whatever action it wants to take and however much it wants to resume growth and to bring forward investment, overcome the fear of unemployment. Nor will the capital projects the Chancellor has announced, which will not start early enough or be extensive enough to help to overcome that fear of unemployment.

Those measures cannot by themselves stimulate the employment necessary to build confidence in the economy quickly enough to promote growth in the way we all want. That is why I argue that it is so crucial for the Government to step in to aid recovery by introducing measures to take people off the dole queues and put them to work. I believe that that need has never been greater at any time in recent memory.

We now have the highest male unemployment since the 1930s. Many people believe that the real level of unemployment is closer to 4 million than to 3 million. In my region—the northern region—31,000 more people have joined the ranks of the unemployed since the Chancellor took office. The number of people out of work for more than a year—the long-term unemployed—rose by 50,000 in the three months to October.

There is now a four-and-a-half year high in the number of long-term unemployed, at 956,000. The Secretary of State for Employment recently described that figure as the smallest for a year. I cannot understand how she can describe it in that way. Long-term unemployment has risen 46 per cent. over the figure a year ago. More than half the people out of work in my constituency have been jobless for six months. Very many of them have been unemployed for more than a year.

It is not surprising—although it is certainly very revealing—that the autumn statement made no forecast of unemployment next year. We know from every authoritative estimate that growth of more than 2·5 per cent. next year will be required to have any impact on the level of unemployment. However, even the Government's own forecasts hope for a growth rate next year of 1 per cent. On the Government's own admission, therefore, growth will be too weak next year to bring down unemployment, which Goldman Sachs predicts will swell by hundreds of thousands of people, thus raising fear of unemployment even more. That is why I believe that Britain needs an immediate employment programme.

The paltry crumbs offered by the Department of Employment over the past week were tragically inadequate. The initiative was pitiful. According to a press statement from the Secretary of State for Employment, her contribution to fighting unemployment consists of the formation of something called jobplan workshops and the merging of employment action and employment training.

The best the Government can do as bankruptcies rise, firms collapse and more and more people are made redundant is to merge two already inadequate small programmes and set up jobplan workshops, which are the old restart scheme rechristened and made compulsory. People will be hauled into jobcentres and asked what they are doing to search for non-existent jobs.

The only difference between jobplan workshops and restart is that, instead of one and a half hours of frustration explaining why one cannot find a job, the new scheme requires people to spend four and a half days explaining, and if they do not last the four-and-a-half-day course, their benefit is docked.

The Government's approach is shamefully simple and inadequate: less training, more coercion and no separate jobs programme for the unemployed. There are merely exercises in public relations, when we really need a programme of public action. I do not decry the efforts of local jobcentre staff, who are doing the best they can. However, they are being asked by the Government to put more effort into the management of publicity than into the organisation of work for the unemployed. That is a tragedy.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Has the hon. Gentleman visited his jobcentre?

Mr. Mandelson: Yes; I have visited it twice.

The tragedy is not that we are short of experience of setting up the kind of jobs programme we require. The recent community programme had its critics, and I was certainly among them. However, at its best, it combined a chance to work, train and search for a job. I believe that the community programme could have been developed and improved, and turned into a proper programme for the unemployed.

Work that would be rewarding for individuals on such a programme would also be immensely useful to the community. It is work that needs to be done. For example, in the environment it could involve clearing and making up derelict sites so that they can be put to practical use. In relation to energy, so much loft insulation and conversion work is required——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The rule is inflexible. I call the hon. Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell).

6.55 pm

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): I very much welcome the change of economic and financial policy since 16 September in respect of which the autumn statement is a very useful further step forward. I welcomed it on the day.

I do not share the view of the shadow Chancellor and other Opposition Members who have spoken today that it is sad that we have moved away from the dogma of an obsession with sterling M3, medium-term financial strategy, shadowing the deutschmark, being obsessed with a public sector borrowing requirement figure which had been set years before in different circumstances and which cannot be changed and changing over to the traditional policy of the Chancellor's judgment. If the Chancellor does not have good judgment, then the Chancellor should be changed—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am not suggesting that he should be; I am simply making a general observation.

We are sent to this House to bring our judgments to bear. That is what we are here to do. We are not a tribe of American red indians who set up a totem pole and believe that it will solve our economic problems for us. Factors such as the PSBR and monetary aggregates are all tremendously important, as are the parities with other major currencies, and they must all be taken into account at all times by the Chancellor. However, it is a great mistake—and one that we have made repeatedly in the past—to set up one of those as a particular yardstick.

When Mr. Charles Goodhart was at the Bank of England, he quite rightly pointed out in what has now become known as Goodhart's law that as soon as one sets up a particular yardstick, it ceases to do the job for which it was invented. Our new approach of using all the yardsticks but allowing the Chancellor, the Cabinet and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to use their judgment is much more likely to produce good results. I argued that point of view throughout the early 1980s when an entirely different view was held.

One of the prime objectives, quite rightly, in the autumn statement is to increase investment. There has been under-investment in Britain for a century. Joseph Chamberlain complained bitterly about it in the first decade of the century and he pointed out the much higher rate of investment in industry in Japan, Germany and the United States. One could read out passages of his speeches made in 1903 and 1904 and they would be absolutely apt today. Nothing has really been done about it for a century and it is about time that we put it right.

In that context, I want to refer to inward investment from Japan about which a great deal of absolute nonsense has been talked. I have had more than 30 years' experience of business with the Japanese in one way or another and I am an international adviser to three huge Japanese companies which trade world wide and have a lot of investment in Britain. I should like to explain what I think is the truth about inward investment from Japan.

Some people have suggested that the debate about Maastricht and the uncertainty about the attitude of the House of Commons to the Maastricht treaty will damage inward investment from Japan which has been immensely valuable to Britain in recent years and has accounted for 40 per cent. of all Japanese investment in the European Community. It is true that, this year, there has been a decline in Japanese investment in Britain, but that has nothing to do with Maastricht—or only marginally, anyhow—and there are two reasons for that decline. One is that Japan is going through the same recession that the rest of the industrial world is experiencing and its banking system is pulling in its loans, and the Japanese are more reluctant to invest anywhere overseas in the present conditions.

The other reason is that the Japanese anticipated that Britain would have to leave the ERM and devalue. One did not need to be clever to know that. On 16 July, the day before we adjourned for the summer recess, I told a member of the Whips Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman), that we would almost certainly have to leave the ERM and either devalue or float in the week before the French referendum. Everyone who takes any interest in such matters, except members of the Treasury, was aware that that was almost bound to happen. Of course great Japanese companies are not going to invest huge sums in a currency that is about to be devalued. Incidentally, as a result of devaluation, they have made a substantial short-term book loss on the investments that they have already made. Those are the reasons for the slow-down in their investment.

The Japanese want access to the single European market. They understand that Maastricht has nothing to do with that. Maastricht adds all sorts of things about a federal Europe, about a single currency, which they do not want, because it would reduce their room for manoeuvre and bring about European monetary union and a federal Europe, all of which they regard as a threat to Japanese interests. No shrewd Japanese industrialist wants to see anything like a close-knit, centralised, federal Europe. Japanese industrialists want access to the huge market, and that is guaranteed to them through Britain's existing treaty arrangements. The fact that we have signed the Rome treaty and the fact that we have signed the Single European Act gives us access to the free market. For a variety of other reasons, not least that we are the European country which is closest in sympathy to the United States, which is the Japanese prime market, they prefer to invest in Britain and they will continue to do so. It is ludicrous for some people to pretend that, if we do not endorse the Maastricht treaty, the Japanese will change their policy because of fear of a fortress Europe being set up.

One hears scare stories that Germany, France, Holland and one or two other countries might tear up the Rome treaty and the Single European Act and start a new fortress Europe of their own with high exterior tariffs from which Britain would be excluded and that, therefore, the Japanese might transfer their investment to France and Germany. That is not going to happen. For one thing, if a group of European countries attempted to do that, they would immediately provoke a total and permanent breakdown of the GATT arrangements and violent tariff reprisals by the United States and Japan against them. That is not going to happen. Our access to the single European market, whatever happens to Maastricht, is guaranteed, and the Japanese know that.

Many Ministers and people such as the chairman of the stock exchange, who wrote an absurd letter to *The Times* last week on this subject, should know better than to use arguments which are absolute nonsense and which no top Japanese industrialist believes for a moment. I promise the House that that is the case. I hope that we will hear no more of that line of argument.

The Japanese are most scared that Europe will become involved in a tariff war with the United States as a result of the breakdown of GATT. They have a much bigger trading interest in the United States and wider diplomatic and defence interests there than they have in Europe. They are extremely concerned about the present negotiations between the European Commission and the United States over GATT and fear that they may be caught in them. The worse the relations between the Commission and the United States become on GATT the more strongly the Japanese will feel that Britain is the best clearing house for their European investments.

The European economy is extremely important to us because of our large exports to Europe. I have always favoured the closest possible economic and trading relations with Europe. I voted for the Macmillan 1961 application. I have voted all the way through for the pro-European ticket, including the Single European Act, because I believe in the best possible trading relations with an enlarged Europe. I voted against Maastricht recently because it is adding quite——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

7.5 pm

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): The autumn statement has failed abjectly to measure up to the scale of the crisis for which the Government have been responsible over the past 13 years or so. They have created a candy-floss economy from which we are suffering.

In supporting that statement, I need rely on no more than the Chancellor's own words. In an answer to me on 6 November, he pointed out that consumer expenditure between 1979 and 1991 rose by 37·5 per cent. and that, by comparison, output rose by 23·6 per cent.; that output excluding North sea oil production rose by 21·8 per cent.; and that manufacturing output rose by 5·8 per cent. All those figures are at constant prices. In other words, consumer expenditure rose by almost double manufacturing output excluding North sea oil production, and consumer expenditure rose almost seven times as much as manufacturing output.

The Chancellor is grappling with massive forces which are beyond his control, or which he has decided not to control because he does not want to adopt policies that can help him to do so. His behaviour is not like that of a maiden aunt who has had a few too many glasses of Pimm's and has become rather merry but is like that of a roaring drunk, staggering from binge to binge via ever longer hangovers.

One needs to look no further than the statement of a leading industrialist, Mr. Neil Johnson, the director general of the Engineering Employers Federation, to *The Guardian* of 28 October:

> "All the Government does is throw up its hands and say 'it's nothing to do with us Guv'. The Government does not understand the crisis and ministers quote statistics that are demonstrably not correct."

That statement was not by a left-wing Labour Back-Bench Member but by a leading engineering industrialist.

Another past leading industrialist is John Harvey-Jones, the former chairman of ICI. On 1 November, he wrote in the *Observer* that the Government are

> "destroying our industrial base, to the level where it cannot sustain our standard of living."

That is another reason why the Chancellor's autumn statement does not measure up to the scale of the crisis into which the British economy has been plunged.

We should look, for example, at the catastrophic balance of payments. To use the autumn statement's own figures, there is a £12 billion deficit in the current financial year, rising to £15·5 billion next financial year. In all probability, if there is an upturn, the balance of payments gap will worsen.

Kevin Gardner of S.G. Warburg, the merchant bankers, said recently that, for the first time ever in Britain's industrial history, we are dogged by a combination of rising import penetration at a time of falling domestic output. That has never happened before. For example, in the second quarter of 1992, manufacturing output fell by 1·4 per cent. but manufacturing imports rose by 8·3 per cent. The Chancellor seems impervious to the depth of the crisis for which he is responsible and with which we are now all grappling.

The Chancellor's answer to my intervention earlier today did not measure up to the figures in the autumn statement. It is interesting that *The Sunday Times* reported at the weekend that senior Treasury and Downing street sources were saying that the Government would have to increase taxes in order to keep the PSBR below the 7 per cent. limit which they say they will not allow it to exceed in the coming financial year. The tax increases may be in the form of VAT, national insurance contributions or excise duties increases. Without such increases, the figures contained in the autumn statement and the projections for the next financial year simply do not add up.

The figures do not add up in another respect. The Government predict that unemployment will remain at about 2·8 million. Most independent forecasters suggest that 3·5 million is much more likely. The Chancellor must come clean on that. If unemployment rises to 3·5 million, that will play havoc with the Government's finances.

Although the autumn statement showed that Government borrowing was set to hit £37 billion—much greater than forecast this year—and rise to £45 billion in 1993-94, many City economists expect the PSBR to go much higher—to £50 billion or even higher. For example, according to Goldman Sachs, the state of the public finances will depend on the economy's growth rate, and an output growth rate next year of 2·5 per cent.

> "would be just sufficient to stabilise the level of unemployment at just under 3·5 million".

Yet the Government predict unemployment of 2·8 million. Goldman Sachs says that the PSBR, excluding privatisation proceeds, will be left stuck at about £60 billion to £65 billion. That is a deficit of about 9 per cent.

Michael Saunders of Salomon Brothers says that the slow economic recovery in prospect means that borrowing could rise well above the Treasury's figures. He predicts a PSBR of more than £50 billion, or 8 per cent. of GDP, for next year, rising to £65 billion, or 9·5 per cent. of GDP, by 1995-96. He concludes correctly that

> "Higher taxes or spending cuts appear inevitable".

So the future is gloomy, and the Government are not coming clean about their own figures, let alone the position in the real economy. If the economy grew at only 1·5 per cent. a year in the three years covered by the autumn statement, unemployment would almost certainly rise, even on the figures in the autumn statement. Public borrowing would probably balloon to more than £80 billion by the end of this Parliament. Those are disturbing figures.

A PSBR of more than 9 per cent., or even as high as 13 per cent., compares poorly with the 3 per cent. PSBR specified in the convergence conditions specified for monetary union under Maastricht. The British economy is way out of line with the projections for monetary integration under Maastricht.

What are the prospects of recovery under the Government's policies? As it is being set in train by the autumn statement, and as it has been developed in the past three years, the British economy is unsustainable, given both the inherent industrial weakness of our economic base and other constraints on the current account deficit. The deficit will explode if there is even the modest upturn projected by the Chancellor.

Then the economy will be locked into the same old rising balance of payments deficit and higher interest rates to claw back our deteriorating trade condition. That is another reason why it is almost inevitable that taxes will be increased next year in one way or another, if the Government's policies are followed.

Another constraint which makes the Government's policies unsustainable is the limit on public sector pay increases to 1·5 per cent. next year. The Government's figures in the autumn statement assume that public sector pay increases will be pegged to about 3 per cent. in the following two years. The Government also predict that average earnings will increase by 5 per cent. a year. That will create a massive gap of almost 10 per cent. between private and public sector earnings. That will be impossible to sustain, and will cause extra pressures and problems.

The alternative, which the Chancellor has not addressed and the Government are either unable or unwilling to address, is an entirely different strategy, which would kick-start the economy and demand by means of investment led by the public sector. At least £10 billion is required even to begin to meet the scale of the problem. We need investment in jobs, infrastructure and training and a much stronger regional policy. In Wales, regional preferential assistance has been cut by 60 per cent. since 1979.

We also need an economic policy which begins to grapple with the fundamental financial problems.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but I have to turn off the tap of the hon. Gentleman's eloquence.

7.15 pm

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), because I, too, wish to make some remarks about borrowing. I understood from his speech that he was critical of the Government for their level of borrowing. Yet the shadow Chancellor gave the impression this afternoon that he would borrow much more. He would certainly have to borrow more if he spent the sums that he suggested.

The autumn statement is a brave statement. It is a Budget more than a statement. I am delighted that the Budget will be incorporated with the autumn statement next year so that we can deal with it at a better time of the year. The autumn statement is an extensive package to stimulate the economy and help to bring us out of recession. However, we have always had to rely on the economies of other countries to help us with that process. The United States has normally led the rest of the world out of recessions.

On this occasion we need to examine the international scene carefully. The summary of the world economy in the autumn statement begins:

"Recovery in the world economy has stalled again."

It is salutary to consider the state of economies other than that of the United States. The United States economy is improving. I do not denigrate that improvement. However, it is not improving with surety. We must also consider economies in Europe and other parts of the world. They are in a recession almost as bad or even worse than our recession.

The crucial factor is our ability to sell goods and services abroad, attract an inward flow of foreign currency to both the City and elsewhere and bring tourists to Britain with their foreign currency and spending power. I prefer to call the tourist industry the visitor services industry. The word tourism gives the impression of people milling around on holiday, but it covers a range of other activities in which I am particularly interested.

In order to attract tourists we must market the product. We have an extraordinarily good product. I welcome the spend on the heritage. Our heritage is one of our great attributes in attracting people to Britain. We must do a full marketing exercise. My hint of regret about the autumn statement is that the tourism budget will be held fractionally below this year's budget and is scheduled to fall in the following two years. Some £46 million will be spent next year.

We must have the methods necessary to market our largest industry. We need the money to ensure that our advertising overseas receives full treatment. It is a case of selling our goods and services.

The statement is a budget for industry because it helps industry in a variety of ways, some of which I particularly welcome. Lower interest rates help industry and everyone else. Lower inflation also helps industry. The 40 per cent. first year capital allowance for investment in plant and machinery is an excellent idea. I want the Government to expand the stimulus for industry to modernise.

The science budget is to be increased slightly. Nothing is more important than developing our science and technology—improving our basic and strategic research in science, engineering and the social sciences. In the coming year that budget will be about £1·170 billion, which is a modest rise.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lindsey, East (Sir P. Tapsell) referred to his connections with Japan. We can lift many examples from the Japanese economy. I should like us to follow the example set by their Government, which works with industry to pioneer research into the next generation of technology, for instance, of robotics and of certain types of machinery. Their industry has had Government assistance in the form of low-interest loans spread over many years. There could be such a partnership here to define which industries should be developed and expanded.

In this country there are many examples of phenomenal expertise, which is dissipated because industries do not have the means to develop innovations, or the experience and research which are endemic in many of our institutions. That is where the Government can have an interplay with that sector and could develop our industry so that we improve our performance in world markets. We must do so, and we must concentrate on manufacturing.

I said that tourism, which is our largest industry, is important, but we can only spend money if we sell goods and services abroad. It is important to put the greatest emphasis on manufacturing.

The statement tells us that the borrowing requirement for the present year has risen by £11 billion to £37 billion —the original estimate was £26 billion. In 1993-94, it will rise to about £44 billion. If we estimate a borrowing requirement of £31 billion for the year 1994-95, we will have spent about £110 billion to try to buy ourselves out of recession. The autumn statement is brave because that is a heck of a lot of money to borrow. To sustain such borrowing, we must achieve performance levels commensurate with the incentives given.

Industry has a lot going for it and we must engender its confidence. Our industry can tackle markets abroad, especially in Europe. I believe passionately in, and want us to be in the forefront of, Europe. With the lower value of the pound, lower interest rates and the proximity of Europe, a vast market exists there for so many of our products. I have this advice for our industrialists, "For goodness' sake, get moving, get over there, travel, go to exhibitions and exhibit your products. For heaven's sake, do not sit on your backsides and moan about the

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recession." They will pull their companies out of recession by going abroad, and that could give them the lead in some sectors of world markets.

I have always had a simple approach to economics. I am not an economist and have never pretended to be one. I have a simple formula—the "what if" formula. We must consider what would happen if the German economy went into crisis and the exchange rate mechanism had to be put in abeyance because of the devaluation of the mark and the franc. I do not wish that on anyone. I believe in the ERM, I want it to work and I want Britain to get back into it. It is the way forward. However, it is always important to ask the question: what if?

What would happen if the improvement in the United States economy failed? What if our manufacturers do not match up to our expectations that they will achieve the growth to get us out of recession? What if we have to raise interest rates to protect the recovery? Heaven knows that that is the one thing that we do not want to do. What if our privatisation proceeds do not match up to the anticipated targets?

That all sounds pessimistic, but we must take into account the scenarios that I have described, because the world is unstable and full of uncertainties. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the colossal changes in eastern Europe, where economies are struggling to get on to their feet, coupled with America's huge debts, have created an international problem which we cannot escape.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) said, we could be sitting on an inflation bomb and I echo what was said by the previous speaker——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Austin Mitchell.

7.26 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Like the Chancellor, the autumn statement is clever, but pretty limited. It does not restore the damage done by the Government to the economy during the past three years of massive deflation, but merely stops the damage from getting worse. That is all that the Government have done —they are trying to alleviate their self-administered damage.

The Prime Minister told us at the Mansion house that the Government meant what they said about manufacturing—presumably, just as they meant what they said about the exchange rate mechanism and no devaluation. With this Prime Minister, one must not look at what he does, but at how he says it. Unfortunately, although he says that the Government mean what they say about manufacturing, that cannot be true, judging from the figures in the autumn statement.

Manufacturing output was down by 4·5 per cent. last year, is down by 1 per cent. this year, and is forecast to increase by only 1 per cent. next year. However, at the same time the volume of imports—most of which will be manufactures—is forecast to rise by 7 per cent. As the volume of exports is also forecast to rise by 7 per cent. —just over 30 per cent. of which will be manufactures—it follows that all of the 1 per cent. increase in production will go into exports. There will be a fall in the proportion of demand on the domestic market supplied by British manufacturing.

On those figures, we shall sell less on the domestic market and import penetration will increase, and that is the essence of our problem. Unlike every other economy, we have not increased manufacturing production from 1973 levels. There has been a huge expansion in demand since then, but it has been supplied not by British manufacturing industry but by imports, which have quintupled during that time. That quintupling of imports —based largely on the fact that our export prices and terms of trade are 36 per cent. worse than they were in the early 1970s—was essentially due to the price mechanism, because imports were cheaper, and it has been the cause of the destruction of jobs in our economy. Since the early 1970s, we have lost 3·5 million manufacturing jobs—a greater decimation than that in any other competing economy. Since we joined the ERM, 600,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost, and so the decimation has continued. We cannot get that ground back, or widen and deepen the manufacturing base, unless we win back those markets and redress the competitive terms against imports. Those terms have gone badly wrong since the early 1970s. It is because of them that the import share of our domestic market, according to the most recent published figures of 1989, stands at 37 per cent.—double the proportion in Germany and France. Obviously, that import penetration is so bad that the Government stopped publishing the figures, because we have had none since 1989.

Imports also constitute a third of our exports; that proportion has trebled over the past 20 years. Two cars exported today make a smaller contribution to our balance of payments than did one car exported in 1970. That is the heart of our problem, but the autumn statement has done nothing to tackle it.

We must change expectations and that means that we must opt for a far greater devaluation than the current one. In fact, we have not really had a devaluation. Everyone talks about it, but we have had only a 14 per cent. change in the nominal rate, which does not take us back to the real exchange rate of 1986. We have still not returned to the level of competitiveness achieved then. We have simply cut off the peaks in the overvaluation caused by the Government's interest rate policy of the late 1980s and hardened by the terms of our ERM entry. We have not returned to a competitive exchange rate, but unless we do, we cannot regain our lost jobs and markets. It is much more difficult to win markets back once they are lost. The exchange rate needs to fall by a further 10 to 20 per cent. before we can win back the lost ground.

Since we need expansion and the autumn statement does not offer us very much, we must ask from where that expansion can come. Demand is deficient, so there is nothing else to do but expand that demand. One man's spending is another man's income. If we follow the good old Keynesian principle that dictates that when demand is deficient, one must expand it, we must expand demand and channel it to domestic production.

With so many people in debt traps, house prices still likely to fall and incomes restrained by deliberate Government policy, expansion will not be created by consumer demand. It will not be created by Keynesian stimulus, because that is not provided for in the autumn statement. I would spend much more on public works projects than on housing and when asked where that money would come from, I would answer with the question, "Why fund the debt?" Why are we not monetising the debt? Why not get ways and means advances for the Treasury from the Bank of England, as happened in war time, and expand demand that way?

We should remember that the banks enormously expanded the money supply and credit supply in the 1980s, but that they are now contracting those supplies. Why should the banks be able to damage the economy in that way when we could remedy the deficiency, and expand demand and the money supply by using public credit, the credit power of the state? Why should we not monetise the debt? The use of public credit would be simple compensation for the damage caused by the banks now that they have contracted the money supply.

Any expansion in demand certainly will not come from exports, given that the overseas markets are so depressed and that the rate of devaluation still has some way to go. Expansion can come only from import substitution. We must replace imports, which have taken such a large share of our market, with domestic production. That is the easiest, quickest and most effective way in which to expand the economy. To do that we must use the price mechanism, which means that the terms of trade for domestic production must be redressed in its favour and against exports. We must use the price mechanism, through greater devaluation, to make imports dearer.

It is no use the Government thinking that they can get away with just a marginal increase in import prices. After the 1967 devaluation those prices went up by 16 per cent. and they must rise substantially now. The fact that Volkswagen and Ford have increased their prices by only 2 per cent. shows that we have not yet achieved that substantial, necessary increase in the price of imports to make domestic production competitive enough to change expectations.

We must channel investment into that domestic production and we must keep it there. To attract investment, industry—capitalism—needs the prospect of profit. Therefore, we must have a competitive exchange rate and that competitiveness must be sustained for a long time so that expectations change and generate investment. In that way production will increase, which is necessary if we are to enlarge our industrial base. We cannot consume unless we produce. It is the production failure, which has continued for years but which was heightened by the Government's policies in the 1980s, that has caused all our problems.

We need a far greater devaluation than we have had and interest rates must be brought down to zero in real terms to bring the pound to a competitive level. In that way we can change expectations, stimulate investment and generate that into domestic production. In that way we can displace the imports that account for such a large share of our market. We are faced with huge problems, but the autumn statement does nothing to solve them; it simply repairs some of the damage that the Government themselves have done to the economy in the past three years through excessive, stupid, unnecessary and damaging deflation. The Government have sought to make good their own deficiencies, not to provide for the future of our economy.

We are at a turning point. Unless we begin to expand our industrial base we shall shrink into a declining, peripheral economy, increasingly dependent upon Europe. It is only by going ahead with a more competitive exchange rate and expansion of the economy that we can rebuild that economy and fight back.

7.36 pm

Mrs. Judith Chaplin (Newbury): I welcome the Chancellor's autumn statement and I particularly welcome his proposals to introduce private sector funding into the public sector. We all know from our constituencies of construction projects that should be completed. We all know of the unfortunate spare capacity in the building industry and of the many unemployed building workers. It is essential that those two factors are brought together. The Opposition bring them together by suggesting a great increase in public spending on capital projects. Those of us who are worried by the scale of public spending and by the size of the PSBR welcome the attempts to increase private sector investment for public sector projects.

The proposals in the autumn statement represent the third attempt by Treasury Ministers to overthrow the famous Ryrie rules. They were formulated in 1981 following concern that nationalised industries were unable to attract private investment. Those rules effectively always put the private sector at a competitive disadvantage because it could never borrow money more cheaply than the public sector.

In 1988 there was an attempt to revise the Ryrie rules to take into account the fact that there were no longer quite so many nationalised industries and the introduction of various new forms of private sector involvement. Unfortunately, the 1988 revision retained two fundamental principles of those rules. First, that private sector finance could be introduced only where it offered gains in cost effectiveness. Secondly, privately financed projects for public sector programmes had to be taken into account in the total Government spending on public sector programmes. Once again those principles effectively deterred private sector construction companies from investing in public sector projects.

In 1989 the then Chief Secretary of the Treasury, now the Prime Minister, announced in a speech to the Institute of Directors in Glasgow that he was "retiring" the Ryrie rules. He said that he would not seek, on a scheme-by-scheme basis, to offset privately-financed projects. In other words, he allowed additionality. Shortly afterwards that policy was set out in the Green Paper, "New Roads by New Means". The Treasury officials fought back as always because it was almost immediately pointed out that the Government would take account of the total provision even though they would no longer take account of each scheme. The Ryrie rules, which had been revised and then retired, had certainly not lain down and died.

I very much welcome the Chancellor's third attempt and hope that it will succeed this time. I urge Treasury Ministers not to be deflected again from getting private sector money into public sector projects. I welcome my right hon. Friend the Chancellor saying that any privately financed project that can be operated profitably will be allowed to proceed. I also welcome the Government's active encouragement of joint ventures.

In his autumn statement, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor mentioned such schemes as the east-west crossing and the Birmingham orbital road, but I hope that schemes will not be confined to large transport schemes. For example, my constituency of Newbury needs a community hospital. Why cannot that be built by the private sector and then used by both the public and private sectors? Why cannot school facilities, such as sports and

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catering facilities, or badly needed nursery facilities, be provided privately and then used jointly? Why do we not allow grant-maintained schools to borrow against their assets to fund projects needed to improve the schools? I hope that small as well as large schemes will be allowed to go ahead.

I hope that every Government Department will now be encouraged to consider how the private sector can be involved in improving the whole of the country's infrastructure. I particularly hope that Ministers will ensure that the Treasury does not obstruct that happening. They should see how the whole process can be speeded up and the cost of tendering reduced so that many companies, not just large ones, can deal in that area. Furthermore, I hope that the Government will encourage the banks to look kindly on such schemes and support and assist the process.

The proposals in the autumn statement could be the start of utilising the private sector and using private sector funds to improve the whole nation's infrastructure.

7.42 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): I listened with interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Newbury (Mrs. Chaplin) but was just a little surprised not to hear her mention the exchange rate mechanism, which was, after all, the cornerstone of the Government's economic policy throughout the time when she was special adviser to successive Chancellors of the Exchequer and head of the Prime Minister's political office. That is one illustration of a series of U-turns or S-bends about which we have heard so much lately.

There have been fundamental changes in Government policy. One day, policies have been firm and unalterable, only to be abandoned the next in a series of embarrassing climbdowns and reversals.

Mrs. Chaplin: I understood that the Labour party favoured balanced exchange rates. I have certainly not moved away from hoping that we shall return to the exchange rate mechanism when there is appropriate convergence.

Mr. Hoon: I am delighted to hear that and I hope that the hon. Lady uses her influence on Treasury Ministers to encourage them to do the same—and quickly.

Those climbdowns and reversals show that the country has what I would describe as a corkscrew Chancellor, who slides around in circles that spiral ever downwards to a point where, like the fading smile on the face of the Cheshire cat, the Chancellor's credibility disappears for ever.

The autumn statement showed an economic policy that is trying to be all things to all people, facing all ways at once, boosting a bit of the economy here, battening down the hatches there, unable to decide which way it wants to go. Having previously set out on a series of different policies, the Government have abandoned them when they proved to be the wrong routes. They now seem to have returned to where they set out, drifting from one economic rock to another without a coherent guide or strategy.

The direct consequence of this deepest and longest lasting recession since the second world war is clear. Since the third quarter of 1990, we have seen 1·25 million people out of work, 110,000 business failures, 140,000 homes repossessed, a 4 per cent. fall in output, a 7 per cent. fall in manufacturing output and a 30 per cent. fall in manufacturing investment. It gives me no pleasure to say that the United Kingdom is firmly at the bottom of the European league for growth, job creation and investment.

The cause of that is a Government who lack a coherent economic policy. They have no idea of what they are in for. They can give us a long list of what they are against, but no clear statement of what they now believe in. For example, we know that they do not believe that they can spend their way out of the recession, because the Chancellor keeps repeating it like a mantra. I presume that we can conclude that he believes that consumers can spend the country's way out of the recession. If that is the Government's approach to growth, it is based on a fundamentally flawed perception of what is currently wrong with the British economy.

Our economy is in recession because previous Government economic policies have caused widespread redundancies and lay-offs. The fear of unemployment explains why the economy remains in recession. That threat of unemployment hangs over almost every family in the country. People have no confidence in their future—no confidence that they will be in work next week, next month or next year, that the Government's economic policies will guarantee their future, or that lower interest rates will revive their own economic circumstances.

Although everyone welcomes a reduction in interest rates, there is no evidence that it will necessarily restore the confidence that is so crucially lacking in our economy. Interest rates in the United States have been at around 3 per cent. for some time now and there is no consistent indication that it is restoring confidence in the American economy or that it has resulted in real and sustainable growth. What is happening there is a good indication of what is likely to happen here.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): Does not the hon. Gentleman's point show the fallacy of the argument put forward by the Labour Front Bench for so many months, persistently calling on the Government for just one more reduction in interest rates? Surely the example of America shows that low interest rates are not the answer.

Mr. Hoon: If the hon. Gentleman will have a little patience and if you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will allow me to continue a little longer, I shall deal with that point. It is not simply a question of reducing interest rates. Clearly, we must also have a coherent industrial strategy to accompany it.

When people in the United States were faced with lower interest rates and had a little more money in their pockets, they chose to pay off their debts—to reduce their credit card obligations and mortgage repayments and to pay off their hire purchase commitments. People lack confidence because they are frightened for their jobs so they are reducing their expenditure so that their commitments are fewer in the event of those jobs disappearing.

The extent to which house buyers are discouraged from buying property when they cannot confidently say that they will be able to meet their repayments next week, next month or next year is the primary cause of the difficulties in the present housing market and a clear indication of lack of confidence. Who will buy an asset like a house when they cannot be sure that they can meet the continuing repayments or, more importantly in the present atmosphere, when they can be sure that the value of that asset will go down?

In this country we are paying for the cost of unemployment, not only in increased benefit payments to the unemployed and lost tax revenues but, crucially, in the light of the autumn statement, we shall also pay through a substantially increased public sector borrowing requirement. That PSBR is estimated to rise beyond the £44 billion projection. How do the Government propose to raise the necessary £44 billion or more? All the signs are that there will be insufficient domestic institutional funds to purchase gilts made available by the Bank of England. That means that the Government will be dependent on foreign investors buying pounds.

With the Government's reluctance to return speedily to the exchange rate mechanism, will foreign investors be willing to invest in sterling on such a scale, particularly given the likely continuing devaluation of the pound? Why should foreign investors invest in pounds that are falling in value? The only way of persuading those investors to do so is to adopt the course taken by the Government in the past: to offer a premium on interest rates and offer higher interest rates than can be obtained elsewhere to offset the currency risk of investing in devaluing pounds.

Such a policy will mean higher interest rates not only for foreign investors, but for the whole of the British economy, which will force this country's economy back into the vicious circle of interest rate rises, further unemployment and repossession of homes. Is that what the Government want? Do the Government want to pursue the policies of previous Conservative Governments that depended on a sustained and persistent devaluation of the pound—allowing the pound to fall steadily on international markets—as a substitute—and here I am tackling the issues raised by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans)—for tackling the underlying problems of the British industrial economy? Those problems include the lack of investment, training and competitiveness.

Devaluation will inevitably feed inflation into the economy. There was a 2·5 per cent. rise in factory input costs between September and October. That 2·5 per cent. rise has been directly attributed to the costs of devaluation. It will be a continuing contribution to inflation in the United Kingdom, will add to and exaggerate the already chronic balance of payments deficit, and exert still more devaluation pressure on the pound.

If the Government believe that consumers can buy this country out of recession, they must put in place the sort of policies that the Opposition have been advocating: a coherent industrial and economic policy.

7.52 pm

Mr. Barry Legg (Milton Keynes, South-West): Like other hon. Members, I welcome the autumn statement and the excellent speeches that we heard from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer last week and today. They contained many sentiments that all Conservative Members can heartily endorse, including the commitments to firm control of public expenditure and to reducing public expenditure as a proportion of national income.

The autumn statement also set out again some vital strategies. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor said that one of the Government's priorities was to make markets work better, as that will enable us to achieve a higher long-term growth rate. My right hon. Friend also restated the well-known truth that Governments cannot spend their way out of recession. There can be no stronger proof of that than what has happened to the projections of the borrowing requirement for the coming year—1993-94—and the borrowing requirement projections for this year.

The projections for the current year have risen from about £19 billion at the time of the autumn statement last November to an estimated figure in the Budget this year of £28 billion, which took away the breath of many hon. Members. Last week we were given a revised estimate of £37 billion. The borrowing requirement for the current year—the estimate of how much the Government will spend in excess of taxes—has increased by no less than £18 billion.

If Opposition Members are right in their assumption that Governments can spend their way out of recession, we should have expected growth projections to be moving forward rapidly, and should now have an overheated economy. However, the reverse has happened. The projections of growth for the current year have fallen from 2 per cent. positive at the last autumn statement to 1 per cent. negative in the current autumn statement. There can be no better proof that Governments cannot spend their way out of recession.

How are we to get out of recession? I was pleased by what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor told us. He said that the main means of ending recession were through the supply side and through monetary measures—easing monetary policy. His autumn statement contained the fact that we now have a new monetary framework, under which British interest rates will be determined by domestic conditions. That is to be heartily welcomed after our experience in recent years, when we first shadowed the deutschmark and then became a formal member of the exchange rate mechanism.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has rightly stated that monetary policy was too tight during our membership of the ERM. We now have an opportunity to set a sensible framework for the future to produce growth in the British economy and deliver the sort of economic results that all hon. Members wish to see.

Many hon. Members have spoken of the immediate measures contained in the autumn statement. I shall spend a little time looking at the medium-term prospects, and the ways in which we are to regenerate the economy in the medium term. My hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) made many sensible comments about Britain's trading relationships, but I do not agree with his judgment that management of the economy has to be left to the day-to-day judgments of one or two individuals. One of our mistakes in the late 1980s was to run the economy in that way, and we did not put in place an established framework or the institutional changes necessary to ensure that our policies were properly implemented.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor said today that the aim for public expenditure for the coming three years is to ensure that it is less than the long-term growth rates, which are thought to be about 2·5 per cent. He has set out a strategy for growth in public expenditure over the next three years of 1·5 per cent. per annum in the Government's

[Mr. Barry Legg]

public expenditure control total. That is a tough target and promises an even tougher spending round in coming years than in recent ones.

The spending round that we have just experienced has provided for 4·5 per cent. growth in public expenditure, which is quite a high percentage. If one considers the future and the plans in the autumn statement, one sees that public expenditure growth will be considerably reduced —to about 1·5 per cent. Like many other hon. Members present, I believe that it is essential to fulfil those plans. All too often, previous autumn statements have contained tough spending plans for years two and three that have not been fulfilled. However, we must keep to our spending plans as the consequences for the British economy for not doing so would be very serious.

We are starting with a budget deficit as a proportion of gross domestic product of about 7 per cent. If public expenditure does not remain within the planned total it will create serious difficulties for our future funding requirements, for long-term interest rates—which have an important bearing on the wealth-creating sector of the economy—and it would have serious consequences for our taxation policies and the Government's commitment to low taxation. Sticking to those spending plans presents a great challenge.

The Chancellor has said that British interest rates will be set according to domestic monetary conditions. I welcome that. A letter dated 8 October from the Chancellor to the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service sets out the conditions for returning to the ERM. The most important of those is that British and German monetary conditions must converge. However, it would be a mistake to return to that mechanism only because of that. We should return to the ERM only when the British and German economies are totally synchronised and working in exactly the same cycles, and, given developments in the German economy over the past two or three years, I can see little possibility of that happening in the foreseeable future.

For many years the German economy was the anchor at the centre of Europe, but that is no longer the case. It has considerable difficulties that will take many years to correct. A hasty return to the ERM would damage the British economy, and fulfilling a legal commitment to return to it and making our economy converge with that of Germany could threaten to capsize the British economy.

I welcome the Chancellor's proposals for a more open approach to financial management. He announced plans for a panel of independent forecasters who will meet once a quarter to discuss the outlook for the British economy. That is welcome, but I do not think that it goes far enough. We should consider institutional change to our economic management. Countries with the best records on their economy and on maintaining low inflation have a much more open system. In the United States the minutes of the open market committee of the Federal Reserve are freely available and in Germany there is constant dialogue between the Bundesbank and the markets. That country also has a panel of independent advisers offering open advice.

Institutional change is appropriate in the fight against inflation and the battle to create sound money, which lies at the heart of the Government's economic policy, which I thoroughly endorse. There are two dangers to such a policy. The first is a large fiscal deficit, and some of the projected deficits are large. Such deficits will tempt future politicians to print money to bridge the gap. The second threat to sound money is over-tight monetary policy. Such a policy was followed in the early 1930s and the reaction that followed harmed the post-war British economy. We have had a period of tight monetary policy when we were in the exchange rate mechanism, but we should now pursue the appropriate monetary conditions to redress that.

We must consider not only lower interest rates but the Government's funding policy. Underfunding the deficit is supported by many monetarists and is the policy adopted by monetary institutions as strong as the Bundesbank and the Federal Reserve.

The autumn statement has many sound features, but in the years ahead we shall need to add further building blocks. If we do that, we shall recreate the spirit of enterprise.

8.5 pm

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): My constituency has a greater percentage of people employed in manufacturing than that of any other hon. Member. I shall return to that. The Chancellor said that the autumn statement is all about confidence, but people in my constituency and elsewhere will see it for what it is—a confidence trick. There have been so many promises of recovery and so many false dawns that nothing that the Chancellor says will ever be believed. On 4 September my local paper, the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph*, carried the headline:

> "Ingenious step to head off a crisis."

The story below that headline read:

> "Of all the options open to Chancellor Norman Lamont to defend the pound, his move yesterday to borrow £7·25 billion in foreign currency to be sold for sterling is the most innovative. Certainly the City hailed it as ingenious . . .Now, with Mr. Lamont's cash-pot, sterling has been provided with a buffer lasting until next March. By that time the long-delayed signs of upturn in the United Kingdom economy may have emerged to strengthen confidence in the pound."

The hundreds of thousands of people who read that major regional daily must wonder when the recovery will come. Having been once bitten, the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* will be twice shy.

The Government's economic policy is all about ingenious steps, three-card confidence tricks and misrepresentations. Despite the Conservative manifesto and solemn pledges at the general election, much has been concealed from the electorate. The manifesto did not mention pit closures and the fact that 31,000 miners and 70,000 people in ancillary industries would be thrown out of work. It did not mention devaluation, the billions of pounds thrown at speculators on 16 September and the continuing slump. On the contrary, the manifesto promised recovery. The Prime Minister told people to vote Conservative on Thursday 9 April and said that the recovery would continue on Friday.

The Chancellor said in his speech that the autumn statement is all about controlling public sector pay. That means that people in the public sector are being asked to pay for the Government's mistakes. The low-paid will also suffer. My constituency is a low-wage area in a low-wage region. Today's debate comes hard on the heels of the debate yesterday on the abolition of the wages councils —an obnoxious policy but a fitting one for the

Government and just what one would expect. The Government's message is that to help recovery people must accept lower wages. They did not bat an eyelid when Vallance in British Telecom and other captains of industry in the privatised utilities were awarding themselves stratospheric pay rises. Those salaries were supposed to signal the spirit of free enterprise. Then, on Tuesday, at the Lord Mayor's banquet, the Prime Minister had the gall to talk about fairness. When did he learn about fairness? Why did it take it him so long to discover it? That will not wash. My constituents and millions like them will be worse off and calls to sacrifice by the Prime Minister will fall on deaf ears in Lancashire, where 5 per cent. of all adults earn less than £120 per week—talk about a wages council minimum—and almost 10 per cent. of women earn less than £120 a week for a full working week.

Those are sweatshop rates of pay, and those are the people whom the Tories want to accept lower wages so as to bail out the Government. The poorest are being called on to make that sacrifice. We know what brought this about. The Government strategy is to compete on wage rates rather than to develop skills. That is why the autumn statement cuts the training and employment budget even further, with youth training and employment training facing a real cut of 3 per cent. The Government's message is "leave it to the market."

We get all these lectures about competitiveness and measures to make the economy leaner and fitter, but no one buys that. No one believes that stuff any more, not coming from them, after two recessions in a decade and one third of manufacturing industry being wiped out. In the north-west of England, where my constituency is, 37 per cent. of manufacturing industry has been wiped out by the Tories.

Despite all this, the Chancellor wants confidence. He says that that is what will pull us through. If he tells that to the people in my constituency, where bankruptcies are running at record rates, home repossessions have never been higher and high unemployment is now endemic, they will laugh. We have the highest unemployment for five and a half years. For 30 months in a row, unemployment has relentlessly risen. Unemployment in my constituency is 72 per cent. higher than it was when Major became Prime Minister in November 1990.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not the custom of the House to refer to another Member by his name. Furthermore, when the Speaker or Deputy Speaker rises, the hon. Member being called to order must resume his seat.

Mr. Prentice: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. You will gather that I feel strongly about this issue.

Ordinary people will pay for the mistakes of the Conservatives. I see Tories snigger. They will probably find some way to twist the issue of Government borrowing. The PSBR of £44 billion comes from a party that in April told the British people that the implementation of the Labour party's manifesto commitments would cost £35 billion. Government borrowing will be running at a rate of £1 billion a week next year with a need to finance maturing Government debt. All this borrowing is to pay for unemployment and to generate growth of 1 per cent. Where will the growth come from? It will not come from our manufacturing industry because Britain does not make things any more.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Rubbish.

Mr. Prentice: Is it rubbish? Work on civil airlines has been transferred from Hatfield to Taiwan. They should tell people in Hatfield about the transfer of technology.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: What about our balance of payments surplus in cars for the first time in 15 years? The hon. Gentleman is wrong to say that we do not make things any longer.

Mr. Prentice: I agree that there has been an improvement with cars, but that is generated by Japanese companies, not indigenous United Kingdom companies. What about consumer durables such as washing machines? What about shipbuilding? Can Tory Members find something to laugh about a shipbuilding industry that has plummeted? What about cameras? Can they laugh about the motorcycle industry, the bus industry or the textile industry, which used to be so important in my constituency, which have all been wiped out? The last pit in Lancashire, Parkside, is about to close. Are they going to laugh at that? What about British Aerospace, in which 132,000 jobs nationwide, and 40,000 in my area, are threatened? If that goes, my region faces economic annihilation and the erosion of its skill base. No doubt they will still find something funny about that.

If we lose leading technologies such as aerospace, from where will the new jobs for my constituents come? We have accelerating job losses, falling investment, empty order books and a flattened housing market. We need a programme for growth and long-term investment—something that we are not getting from the Government. The north-west needs a Government who are seriously interested in manufacturing industry, but no one believes that the autumn statement measures up to the task ahead.

8.15 pm

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): The Chancellor's autumn statement has quite rightly been widely welcomed. I endorse what my colleagues have said about it. The welcome is quite simply because it is appropriate for the new circumstances in which we find ourselves, and because the measures it introduces are imaginative. Most of all, it is because the autumn statement is fundamental to building confidence. It describes the Chancellor's economic framework in a way that allows everyone to see clearly his targets and the indicators that he will use to ensure that he attains those targets. The Conservative party has confidence in its Chancellor.

Having heard the shadow Chancellor this afternoon, I feel that Opposition Members might want to reassess their view of his policy. It was revealing that he did not have a good grasp of economics. He drew attention to the fact that one of the measures in the autumn statement was abolishing car tax. He rightly quoted the figure, used by the Chancellor, of a cost of £750 million in the fiscal year 1993-94. That works out at approximately £400 per average family vehicle.

The shadow Chancellor then took the motor manufacturers' forecast of an increase in sales of vehicles of 70,000. Any average GCSE pupil would have told the shadow Chancellor that 70,000 vehicles costing the Exchequer £400 each would result in a cost of £28 million, less VAT. However, the hon. Gentleman did not make

[Mr. Rod Richards]

that computation. In the topsy-turvy world of Labour's "think of a number" policy, he took the Government's cost forecast for the total spend, divided it by the motor manufacturers' extra cars sold forecast, and came up with the cooked answer that every vehicle would cost the Exchequer £10,500. He forgot to mention that almost 2 million car owners will have an extra £400 each to spend, thereby creating demand and boosting the economy.

I know that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) was once employed as a temporary lecturer at Edinburgh university, and I can understand why it did not offer him a full-time job. His speech proves that Labour cannot be trusted to get its sums right with the taxpayer's money.

I particularly welcome the £6·3 billion settlement for Welsh programmes and the fact that its real value will be maintained for the next three years. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales on retaining the population-based formula for calculating public expenditure provision. Long may that practice continue.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and I recognise that the recession is global and therefore that any Government's actions are limited. However, Government policy has brought considerable success to Wales over the past 13 years, so the effects of the recession there have been less severe than in the rest of the United Kingdom. At present, 10 per cent. of the potential working population of Wales are unemployed—which reflects almost exactly the figure for the rest of the United Kingdom. In 1986, the comparable figures were 14 per cent. and 11 per cent.

Wales has caught up with the rest of the United Kingdom because its economy has been completely transformed over the past 13 years by Government policy. The basis of the Welsh economy is now much broader than in 1979, when a Conservative Government came to power, when coal and steel were virtually the Principality's only industries. That transformation occurred through the effective use of public funding of inward investment.

Since the general election, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has announced the creation of 3,000 new jobs and that 800 others would be safeguarded, reflecting investment of £78 million and a Welsh Office contribution of selective regional assistance valued at £20 million. To save the shadow Chancellor tripping his fingers over his calculator, that produces a cost of £5,260 for every job created. I am pleased, therefore, with the increase in investment capital allowances, which can do nothing but good for investment prospects for Wales.

The self-employed and small businesses account for the bulk of the Welsh economy. The autumn statement is about confidence, and that is precisely what has been lacking among small businesses in Wales and the rest of the United Kingdom. Inflation poses the greatest threat to confidence, and my right hon. Friend's means of achieving his inflation target are boosting confidence. However, expectations of future inflation tend to be self-fulfilling and to generate their own inflation.

The biggest boost to confidence among the self-employed and small businesses was sterling's withdrawal from the exchange rate mechanism on 16 September. Those to whom I spoke displayed unbridled joy at that development, and the subsequent lowering of interest rates meant that many more small businesses will survive the recession. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will lower interest rates again when it is prudent to do so.

Having raised the matter of the exchange rate mechanism, the shadow Chancellor and his right hon. and hon. Friends persist in saying that sterling should have been realigned a week or a fortnight before 16 September. I put the question to the Chancellor this afternoon, and I really would like an answer. If the Opposition really believe that the ERM should have been realigned at that time, will they kindly tell the House what, in their view, the central value of the realignment would have been, and what would have been the appropriate base interest rate for that value?

I accept the discipline that the ERM forced upon this country, but now that we are out of it, let us take full advantage of the opportunity. I congratulate the Chancellor on taking the first major step along the road to recovery.

8.25 pm

Dr. Roger Berry (Kingswood): Earlier, reference was made to a letter signed by several hundred economists in 1981 that was critical of the Government's economic policy. I plead guilty to being one of its signatories. I am not at all embarrassed, given that Conservative Members have spoken this afternoon as if, since 1979, the Government have not had the worst record of economic management of any postwar Government.

The Government have the worst record on growth, unemployment, interest rates, the balance of manufactured goods, and so on. The list is endless. I looked in the autumn statement for remarkable features and for something new. It makes a half-hearted and belated attempt to adopt policies that the Government ridiculed and rejected not only before and during the general election but in the seven months since. They rejected lower interest rates, tax allowances for investment, additional export credit assistance, and the release of local authority capital receipts.

In my maiden speech on 10 June, during the debate on the Finance Bill, and on a Labour amendment calling for enhancement of first-year capital allowances that was rejected out of hand, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury said:

> "The facts do not support the assertion that capital allowances increase the flow of investment".

He said that the amendment was aimed at generating an investment-led recovery.

> "but history has shown time and time again that investment led recoveries are chimeras."—*[Official Report*, 10 June 1992; Vol. 209, column 357.]

The Financial Secretary followed the lead set by the Chancellor in presenting his Budget, when he also rejected enhanced capital allowances on the basis that they would not be a sensible use of available resources.

Last Thursday, the Chancellor increased allowances for first-year investment in plant and machinery. There has been much ill-informed talk about investment led recovery, and that was one change of policy. The most dramatic change followed the lengthy call for a reduction in interest rates. A Treasury press release issued last week spoke of the lowest interest rates since 1978. What happened after 1978 to give us record interest rates? The truth is that the present Chancellor and his predecessors have been responsible for precisely the record interest rate levels that the Chancellor now seeks to claim credit for reducing.

It must be quite easy to be a Chancellor of the Exchequer in such circumstances. You jack up the interest rate; you wait for a few months; then you bring them down, and everyone says how wonderfully you have done your job. No doubt some Conservative Members are impressed by such tactics.

In the autumn statement, the Chancellor proclaims the benefits of a devalued pound—he refers to it, of course, as a competitive pound—and the lower interest rates that that allows. There is, however, no hint or whiff of recognition of the fact that this is the same Chancellor who resisted such a policy until it was forced on him; the same Chancellor who was prepared to borrow £7 billion to throw away more than £1 billion of taxpayers' money in a vain and foolish attempt to prop up an overvalued pound. There is no recognition of the fact that the right hon. Gentleman not only raised the interest rate to 15 per cent. on 16 September, but subsequently told the House that he would have kept it at 15 per cent. if the policy had worked.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The hon. Gentleman said that he considered the pound to be over-valued at its then rate in the exchange rate mechanism. I seem to recall that, during the general election campaign, the Leader of the Opposition suggested that the Labour party would defend that valuation. Did the hon. Gentleman say then that he considered the valuation too high?

Dr. Berry: I pointed out that it was too high on the very day that we entered the ERM; it seemed reasonably obvious. My right hon. and learned Friend will speak for himself, but I am convinced that, if he had expressed the view that I now hold in the run-up to the election, he would have been held responsible for the devaluation in the currency. Indeed, incredible though it may seem, I have heard hon. Members in the Chamber trying to blame him for precisely that—although, as the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) has said, he did not express the view about the devaluation of sterling that I am now expressing.

The point is that, if the Chancellor's policy of jacking up interest rates to 15 per cent. had succeeded in maintaining the pound at DM2·95 in the ERM, we would be debating a slightly different autumn statement. However, millions of people in the country would be seriously worried, and rightly so. On reflection, I believe that that would have been a preposterous proposition—but, according to the Chancellor, it is what he would have done.

One feature of the autumn statement is its acceptance of some of the arguments advanced by Opposition Members and others. Today, people are talking about the awarding of marks to schools, and about league tables. I would like to award marks for economic literacy to the autumn statement—I would not give it many. First, why start with a planning total of £244·5 billion when the circumstances in which that total was set last year have changed so radically? The dramatic recovery to which the Chancellor referred last year has signally failed to materialise, and there is no economic rationale for sticking to a figure when it is out of date.

Secondly, why assume that improved confidence—a phrase that is used repeatedly throughout the autumn statement—will miraculously follow interest rate reductions, when the private sector is debt-ridden on an unprecedented scale, and unemployment is still rising? Thirdly, why continue to assert that conquering inflation—whether that is interpreted literally as the achievement of zero inflation, or more liberally as achieving any old rate between 1 per cent. and 4 per cent.—is the key to sustainable growth? No economic theory or empirical evidence demonstrates that; indeed, a few years ago, the *Financial Times* pointed out—correctly—that there was no perceptible link between the inflation rate and the rate of economic growth.

Fourthly—this annoys me most—if, as the Chancellor says in the autumn statement, it would be damaging to seek to prevent the PSBR from rising in a recession owing to the loss of tax revenues and the payment of benefits—a view with which, incidentally, I agree—why is it not better to increase the PSBR to invest in economic recovery? The statement gives no answer to that question.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) has pointed out, at the last general election the Government made much of Labour's spending programmes; indeed, they assumed that all our expenditure on every conceivable programme would be incurred in 12 months. That would have required a significant increase in public sector borrowing—probably of the order of that the Government propose for the PSBR in the current year. The Government's wheeze has been to achieve a similar figure without any improvement in services, with employment accelerating to 3 million—according to their figure; on the bases of calculations made before they fiddled the statistics, the figure is nearer 4 million. It is difficult to imagine a more damning condemnation of economic incompetence.

That brings me to the most remarkable feature of the autumn statement. As many of my right hon. and hon. Friends have said, it fails to address the real issue: how we can secure economic recovery, and reduce unemployment and the record number of bankruptcies. Most significantly, it fails to appreciate that, without sufficient demand in the economy, unemployment will continue to rise and firms will continue to go bust.

As hon. Members on both sides of the House have pointed out, supply side policies are important. Our appalling balance of trade in the midst of recession is evidence of that. They are not enough, however; our economy's output will not be purchased unless there is sufficient demand in the economy. In my constituency, the owners of businesses are working every hour that God gives. They have made every conceivable supply-side improvement. The only thing that keeps newsagents, local garages and other small businesses in operation and secures jobs is the arrival of more customers spending more money. An increase in demand is not merely sufficient, but absolutely necessary, if the country is to emerge from recession.

The Government appear to believe that the private sector will somehow generate that increase in demand. They seem to think that consumers will get hold of their plastic cards—observing that interest rates have fallen by another point—shoot out into the high street and increase their expenditure, thus bringing the country out of recession. I believe that the Government hope and pray that that will happen, but the problem is that it will not happen.

[Dr. Berry]

Interest rates are not particularly low at present; and in the United States, where rates are around 3 per cent., the recession continues. The private sector in this country—whether it is the corporate sector or private consumers—is more debt-ridden than that in the United States. It is inconceivable that an interest-rate reduction will be sufficient to regenerate economic recovery: as a number of hon. Members have said, what we need is an increase in public expenditure.

I have looked carefully at the figures in the autumn statement. If we accept all the Government's assumptions about a 1 per cent. growth rate next year, and their assumptions about the components of demand arising from exports, private investment and private consumption, the fact remains that there is a yawning gap in demand. There is not enough demand even to prevent rising unemployment.

Having taken account of the knock-on effects, I believe, as my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) has said, that we need an increase of £10 billion in public expenditure to make any impact on unemployment. It should be targeted at investment in industry, public works infrastructure and construction, for three obvious reasons. First, it would use unemployed resources to create productive assets; we should be investing in projects with rates of return in excess of the cost of borrowing. Secondly, public expenditure on investment would have less of an impact on imports than the equivalent increase in private consumption, even if that could be engineered. Thirdly, such a package would immediately be self-financing in part as tax revenues rose and social security payments fell.

Conservative Members are fond of chanting the dogma that the Government cannot spend their way out of recession. That is a fatuous excuse for Government inactivity. It is incontrovertible that to get out of recession requires increased expenditure on the nation's output. If the Government will not help bring that about, who will? If there is one reason why I shall be voting against the autumn statement, it is the abject failure of Government to answer that simple question. The autumn statement is not a programme for recovery; it is not the programme that my constituents and millions of others need so desperately.

8.41 pm

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): May I add my congratulations to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on presenting to the House an autumn statement which has won plaudits not only in the House but amongst many independent commentators. His emphasis on capital spending, his commitment to keeping a lid on inflation and his commitment to reviving growth have been greatly welcomed.

The events of the last four months have produced a number of instructive lessons. A financial whirlwind forced us to leave the ERM but the whole country now welcomes the cuts in interest rates since our departure. However welcome the new minimum lending rate of 7 per cent. is—hopefully with more to come—it marks a stage in a volatile roller coaster ride of interest rates—7·5 per cent. to 15 per cent. and back to 7 per cent. While I greatly welcome the Chancellor's firm commitment to low inflation, the post-war swings and roundabouts of interest rate policy have bedevilled the economy. For example, the credit boom of the late 1980s bore great similarities to credit conditions in the early 1970s. Sadly, history has had a habit of repeating itself.

The Maastricht treaty requires during the second stage that member states should start the process leading to the independence of their own central banks. It is not clear that we would find it desirable to move towards a single currency or indeed that the convergence criteria will ever be successfully met.

I turn to the domestic argument. There is no doubt in my mind that the wave of money moving into the deutschmark this year was due to the belief of the markets that the Bundesbank would pursue policies essentially unfettered by political influence. The markets were proved right. In its policy objectives, the Bundesbank has been by and large successful.

The Bundesbank is more substantially independent than the Bank of England. That is important. The IMF working paper, "Central Bank Independence: Issues and Experience", noted that the results of most studies are that countries with independent central banks tend to deliver better inflation outcomes. Had the Bank of England been considerably more independent, over the past four decades we would have enjoyed lower inflation, a more stable currency and less volatile interest rates. Surely it is time, particularly after the turbulent experiences of the summer, to look seriously at the structure of the bank and thereby the conduct of our monetary policy.

Given the enormous and justified importance which hon. Members place upon debate and parliamentary scrutiny, there might be concern that an independent Bank of England would be unaccountable. There is clearly a difficulty, with a tension between parliamentary sovereignty and central bank independence. That needs to be addressed.

The fears of lack of democratic accountability to Parliament could be addressed if the Governor were made regularly accountable to the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service. The ingredients for that exist already. The Select Committee could have an enhanced role in monitoring the bank's performance. Basic to the independent bank's charter would be an absolute commitment to stable prices. The Select Committee could examine the conduct of the bank's monetary policy. A mix of a statutory commitment to price stability and parliamentary accountability would enhance the conduct of future monetary policy.

If ever, heaven forbid, we were beset again by the same financial whirlwind that we saw in the summer, we would be better able to withstand it. I urge my right hon. Friend to give serious consideration to that proposal.

There has been a great upsurge in concern about the future of small business. The huge increase in small businesses and entrepreneurial activity in the 1980s was welcomed and was a great triumph for the Conservative Government. As is happening tragically everywhere in the world, small businesses here are being hit very hard by the recession.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) very ably highlighted small business problems in the House last Friday, and in Adjournment debates my hon. Friends the Members for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) and for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) dealt with specific difficulties facing the small business community.

Small businesses face a liquidity crisis despite lower interest rates. My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls), with all his years of distinguished commitment to small businesses, has spelt out eloquently the lack of long-term assured capital which has been so damaging and debilitating.

Has the desire of banks to repair profitability by extending margins something to do with lack of liquidity in the banking system? In the 1980s bank credit to the private sector, which is most sensitive to interest rate changes, grew by 20 per cent. per annum. The growth of money supply in the early 1980s fell to a more sustainable 12 per cent. because of Government overfunding, that is, selling more Government debt to non-banks than the PSBR and using the excess proceeds to repay Government debt held by banks. Surely now we are in exactly the reverse position, as indicated by my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, South-West (Mr. Legg). We need to liquefy the system by underfunding, that is, by the Government financing at least part of their PSBR from the banks. That system was in force prior to 1985 and was considered to be successful. That approach to monetary policy is practised widely in other parts of the world. The collapse of broad money growth from 18 per cent. in 1990 to 5 per cent. now suggests that greater short-term monetary expansion is called for.

May I be technical and illustrate the extent of this dire problem? In the year to the third quarter of 1988 the rise in bank deposits held by unincorporated businesses, mostly small businesses, was 28·9 per cent. In the year to the second quarter of 1992 it fell by 0·1 per cent. Small business liquidity has been severely cut at a time of recession by lack of growth in broad money. Surely, therefore, the Treasury should consider under-funding to make up for the lack of credit growth. Broad money needs to grow, to boost liquidity in the short term before levelling off in years to come. That is the real world that business—small businesses in particular—has to live in. By liquefying the banking system, the lending practices of banks would surely not be so damaging and obstructive as they clearly are at present. Therefore, I urge the Treasury to address that problem, in the face of rising business illiquidity and bankruptcy.

All that having been said, the business community in west Suffolk, in my constituency of Bury St. Edmunds and in the nation at large greatly and without reserve welcomes all the measures that the Chancellor took so boldly last week. We now have in place a strategy for new growth, which I greatly welcome and fully support.

8.50 pm

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The autumn statement can rightly be described as containing very small crumbs of little comfort. It should have been about reversing our industrial and economic decline and establishing a structure for long-term growth. In reality, it continues to destroy credibility and it certainly does not hold out the prospects for an improvement in confidence. The main reason is that the Government have singularly failed to recognise that unemployment is the greatest threat to a return of confidence. Unless the Government recognise that fact, confidence—which is so elusive—will not be generated. Unless the priority objective is employment, not unemployment, we shall continue to suffer.

The Chancellor's autumn statement and his subsequent contributions contained hardly any reference to unemployment. That had to be dragged out of him by means of questions. Finally, he had to admit that unemployment would continue to rise. What a disgraceful statement to have to make after 13 years of Tory government.

The autumn statement provides official recognition of the fact that the Government's philosophy has been completely discredited. We have been asked to believe that what we have to do is to drive down pay and increase poverty, as those elements are vital to recovery.

The other element that we are asked to accept in the deadly economic cocktail with which we have been presented is chronic short-termism. We are told that increased capital allowances will be helpful to business and industry, but they are available for only one year. That is unlikely to provide an incentive to stimulate investment. What is needed is a long-term strategy, but no evidence of such a strategy can be found in the autumn statement. The Treasury's economic model makes it clear that any possible benefits from devaluation, allied to the Government's present policies and any growth, if it happens, will be short lived and quickly reversed.

The Government seem equally unable to realise that lower pay will depress much-needed domestic demand. Short-termism, incompetence and cuts in living standards will create further economic and social divisions. Apart from the damage that that does, it is irrelevant as we search for a solution to the chronic economic problems that the Government have created. As they continue to stagger from crisis to crisis, the suffering of the British people intensifies. One can detect no reasonable prospect of any reversal of the decline, let alone any prospect of the promotion of economic growth.

The Chancellor told us that he anticipates a 1 per cent. increase in growth next year. If we were to depend upon the reliability of past predictions, we should be looking at another example of an economic blind date. Any talk by this Government of growth and of an increase in jobs borders on the obscene. More than 3 million people are on the dole. The pits closure programme will lead to another 4,000 job losses in my constituency of Stoke-on-Trent, South alone. Will the Chancellor come to my constituency and explain to those 4,000 people who are to lose their jobs how the economic miracle will enhance their job prospects?

Another bombshell is lurking in the background. The British people should be given clear notice of what is going to hit them. We can predict with reasonable confidence that the Government will be forced to increase taxes, in one form or another, in the very near future. The public should not be deceived into believing that any other prospect is open to the Government.

The autumn statement was greeted with a certain amount of euphoria by Tory Members. It occurred to me that the shouting and cheering grew in intensity as the Government's credibility fell. I do not know what is going to happen in future. I think we can expect more shouting and more cheering. However, this mini-Budget has been received throughout the country with as much enthusiasm as a sun-ray lamp would be welcomed in the Sahara. It is perceived to be irrelevant and useless.

The Government have no control over the economy. They have no commitment to economic recovery. The plain fact is that they are just not believed. The Tories have cashed in all their credibility. The biggest obstacle to the

[Mr. George Stevenson]

return of confidence are the Government. They pursued dogmatic policies for so long that they caused enormous damage. The Prime Minister told us that any change in the Government's policies would be a betrayal of our future. The collapse of the Government's economic policies, however, has forced them into changing their policies.

It is impossible to believe that the country is now being asked to accept that the policies contained in the autumn statement are virtuous and that they were planned all along by the Government. That is patent nonsense.

It is clear that the only question that remains to be answered is not whether these measures will restore confidence but when—if not—there will be a further retreat by this incompetent Government. No Cabinet reshuffle, whenever that comes, will hide that fact, or con the British people.

The Government have been described as a busted flush. I do not know whether I accept that. Nevertheless, they display all the characteristics of a spare trick at a whist drive. "Trick" is the operative word. The people of this country were subjected to a tragic confidence trick at the general election.

These measures are marginal indeed. They are designed to attract more Tory cheers. They do not address the deep-seated problems that face the country. They are motivated by desperation, not by conviction, and have little chance of success. They expose the disastrous policies of a discredited Government, who have a knee-jerk philosophy that masquerades as economic policy. It is no substitute for a radical new direction based on partnership between government at central and local level, and business and industry throughout the country. We need real investment in training, real investment in business and industry, an urgent job programme and an immediate attack on mass unemployment. Only then shall we see any real prospect of a return to much-needed confidence.

My contention, which will be supported by many hon. Members in the Lobby tomorrow night, is that confidence will not return as a result of the Chancellor's package and will certainly not return while this Government are in office.

8.58 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I welcome the autumn statement because it represents a change in policy. If we had not seen that change, I would have taken a different view. The Government's previous economic policy was proving inadequate because it was based on forecasting that was clearly flawed. As evidence developed that the recession was not over, a change was urgently necessary.

It was certainly no part of my own election platform, of our party's election platform or of Ministers' election platforms that we should continue to preside over a continuing recession. This necessary change in our economic policy was clearly overdue.

Before the autumn statement and black Wednesday, the emphasis that was so heavily on the control of inflation was no longer making sense to business, to home owners or to the public in my constituency and elsewhere. It was increasingly obvious to them and to many Conservative Members that growth in the economy had to become the new and central focus. That is why, as a result of the autumn statement, we have a welcome for the policy from the Confederation of British Industry and from the Institute of Directors. More importantly to me, the policy has got a welcome from those active in business at all levels in my constituency.

I do not recognise that there has been a gloomy response to the autumn statement, as Opposition Members have suggested. They may not like it, but my constituents and people in business who have been looking for a more hopeful and positive outlook are pleased with the results.

The measures in the autumn statement are now regarded as realistic and sensible. Those running industry and business may not have got everything that they wanted, but they did not expect to get everything. They realise that the Government cannot get the country out of recession by themselves. The Government can only take certain measures to act as a stimulus.

There is a real change in perception in the country about what the Government are now doing on the economic front. I support the Chancellor in his efforts to hold the level of public spending below the level of growth in the economy as a whole. I share the concern expressed by other speakers today about the level of borrowing. Once I had heard the Chancellor say what his borrowing forecast was for this year and for the years ahead, I no longer expected that we would get two points off interest rates at this moment. However, I hope that the downward pressure on interest rates will continue as a result of a prudent and balanced policy now.

It is entirely proper that the statement should contain a pay ceiling of 1·5 per cent. in the public sector. That leaves room for productivity arrangements and for some recognition to be given to improvements in the operational efficiency of those in the public sector. A nil increase would not have allowed that and would have been a mistake.

Clearly the emphasis on protecting capital investment and increasing capital spending is right. I welcome the emphasis on housing, on roads and on railways, and I especially welcome the commitment to build the Jubilee line extension. Concern has been expressed today about other areas of capital expenditure for London Transport. The tube strike threatened for next week is an appalling example of Luddite mentality. How can it be right to upgrade the capital investment in London's tube lines if those operating the lines are not prepared to make necessary changes to increase efficiency and, under the schemes, increase the earnings of the majority of people employed by London Regional Transport? I hope that the union will see sense and not cause unnecessary difficulties and problems for Londoners next week.

I welcome the new rules for funding public sector projects such as the joint private-public ventures. The advent of leasing arrangements will be particularly helpful for my constituents who commute to London, who are absolutely fed up with low-grade rolling stock. That proposal will provide a way forward to deal with that problem faster than before.

The ideas of charging for motorways and ultimately for electronic charging for other roads are also ways to improve Britain's infrastructure so that it can compete with the rest of the world, and particularly with Europe, without placing an unrealistic burden on public funding.

I question whether the privatisation plans for British Rail, which are very much linked to the level of PSBR and the Government's ability to fund rail infrastructure, are likely to be really effective in their present form. Clearly much further consideration will be given to that issue in the House.

I ask the Government Front Bench, and in particular my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, to continue to focus on the importance of manufacturing industry. There is a good story to tell here. Manufacturing accounts for 50 per cent. of consumer purchases in this country and 70 per cent. of exports. It employs 5 million people directly and another 5 million indirectly.

Manufacturing industry's record in the 1980s was one of considerable progress. Output has risen by 22 per cent. and productivity by 58 per cent. from the low point in the early 1980s. Our share of main manufacturing countries' exports recovered from a low point of 7·6 per cent. in 1985 to 8·7 per cent. in 1991. Most importantly—and this point is often missed—is the fact that business expenditure on research and development rose 6 per cent. a year in real terms in the decade 1981-91. We are all well aware of the fact that industrial relations were transformed over that period.

A gap still exists of between 20 and 40 per cent., on whatever range of measures one uses, between the United Kingdom's ability in manufacturing industry and that of our major competitors. Therefore, much remains to be done. Part of the Government's policy in future should be to ensure that we put manufacturing industry at the top of our agenda, that we recognise and promote the importance of a strong manufacturing base and that that point is taken account of in every area of Government policy.

That is not to suggest that Government can do industry's job, which is to manage, sell, achieve and be profitable. However, I believe that it is important that we learn from the lessons of the past when at one stage it was said from the Conservative Benches that manufacturing industry was not as important to the country as it had been and never would be again. I want to raise the emphasis in that respect. The policies that we are now following are sensible in terms of the future of British industry. I hope that the focus on the importance of manufacturing will remain a fundamental tenet of Government policy in future.

9.9 pm

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The Chancellor began his autumn statement by stating the three principles on which it was based. The third principle was his wish to make markets work better. However, he did not make it clear for whom he wanted markets to work better. Did he want markets to work better for the public good, for people who are working, for people who are out of work, for people who are looking for work, or for some financial institutions?

It is important to look at the fine print in documents such as the autumn statement. I was made aware of the fine print when I received a letter from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), only yesterday, spelling out the implications of the autumn statement for economic development in inner-city areas. The autumn statement does not reveal that the implications for inner-city areas will mean that urban programme funding is maintained, to use the Minister's word, at £176 million. That is a decrease on this year's figure of £237 million, to £91 million for 1994-95, and virtually nothing for the year after that.

In my constituency of Sheffield, Hillsborough that means that about 200 economic regeneration schemes ranging from very small schemes such as a £300 toy provision for a mother-and-toddler library to essential regeneration projects to equip the city's media centre will finish next March unless the proposals are changed.

Let us consider the benefit of urban programmes. In my experience, 90 per cent. of urban programme funding is directly felt by people, 37 per cent. of schemes are promoted by the voluntary sector, 25 per cent. of schemes have a positive action element, and a large number of schemes have European partnership funding. The autumn statement told us nothing about how to work with European funds to obtain better regeneration.

On 2 June, in an answer to me, a Minister said that he did not expect the establishment of the urban regeneration agency to have any effect on the future financial provision for the urban programme. We continued to plan excellent schemes and projects to regenerate our economy in Sheffield. After such a statement, I did not expect to find that, at a stroke in the autumn statement, the urban programme in major cities had virtually been aborted. The excuse is that it is aborted in favour of £20 million, which is a mere quarter of the money that has been cut and which has to be matched by capital receipts this year. Have Conservative Members tried to sell a house lately? There is not an enormous market. The money will not be forthcoming. The fine print in the autumn statement will be disastrous for poorer city areas.

I urge hon. Members from urban areas to consider the detailed implications of the autumn statement and put pressure on the Government to ensure that their policies work for everybody in city areas, not just for the few.

9.14 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I, too, welcome the excellent autumn statement of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. I also pay tribute to him for the two excellent reforms that he has introduced. First, he has planned an expenditure total and then worked out which Departments would have what proportion. Secondly, this will be the last autumn statement in its present form. That is a long overdue reform. In future the autumn statement will be made and tax-raising measures will be announced at the same time at the end of the year.

My right hon. Friend's planned expenditure total of £244·5 billion is a 7 per cent. increase over last year, on top of a 10 per cent. rise the year before. So any talk of cuts from the Opposition is absolute nonsense. That is why Opposition Members' comments were so empty last Thursday. All the wind had been taken out of their sails, because all the budgets had been maintained.

However, there is a danger in the planned expenditure total. It represents some 45 per cent. of gross domestic product and a public sector borrowing requirement of about 6·5 per cent. this year. If some of the forecasters are right, the PSBR could well rise to 9 per cent. in the next two years. The PSBR was zero in 1990-91, so this year's PSBR represents quite an increase. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor will have to pay careful attention to it.

[Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown]

In order to make the public expenditure round work, my right hon. Friend had to save some £1·5 billion by putting a curb on public sector wages. Approximately 5 million people are employed in the public sector. That has fallen from 5·9 million a year ago, and I hope that the trend will continue.

My right hon. Friend has direct control of about 3·5 million of those 5 million employees. The remaining 1·5 million are employed by local authorities. If the local authorities wish to hold their council tax to a reasonable amount and preserve their budgets, it would be very much in their interests to hold wage increases for their employees to about 1·5 per cent. in forthcoming wage rounds.

There is a great deal of talk about holding down wages in the public sector. However, public sector employees mostly have protected and generally well paid jobs. They have plenty of fringe benefits. Many of them have pensions linked to inflation. But, above all, they have a job, and in that they are an awful lot better off than people in the private sector who have lost their jobs. Surely it is right that a sector which has enjoyed real increases in wages in the past 10 years should at this stage of the economic cycle take part in the economic stringency which so many employees in the private sector have had to endure.

The autumn statement has put us well on the way to recovery. We have a reduction in the value of the pound against the deutschmark and the dollar of some 15 per cent. That will be of major benefit to our exporting companies. Much more importantly, we now have lower interest rates. They are down from 9 per cent. a few weeks ago to 7 per cent. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to reduce them further, to 6 per cent., before Christmas.

Even at the present rate, interest rates are at their lowest since 1978. We have lower rates than any of our major European partners. If that will not stimulate confidence and recovery in the consumer market, I do not know what will.

I and my constituents in Cirencester and Tewkesbury —especially the business men—congratulate my right hon. Friend on his measures to bring about investment in the economy next year, and on his imaginative statement.

9.18 pm

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): We have had an interesting and wide-ranging debate, as befits an autumn statement which was dressed up as a mini-Budget. As the Chancellor spoke, it became clear that the statement had a great deal more to do with reviving his reputation and that of the Government than reviving the British economy. What is more, it failed on those counts. Had the Chancellor been here to listen to all the contributions in the debate, including those from his side, he would have heard Conservative Members on the Benches behind him voicing a sombre tone, which did not reflect the exuberant self-congratulation with which the Government tried to launch the mini-Budget.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who is always an interesting, and frequently a sombre, contributor, set great store by devaluation. He and other devaluationists—including any Opposition Members—would do well to pay attention to what the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders has said since black Wednesday:

> "there is great uncertainty at present over the future direction of Britain's economic and European policy. Inflation is still feared, the pound is regarded as unstable at its present level (which is much too low—the industry was competitive at DM2·90-£1) and there is great concern lest the industry again be subjected to taxation to help the Government fund the PSBR. A two-speed Europe would speedily negate the purpose of the foreign investment so that new capacity would replace rather than add to existing capacity".

As my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) rightly said, devaluation cannot be a substitute for tackling the underlying weaknesses of the British economy.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North also alerted us to the "inflationary time bomb" which is inherent in the present situation. He should recognise that much of that inflationary time bomb can be traced to precisely the devaluation in which he seemed to have so much faith.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) made at least two judgments with which I agreed. First, he said that the debate on the statement is being held unusually quickly because, the longer that the country has to examine it, the more they will realise how shallow and inadequate it is. I also agree with him that it is a shameful abdication of the country's international responsibilities for overseas aid to the poorest third-world countries not to have increased it in real terms, and it is against the best traditions of the British people's feelings.

I endorse the powerful argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) that everything possible should be done to boost the British car industry. Welcome though the abolition of the special car tax is—like my hon. Friend, I have long argued that it should be ended—let no one be deceived: even if sales were to increase by 70,000, as the SMMT says they might, it will still leave them 29 per cent. lower than they were in 1989. Such is the depth of the recession—and, by comparison, how puny are the measures in the autumn statement.

Can the Paymaster General answer the question that he could not answer last night when we discussed the car tax? How will that £750 million be recouped from British motorists, as the Chancellor said it would be? Also, why is it £750 million, when an extra 70,000 car sales, resulting from the abolition of the tax, would bring in £122 million in additional VAT? Does that not make the net cost of abolition £628 million? If he is going to clobber the motorist by taking the money back, should it not be £628 million and not £750 million? I hope that he will answer that question.

Welcome though the measure is, the car industry needs a restoration of consumer confidence more than anything. That will not come about as long as people fear for their jobs, are fearful of outstanding debts and are uncertain as to the direction that the economy will take under the Government. As the likely effects of the autumn statement, as opposed to its promises, have sunk in, it is increasingly evident from industry, and the high streets, as well as from the House that, whatever else the autumn statement does, it will not lift the fear of unemployment that is so damaging the economy and people's lives.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has said, even if the promised whole 1 per cent. of growth, as predicted in the autumn statement for next year, materialises, it will leave Britain in the three years to 1993 with an appalling cumulative cut in real GDP of no less than 2·5 per cent., as compared with an increase of 4 per cent. in the United States, 10 per cent. in Japan, 5 per cent. in Germany, 6 per cent. in France, 8 per cent. in Spain and 4·5 per cent. in the European Community as a whole.

That nails the claim made by some Conservative Members that somehow Britain is muddling along all right in a recession that is also hitting everyone else. The difference is that, in the past few years, other European economies have been growing, while ours has contracted. They have built up their industries and rate of production, while our Government have run our capacity down. As my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) has said, they have run it down to the point where even our ability to sustain our future standard of living is threatened.

How much confidence can we have in the Chancellor's forecast of 1 per cent. growth next year and his pathetic 0·25 per cent. forecast growth in total investment? After all, this is the Chancellor who told us in his interview during "On The Record" on Sunday:

> "The Government cannot forecast precisely whether the economy is going to grow by 1 or 1½ per cent. There are margins of error as I have constantly, constantly tried to make clear."

The Government have another chance today. Will they tell the House what are the margins of error for those pathetic forecasts of growth next year? Is the Chancellor saying that the downside of those margins of error is that there might be no growth at all? After all, he forecast growth of 2·25 per cent. this time last year, but, instead, we had a cut of 1 per cent. in GDP. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) said, that forecast is like an economic blind date—and it does not look like a very good one.

Although some of the decisions in the autumn statement may bring some limited benefit, they will be affected by the deflationary impact of others. It is all very well for the Government to boast that they now hope that the Jubilee line extension will go ahead—although they have been unable to confirm any deals that will enable that to happen—but what about transport in the rest of London? What possible sense does it make to cut £380,000 from London Transport's budget—equivalent to more than a quarter—when, as the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) spelt out, the underground is crying out for more investment, not less?

What about the rest of Britain? Where is the capital investment that will give our country the communications network it needs and construction workers the jobs they need? Why have the Government not announced any new capital programmes? They have told us nothing new; they have simply cited programmes that have been announced previously.

I was pleased to note that the hon. Member for Newbury (Mrs. Chaplin) welcomed public-private financing partnerships. It is a pity that her opinion was not able to prevail in her previous job as head of the Prime Minister's political office, when Conservative Members heaped ridicule on the proposals of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). As my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Dr. Berry) has said, measure after measure that we set out in our programmes before the election, and which was ridiculed by the Conservatives, is now being hesitantly implemented by the Government.

We do not complain that the Government have taken our policies. The more of our policies they adopt the happier we shall be, and the better off Britain will be. Our complaint is that they have not accepted entire programmes—their acceptance is half-hearted. What they propose in the autumn statement totally fails to match the challenge that now confronts our country as a result of the failure of their policies.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) rightly said, the Government's industrial investment incentives are inadequate, and the cuts in training and industry budgets are particularly damaging, especially in regions with high unemployment.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) said, the Government are failing to meet the need for high quality training for the unemployed. Jobplan workshops can only be of limited value as long as six people chase every vacancy.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson) asked, what good can come from cutting programmes which are desparately needed to regenerate inner city areas?

The hon. Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) rightly complained about cuts in the tourism budget, but he is too easily satisfied if he believes that the present budget for science, research and development is anywhere near adequate when many of our competitors are spending so much more and investing an increasing amount in important science, research and development for the success of industry in the future.

Several hon. Members referred to the Government's incomes policy. The obvious economic objection is that, even if it could work, it is bound to store up problems for the future. It takes demand out of the economy but will give rise to pressures in a couple of years time, precisely when inflation is likely to be taking off again. As my hon. Friends the Members for Newport, East and for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) pointed out with great passion, we also need to focus on the unfairness of that incomes policy.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Where would the hon. Gentleman get the money to pay for wage increases in the public sector? Would he get it from cutting back current spending on capital projects, on pensions or on social security?

Mr. Smith: I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman has asked that question, because it is a variant on a question asked by several Conservative Members, including the Chancellor, who asked what the Labour party would cut to bring down the public sector borrowing requirement. We shall bring down the public sector borrowing requirement by cutting unemployment.

On the unfairness of the Government's incomes policy, may I take the example of a real home help—a Mrs. Weston—whose take-home pay is just £100 a week. She receives that sum for the responsible job of looking after elderly people, many of whom are incontinent and confused. As well as doing their shopping, housework and 101 other things, she washes and dresses them and helps them to go to the toilet. The House will agree that it is not an easy job.

The Government are telling Mrs. Weston that she can expect, at most, an increase of £1·50 per week. That sum will be more than eaten up by the £3·75 which the Government acknowledge is likely to hit her through

[Mr. Smith]

inflation. Those of her colleagues with council rents to pay will find that 5 per cent. plus the increase in the inflation rate on which the Government insist will take another £2·32 or so. Clearly the Government are piling an indefensible burden on those workers least able to bear it. The British public will know that that is wrong, and will be deeply ashamed of what the Government are doing.

In addition to the injustice and unworkability of the Government's incomes policy, another deep and potentially devastating problem is hidden in what the Government have said so far about that policy. They must say whether it includes increments, performance-related pay, overtime and so forth. Are increments to be included in the 1·5 per cent.? I shall give way to the Chancellor if he will tell us. The Chancellor does not want to answer the question—perhaps he does not know. If they are not included, we have not a 1·5 per cent. pay limit, but a 1·5 per cent. limit plus 1·5 or 2·5 or 3 or 4 per cent.—and that is not what the Government have been claiming.

If increments are to be included, do the Government believe that there will be enough money within the 1·5 per cent. to honour legally binding contracts? The increments on nurses' wages scales are legally binding and automatic. Will the Government legislate to set aside those increments, as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) did when he operated a statutory incomes policy? If not, the increments will have to be paid and, together with performance-related pay and other supplements, will rapidly use up the available funds. If that is the case, the Government are assuming either cuts in cash terms for other public service workers or large-scale cuts in staff. The House deserves to be told which.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle reminded us with great passion, on Monday the Prime Minister appealed to the partnership and fairness of the British people. Where is the partnership and fairness in an incomes policy that gives a home help £1·50 a week and a judge £50 a week? Where is the partnership and fairness in removing wages council protection for 2·5 million low-paid workers? Where is the partnership in abolishing the National Economic Development Council—the very forum through which partnership in tackling Britain's economic problems could have been carried forward?

The reality is that, even as the Prime Minister talks partnership, he and his colleagues practise division. When the Chancellor talks of confidence, he breeds despair. How can anyone have confidence in the Chancellor after all that he has said and done? He is the Chancellor who sees little green shoots that are not there. He then protests, like a true believer in unidentified flying objects, "They were there—I saw them—yes, I did, But they have gone now." He then goes to the Treasury Select Committee and says, "Other people saw them too."

No wonder that the Chancellor's colleague, the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), wrote in yesterday's edition of *The Daily Telegraph*:

> "People will never quite believe what the Government tells them again."

We do not believe what the Government say in their gloss on the autumn statement. We have had not a budget for growth, but a statement for stagnation. On the Government's own admission, the statement will condemn thousands more of our fellow citizens to the despair of unemployment, bankruptcies and house repossessions. The statement fails because it leaves people and resources idle, not mobilised as they should be to respond to unmet needs.

The Opposition have clearly stated what is needed for Britain's recovery. The ingredients are: real partnership in place of division; a jobs programme in place of unemployment; quality training in place of cheap labour schemes; public investment in place of spending cuts; homes in place of homelessness; a Europe-wide expansion programme in place of the wasted Tory presidency; a managed exchange rate in place of free market floating; and a positive energy policy in place of pit closures.

We need active government for sustained economic success, instead of the incompetent meandering of a Government who have broken their election promises, failed the economy and deceived the British people. The autumn statement once again confirms the Conservative party as the party of economic failure and mass unemployment. The Government should be rejected in the Lobby tomorrow, as surely as they are rejected by the British people.

9.38 pm

The Paymaster General (Sir John Cope): I can agree with the first few words of the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) in which he said that we have had an interesting and wide-ranging first day's debate. Thereafter, I differ from him. The hon. Gentleman recycled some of the speech that he made yesterday on the Ways and Means motion on car tax. He again asked me about the abolition of car tax. The answer is the one that I gave the hon. Gentleman last night and the one that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave to the House today. We certainly do not intend to anticipate the Budget at this stage. Still less do we intend to anticipate its effects based on the forecasts of the hon. Gentleman or anybody else.

Hon. Members have expressed concern about the continuing recession. My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Chancellor recently emphasised that that concern is shared by the Government. As everybody knows, the economic background is difficult not only for us but for other countries. Our hopes for recovery in the early part of this year have been disappointed. The fact that economic activity in other countries remains weak and the outlook in Europe has worsened further in recent months makes this country's task more difficult, not easier. Our task is to return to sustainable growth without renewed inflationary pressures.

Experience in this country shows only too clearly that growth cannot be sustained unless inflation is controlled, and we all want sustainable recovery. Retail price inflation has fallen rapidly over the past two years from almost 11 per cent. in autumn 1990 to 3·6 per cent. in October this year, while underlying inflation is only marginally higher at 3·8 per cent. Both those percentages are below the European Community average, and producer price inflation and underlying earnings growth are both lower than they have been for a generation. This progress was achieved during a period when our anti-inflationary policies were bolstered by sterling's membership of the exchange rate mechanism. The turbulent events that culminated in the suspension of that membership have not diminished our determination to prevent any resurgence of inflationary pressures, and we have recognised the need for clear yardsticks by which we can judge monetary conditions, and by which others can judge our monetary stance. As a result, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has introduced a measure that Britain has never had before —an explicit target range for underlying inflation of 1 to 4 per cent. As the House knows, we intend to be in the lower part of that range by the end of the current Parliament. We have also established a monitoring range for M4 to go alongside our target range for M0.

As well as clearly laying out our objectives and the indicators on which we intend to concentrate, we have introduced considerably greater openness into the process by which interest rate decisions are taken.

The battle against inflation is never over and we must always be on our guard if we are to ensure that we can compete effectively with the best of our competitors in Europe and beyond. The good progress that we have made and the considerable downward pressures on inflation still in the pipeline have allowed my right hon. Friend to present to the House in his autumn statement a clear, comprehensive strategy for sustainable growth which has been widely welcomed.

We have responded with a considered reduction of interest rates and an imaginative package of measures designed to restore confidence and boost sectors of industry that have been particularly hard hit by the recession. We have done so without throwing away financial discipline because that would unleash a new burst of inflation and kill the recovery that everybody wants to see. We have made the package time limited so as not to impede the reduction in the PSBR that will occur as the economy recovers. We are well aware that persistent, high PSBRs would have the effect of passing a heavy burden of public sector debt to future generations. That is why it is also vital to continue to exercise tight control over public sector spending, as we have done in this round.

Some hon. Members expressed concern about the high level of the public sector borrowing requirement this year and the forecast for next year. No one in the Treasury is in the least complacent about the PSBR, but it will fall back as the economy recovers. As we all know, it compares badly with what we were able to achieve before, but our tough attitudes to public spending over the past decade mean that the United Kingdom now has the lowest Government debt in the European Community, except for Luxembourg, as a proportion of our GDP, and one that is lower than those of the other G7 countries. That will help us to sustain a high public sector borrowing requirement to get us through the recession. In any case, as has been pointed out, the planned growth of public expenditure is well within the potential growth rate of the economy. This ensures that the ratio of general Government expenditure to gross domestic product will fall and that will, in itself, help us to deal with the PSBR.

Mr. Hain: May I draw the Minister's attention to page 53 of the autumn statement, in which it is said that unemployment will be 2·8 million not only in the next financial year, but for the two subsequent financial years? That is an incredible figure and if it were breached, it would drive a coach and horses through the Government's public finances and put extra burdens on the PSBR. Can he name one independent authoritative forecaster who agrees that unemployment will remain at that total?

Sir John Cope: I am following the usual convention in saying that I am speaking about unemployment later, if the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not replying to his point now.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) rightly congratulated the Chancellor on the fact that this will be the last traditional autumn statement. My right hon. Friend has instituted some profound and important reforms in the way that the Treasury organises its business and that the Government's financial decisions are made. The importance of these reforms has been under-estimated, and it is important that they are not. Merging the tax decisions of the Budget and the expenditure decisions of the autumn round into one joint process is not easy. Apart from anything else, the ancient seasonal organisation of Parliament is being totally reorganised, and we all know the difficulties involved in changing this place.

The second major change that the autumn statement embodies is the new method of settling expenditure from the top down instead of collecting departmental bids first. We can add to the reform list the new, more open methods of handling monetary policy, to which I have referred, the coming changes in the Government's accounts to distinguish between capital and revenue and the new changes in the rules for private finance of investment that is normally in the public sector. All these reforms have been introduced by my right hon. Friend and he deserves full credit for the biggest set of improvements to our financial decision-making process for many decades, if not for a century.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Did my hon. Friend see the parliamentary question that I tabled the other day? In it, I pointed out that only Ireland and ourselves still have a tax year that does not run with the calendar year. May I invite my hon. Friend to go a little further and bring that into line as well, because that is a much-needed reform?

Sir John Cope: We are open to suggestions, but not at the moment. We have noted my hon. Friend's point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mrs. Chaplin) referred to the changes in the rules for private finance, of which I have just spoken, and to the fact that most of the projects mentioned in this connection have to do with transport. She expressed the hope that they will go much wider. I assure my hon. Friend that they will. In some of the material that we have put out about this proposal, specific mention is made of the package of housing market measures and the lower housing association grant rates, of allowing British Rail to lease some £150 million worth of new rolling stock, provided that suitable leases are offered, and of ending the prohibition on borrowing by higher education institutions. That proposal also includes the national health service, so it goes much further than just transport.

Mr. Andrew Smith: The House deserves to know whether nurses' increments are included within the 1½ per cent. pay policy and how much money the Government are setting aside to pay for them.

Sir John Cope: Settlements are the basis of the pay policy. Existing performance pay will continue within the wages bill, but of course new performance pay arrangements and new arrangements of that kind will count against the 1½ per cent.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way now?

Sir John Cope: No, I have very little time. I gave up some of my time to allow other right hon. and hon. Members to comment, but I want to respond to many of the points raised during the debate. It is quite clear that the 1½ per cent. applies to settlements.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) expressed elegantly, as always, philosophic doubts about public sector borrowing and other matters, to which we shall pay careful attention.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) expressed concern about local authority capital receipts. As he knows, the capital receipts rules were introduced in 1990 as part of the new local authority capital finance scheme, with the objective of bringing capital spending under control. Local authorities were required to set aside a proportion of their capital receipts to repay their debts.

Some local authorities did so, and it would be wrong and unfair on local authorities that took the prudent course of repaying debts from their set-aside receipts to allow others that accumulated receipts to use them. That is why the new arrangements apply to future receipts, so that people know in advance what is going to happen to them.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) advanced his own plan for the pay of Members of Parliament. It was ingenious, but built more on the measures in the autumn statement than was intended. In any case, that matter is for the House.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way now?

Sir John Cope: No. I made it clear that I will not give way because I have little time left.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking raised also the question of interest charged by banks, as did other right hon. and hon. Members. The Government take very seriously complaints that banks are not passing on base rate cuts, particularly to small firms. It is not for the Government to intervene in individual negotiations, but my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is taking the matter up again with the clearing banks and plans to meet their chairmen in the near future. He has also asked the Bank of England to review the latest position as quickly as possible. When a review was undertaken last year, it was shown that small firms had benefited from base rate cuts —but clearly it is time to check the position again.

The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) referred to road building and the Severn bridge. The second Severn crossing, which is being built between the hon. Gentleman's constituency and mine, is an example of private finance being used in a particularly imaginative way to assist the road building programme. The hon. Gentleman welcomed the ending of car tax, on which the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) poured scorn earlier. In this instance, the hon. Member for Newport, East is in the majority, both in the House and elsewhere, in welcoming that development.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) drew attention to some supply-side measures involving the property market, and we shall certainly ponder those. The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) raised a series of issues, some of which I have already touched on; one however, was the cost of security. I have personal reason to remember what terrorism costs, in terms not only of cash but of confidence—as well as the tremendous personal cost paid by people in Northern Ireland. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to the two road projects in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

A number of hon. Members—including the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson)—mentioned unemployment. I think that the hon. Member for Hartlepool misread the position slightly, but I have discovered that he is usually fairly accurate, and it may turn out when I read *Hansard* that I did not hear him correctly. The point is, however, that despite the increase in unemployment over recent quarters—which we all regret—long-term unemployment is still about one third lower than its peak six years ago. The object of sustained growth is to bring down unemployment; as has been pointed out by a number of hon. Members—including the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson), it will not be quick or easy, but there is no quick or easy way to do it.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) made some important points about Japanese investment, which has been very valuable.

Mr. Hain: Will the Paymaster General give way?

Sir John Cope: I would rather not. I am within about four minutes of the end of my speech.

I was about to say that Japanese investment has been extremely valuable in providing jobs, and in other ways.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) was, as usual, well out of line with his party. That is no surprise, of course. Far from thinking devaluation a bad thing, as some people appear to, the hon. Gentleman appeared to consider 16 per cent. devaluation no more than marginal, and to believe that a much more substantial devaluation was required. Everyone is entitled to his opinion, but if massive devaluation were the sole answer to the United Kingdom's problems, a glance at the exchange rates over the past 30 to 40 years would lead us to suppose that the economy was very strong. I am not prepared to accept the hon. Gentleman's recipe for sustained recovery, or any sort of recovery, and I doubt whether any Opposition Members accept it either.

The hon. Gentleman presented an ingenious method of spending money without having to raise it. I confess that I did not quite follow it, but it seemed to amount to printing money and bringing about inflation. It was all very interesting, but not very relevant to what the rest of us want.

The hon. Member for Hillsborough spoke of urban programmes. She said, correctly, that £176 million would be available in 1993-94. She many not have noticed the extra spending on city challenge, which is being introduced as part of the package. Including that money, a total of £408 million will be available for urban-priority authorities, compared with £319 million this year. That is not counting the additional spending power from capital receipts—more than £500 million—that will result from the relaxations announced last week. Moreover, the resources for the urban programme in 1993-94 allow £20 million for new projects, over and above existing commitments. That money would be allocated through capital partnership to work alongside the capital receipts money that I have mentioned.

All in all, the debate has been interesting but the Labour party, having spent the summer arguing about whether its economic policy or its presentational skills had lost it the election, has not altered its economic policy since, so far as I can see, although the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East shouts about it louder than we are used to, which is a particular punishment for those of us who sit on the Government Front Bench.

Opposition Members seem to have a new dilemma. In facing the autumn statement, they cannot decide whether to attack our policies or to claim the credit for them. The result is that they do both. It has been impossible to tell——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Oil Exploration (Compensation to Fishermen)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

10 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker and, through you, Madam Speaker for granting me the Adjournment debate. I was asked by the fishermen of the Isle of Wight to inquire discreetly whether Madam Speaker enjoys lobster or crab from time to time, because they wish to make a donation to her for granting me the debate. No doubt I can make discreet inquiries to that end via *Hansard.*

I apologise to the Minister for Energy for bringing him to the Dispatch Box on the issue, because he has been extremely helpful. There was a stage when I thought that the whole matter was settled.

To recap, on 4 June in the House of Commons I met Mr. Romieu, the chairman and managing director of Elf Enterprise. I told him how concerned I was that there was not a proper compensation scheme in place for the inshore fishermen who were affected by the oil exploration that was taking place off the Isle of Wight. He wrote to me on 10 June and accepted that there was a need for an ex gratia payment. On page 2 of his letter he said:

> "With the list complete, we will also agree with the fishermen concerned, not all of whom belong to associations"—

I underline that point—

> "a fair and equitable system of ex gratia payment from Elf Enterprise to secure their co-operation."

In the final paragraph he said:

> "It is deeply disappointing to me that you have been angered as a result of the representations made to you by fishermen in your constituency concerning our activity. As a responsible company, it is clearly our intention to deal with their concerns, and in so doing achieve the same level of co-operation established during the 98/13 exploration programme."

That exploration was carried out by Occidental Oil which was taken over by Elf Enterprise.

On 22 June I wrote to my hon. Friend in the Department of Trade and Industry and told him that we were becoming increasingly disillusioned with Elf as it had not set out the terms of its compensation scheme. I enclosed with my letter a copy of the latest letter that I had received from the fishermen's association. I told my hon. Friend that we felt that Elf was being deliberately obstructive, particularly as the same individuals were involved in the Elf compensation scheme for fishermen as had been concerned with the Occidental scheme, because they were taken over when Elf took over Occidental. That was of great concern because effectively they had been through the exercise once before with island fishermen.

However, everything looked much brighter after a while—thanks, I am sure, to my hon. Friend's intervention. On 10 July, therefore, I was able to write the following letter to him:

> "Dear Tim, You have won first prize in the 'most helpful' Minister competition for this session and the fishermen and the Member for the Isle of Wight are pleased to acknowledge this by awarding you one week's holiday at the Field hovel during the coming recess . . . Thank you and a thousand crustacea owe their lives to you!"

Unfortunately, my enthusiasm was a little premature. I could not possibly read into the record the Minister's

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reply. He is already under a great deal of pressure from the energy world, and I feel certain that the population lobby would be immediately on his back, were they to see the contents of his reply.

As for the contents of the correspondence with one of my fishermen, I can assure my hon. Friend that I have prepared for him copies of all the correspondence with just one fisherman who now finds himself without full compensation. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that, having carefully scrutinised all the documents the fishermen brought to me, I found that they were all the same.

This particular fisherman received a letter on 6 July from Elf Enterprise. It was a "Dear Sir" letter and it set out the way in which the compensation scheme would operate. It worked like this. There was to be a £4,000 lump sum payment on an ex gratia basis to bona fide fishermen or chartered skippers who regularly worked in the area and who were certified to do so by the local fishermen's association. There was to be £2,000 up front straight away on signing the agreement and £2,000 at the end of the survey, providing there had been no further disruption —the point being that both I and certain others had encouraged the fishermen in their blockade of the seismic survey because we had been unable to obtain a proper compensation scheme from Elf. Therefore, Elf said that it would make half the payment available as a sign of its good will straight away, as soon as all the fishermen had signed up, and that it would pay the balance at the end, provided that there was no more disruption to the work during the rest of the survey—which proved to be the case.

Elf produced the agreement on the same day, 6 July. There are a number of points in the agreement, but the real point concerns item 5 which says:

> "The Company may be requested by the Inland Revenue to supply details of any such cooperation payment. Such details will only be supplied on request."

Item 6 says:

> "Payment will be made on the basis of information disclosed to the Company by the Skipper or Owner or his representative organisation and set forth below."

The information required relates to details of the skipper-owner, the address, the name of the vessel, the type of fishing, full or part-time, the average days fished in the survey area per month and the association to which he belongs.

The agreement contains a number of other points, including the fact that it is governed by English law. Nowhere in the agreement, however, which is absolutely standard and which was used for all the fishermen, is there any suggestion that the fisherman has to provide certified accounts, and the like, in order to obtain these payments —one of the points in contention.

My hon. Friend will have noted carefully the point that I made at the beginning: that the managing director of Elf was certain that a compensation scheme would be provided that would be available not just to members of the fishermen's association but to other fishermen. However, a number of fishermen have had no compensation. An attempt is being made by the oil company to suggest that those fishermen have not been certified, so to speak, by the fishermen's association.

I have a letter of 30 September from the Isle of Wight Commercial Fisherman's Association which says:

> "I have been requested to contact you to confirm that the people named below are members of the above association. They attended a meeting with representatives from the Elf Enterprise Company when they were told that ALL persons whose name appeared on the list that was prepared that evening would receive co-operation payments.
>
> The persons named below have been greatly inconvenienced by the survey resulting in a significant decrease in their earnings."

When I first asked for the Adjournment debate this evening, I thought that I might produce a list of all the people who have been affected, or who have either not been paid or not been fully paid. I then realised that that was a treacherous course to follow because the list might not be exhaustive. I do not intend to go down that path this evening. However, I know the principal players in the problem.

We must bear it in mind that a number of fishermen have received no compensation despite the fact that they signed the agreement, the fact that they are members of the association and the fact that they went along to meetings. Their request for compensation has been refused point blank.

Joy of joys, those fishermen then received a letter from Elf Enterprise thanking them for their great co-operation during the survey and for all the assistance they had given. I wrote a rather strong letter to Elf Enterprise and received a letter back from Mr. Jackson, the marine operations manager, who is one of the serious problems in this matter. He replied to me on 14 October as follows:

> "The purpose of our letters dated the 1, 5 and 12 of October, sent out to all 207 individuals on our contact list was to keep people informed of the progress of the survey, which has been repeatedly delayed by inclement weather. Any misunderstanding that might have arisen as a result of receipt of these letters by fishermen who have not been made an offer of payment is regretted."

One does not have to be a genius or to know much about inshore fishermen or fishermen the world over to know that having refused them compensation payments and then to write to thank them for their co-operation is to invite a fairly robust retort. The fishermen were pretty irritated, to say the least, and so was I. By then, I had come to expect a rather lackadaisical attitude from Elf.

There were then letters dated 14 October. I do not know whether they were all sent on the same date, but they were all of the same nature. The company, under the heading

> "Block 98/12 Seismic Survey—Co-Operation Payments",

pointed out where the meeting was to take place, the venue, the time and all the information that the fishermen had to produce to get paid. The company asked about the local authority licence for the carriage of passengers—charter only—the record of charter bookings, vessel logbooks and diaries. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the fact that none of that information was required in the original agreement.

By then, the Isle of Wight Commercial Fisherman's Association was pretty angry with Elf. It sent me a copy of its letter to Elf which was dated 24 October. The association quite rightly makes the point as follows:

> "The agreement that you made with the fishermen was for non-interruption of the survey and as you already know, our members have given you their fullest support in this. We would expect you to honour your side of the agreement as expediently as possible and not put further matters of contention in the way of this final settlement."

By then, the list had become extensive and there was great concern among the fishermen—I also felt great concern

—that the company was asking for more and more information which was not contained in the original agreement.

The piece de resistance was served on 30 October, with the same heading. The simple, one-paragraph letter, said:

> "I refer to our meeting . . . and confirm that we will be unable to pay the second instalment of Cooperation Payment due under the terms of our Agreement dated 6 July until you provide certified accounts and fish sales notes, as requested in my letter . . . to substantiate the information originally provided by you and which forms part of the Agreement between us."

None of that information was mentioned in the original agreement.

On 21 October, I wrote to Mr. Jackson in Aberdeen and I said that I did not think that the correspondence would bear public scrutiny. I thought that it was rather perverse to say the least that letters had been sent to fishermen who had not been offered payment. That showed abominable administration and something that I had come to expect from Elf after my dealings with the company. I felt that if I could not get a more positive answer from him or from the managing director Mr. Romieu I would have no alternative but to raise the matter in Parliament.

I did not want to trouble my hon. Friend the Minister yet again because he had been very helpful. An hon. Member should not have to come to Parliament to try to negotiate on behalf of his constituents if an oil company is a reputable organisation. Clearly the company is involved in serious matters in respect of North sea safety and one hopes that one deals with reputable people when one deals with big public companies.

I eventually received a reply from the managing director dated 12 November and I want to quote two paragraphs from that letter. I apologise to the House for quoting at such length from documents, but they are clearly germane to the problem. The managing director wrote:

> "It should not be forgotten that we had as much right to carry out our survey as they had to fish, and there was no obligation on us to make any payments at all."

I draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister to that point because I think that he and I might disagree with the managing director of Elf about that—at least, I hope so. The managing director continued:

> "Nevertheless, we recognised that some disruption would be inevitable and we therefore proposed a scheme to make co-operation payments to bona fide mobile gear fishermen nominated by their associations."

In almost the last paragraph he wrote:

> "Having said all of the above, I accept that, during the course of such a large and complex scheme it is entirely possible that some individual cases have not been dealt with as fairly as we should have wished. If this is so I can only express my regret, and assure you that we have made every effort to deal in good faith with all the claims which we have received."

I enjoy watching free enterprise flourish in our nation and there is no reason why we should have come to this dreadful impasse. I do not believe that Elf has made a serious endeavour to accommodate the fishermen.

The managing director says in his letter, quite rightly, that the company has paid out nearly £1 million in compensation to fishermen. I doubt whether, absolutely top whack tonight, we are talking about more than £30,000. The figure has been very exaggerated.

I understand that the company's parting shot to my constituents was that it intended to come back. It hoped to win licences for further exploration and perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister has some information about that. It is extraordinary that the company did not want to leave the sweet smell of a nice bunch of violets behind instead of the great problems and difficulty which are ongoing and have caused upset and real aggravation to me and to my constituents.

The gnomes of Zurich were rather troublesome to the Government in the past. However, Elf Aquitaine is clearly the mafia cousin of the gnomes of Zurich in respect of the inshore fishing industry off the Isle of Wight. I believe that the company has turned out to be a piker because it has not honoured its agreement in the way that the managing director assured me that it would when representatives met me in the House on 4 June.

As I represent the numerically largest constituency in the House, I must be very careful how I ration my applications for Adjournment debates. There are many pressing issues facing the Isle of Wight. Endeavouring to wring out the last few coppers of a compensation scheme from a large multinational oil company is not in my view a justified use of my time or that of my ministerial colleague tonight. I am very sad that this debate has been necessary.

10.18 pm

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) for not reading out my reply to his kind invitation to join him in what he termed his hovel. I am not sure whether the size of my family would have borne the scrutiny that the House would apply. I must thank my hon. Friend for his very kind personal remarks about my small role in this affair and in turn pay tribute to him for the way in which he has fought on behalf of the fishermen and his constituents.

This is an interesting matter and, before this debate, it had not received much attention or time in the House. It might be useful if I briefly explain exactly how the licensing system works with regard to fishermen's interests.

The standard conditions which are incorporated in seaward petroleum licences are published before the blocks are offered for licensing. Those standard conditions do not include any requirement for the licensees to make payments, either as compensation or otherwise, to commercial fishermen, or indeed to any other marine interests.

As a matter of policy, the Department does not regard it as appropriate to place requirements on petroleum licensees to pay compensation to fishermen for loss of access to fishing grounds. Oil and gas licensees are no less entitled than fishermen to pursue their activities on the open seas. If the licensees and fishing organisations agree in certain circumstances that some form of payment would be helpful, that is essentially a commercial matter for them.

However, fishing interests are taken account of in the planning of licensing rounds and when licences are awarded. The licences include a standard clause to the effect that the licensee shall not carry out operations in such manner as to interfere unjustifiably with fishing or with the conservation of the living resources of the sea. To help to give substance to that provision, my Department consults the fishing departments and the principal fishing organisations to identify fishing sensitivities before

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deciding which blocks are to be offered for licensing. It also consults other organisations about other sensitivities, for example, environmental matters.

Where the fisheries departments advise that special conditions should be attached to licences, tailor made to the particular sensitivities in certain blocks, that advice is followed. For instance, where blocks lie in herring spawning grounds, for example off the east coast, the licensees are required to carry out seabed surveys within a prescribed distance of any proposed drilling location to ensure that drilling will not disturb the spawning grounds. In the spawning season in such areas, conditions are imposed as to the time of year in which they can undertake seismic work or drill, and the use of certain drilling muds may be required in the case of drilling.

Licence-specific conditions, where applied, touch on compensation in one limited respect. If oil-related debris is located on the routes taken by supply vessels to and from rigs, and it results in damage to fishing gear, the licensees are required to deal promptly with claims in respect of that damage.

A further indication of the recognition in the licensing arrangements of fishing interests is that we require licensees to nominate a fishing liaison officer to maintain contact with those interests.

So care is taken to ensure that fishing interests are properly taken into account in our licensing arrangements. What we seek to achieve by our consultations and by provisions tailor made to particular blocks is a situation where there is mutual accommodation between those two groups of sea users.

Perhaps my hon. Friend would like to reflect whether his fishing constituents would really wish for formal compensation arrangements. I understand that that is not the position or an aim of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations. The federation has been developing an understanding with the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association on the subject of compensation.

I have received from the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations a fax, which states that the organisation

> "has its reservations with regard to the adjournment debate since it has established a clear working relationship with UKOOA on the subject of compensation which takes account of lost earnings in the given area and the likely effects of restrictions to access. The NFFO is, therefore, prepared to liaise directly with the Isle of Wight Commercial Fisherman's Association in order to attempt to reconcile the various difficulties."

Mr. Field: The NFFO telephoned me this week and said that it had attempted to negotiate on behalf of my fishermen. I pointed out that it had been nowhere near the scene. The matter had been in all the national papers and every television channel in the south, yet we did not hear a dicky bird from the association. Indeed, we did not hear from it in the initial stages when we had exactly the same problem with Occidental. The NFFO's association with UKOOA is laughable. The fishermen with whom it said that it had been in contact were not affected by the most recent licence.

Mr. Eggar: My point was simply that over the years the NFFO has had experience of similar disruption caused by seismic surveys. It has developed a relationship with the oil companies. Not invariably, but in general, that relationship has worked reasonably well and has proved satisfactory to both parties.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Eggar: I will give way, but I have many matters to cover in a short time.

Mr. Morley: The Minister has been fair. The NFFO and, in the first instance, the local association negotiates. The federation offers its services to bring the matter to a conclusion. So the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) was a little unfair.

Mr. Field: I must object. This is my Adjournment debate and the hon. Gentleman did not ask my permission to intervene. The organisation to which he refers and seeks to defend——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The person who has the Floor decides whether to allow an intervention.

Mr. Eggar: I apologise to my hon. Friend for giving way to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley). It is a difficult matter and I do not want to upset anyone. None the less, there is a national organisation and it has evolved a system. It could have a role in the final resolution of the matter to which my hon. Friend refers. I do not seek to impose that, or anything else. I hear what my hon. Friend has to say about the role that the national organisation has played.

The petroleum licence given to the company includes not only a right but an obligation to undertake seismic surveys. Surveys are necessary under the terms of the licence. The company must undertake a seismic survey in order properly to appreciate the potential of the block. In this case, the company chose to pursue a 3-D seismic survey, which takes rather a long time but is believed by the industry to give a fairer and more accurate picture of the potential of that block. That perhaps accounts for the fact that the time taken has been rather longer in this instance than might otherwise have been the case.

I emphasise to my hon. Friend that, although I have been in contact with the company about the matter, it is the company's responsibility to decide how to respond to the application and the representations made by my hon. Friend and the fishing organisation. I am told that the company had more than 30 meetings with fishermen's organisations. I am aware that my hon. Friend took the view that the consultation was not sufficiently wide.

My hon. Friend may be aware that Elf Enterprise has undertaken, in addition to reaching agreement in principle with the organisations on compensation, to fund research into the migratory patterns of sea bass in the area. That might be of some help to the local fishermen. I understand that payments made by the company to the fishermen have totalled more than £1 million. That is not an inconsiderable sum. I am told that the company has spent a total of about £3 million on the entire seismic operation. So the payments to fishermen represent 30-odd per cent. of the total cost of the seismic operation.

The company has no obligation under the terms of the licence or in law to pay any compensation. Like my hon. Friend, I take the view that, where there is proven disruption, it is appropriate for the company to compensate. However, it is not unreasonable for the company to seek to satisfy itself that the money that it pays over is justified in terms of the fishermen's activities. I do not say that to defend the company, but because it can offset some 80 per cent. of the cost of compensation against tax payable to Her Majesty's Government. So we all have an interest as taxpayers in ensuring that the company pays a fair sum.

I listened carefully to my hon. Friend and I shall ensure that the *Hansard* report of the debate is passed on to the company. I hope that some satisfactory conclusions will be reached by all parties.

The motion having been made at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 19 November 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[DAME JANET FOOKES *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 26 November.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Visitors (Pakistan)

1. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons from Pakistan sought to enter the United Kingdom as visitors in the last year; and how many were refused entry.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): In the year ending August 1992, there were some 67,000 admissions of Pakistani visitors at United Kingdom ports; 371 were refused entry and removed. It is likely that the majority of them were visitors.

Mr. Chisholm: That is a high refusal rate. Why are 8·5 per cent. of visitors to this country from the black Commonwealth, while 54 per cent. of refusals are from those same countries? Does the Minister realise that, once people have been refused they will probably never be able to enter because it is marked in their passports? Does he accept that the situation will get much worse if appeal rights are abolished and immigration officers become completely unconstrained?

Mr. Wardle: It has been made absolutely clear to immigration officers that none of their decisions should be based on questions of race, creed or colour. The hon. Gentleman asked about Pakistan. In the case of that country, 78 per cent. of applicants for visit visas last year were successful, 22 per cent. were unsuccessful initially, and just 2 per cent. of those were granted visas on appeal.

Mr. David Evans: Is my hon. Friend aware that the British people are not interested in those who are refused entry but in those who are allowed in and are now here illegally? We want to know whether they are here permanently and whether they are drawing social security. We all know that the lot opposite will let anybody in. When will the asylum Bill be put in place?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend will know that the immigration and nationality department has a most effective and hard-working enforcement department and that this country welcomes visitors from all over the world. Last year, some 5·5 million visitors were welcomed to this country, including more than 215,000 from the subcontinent.

Mr. Allen: Is the Minister aware that black British, Asian British and other ethnic minority British are seething with anger at the Government's proposal to abolish the right of appeal for visitors seeking to come to this country? Some 1,500 visitors from the subcontinent alone won their appeals last year. Why are the Government now abolishing the right of appeal, rather than correcting the process that brings it about? Is it because there is a hidden agenda from the European Community—the Schengen group, the Trevi group, and the ad hoc committee of Ministers? Will he come clean on why the Government are abolishing the right of appeal, when visitors are refused entry to our country?

Mr. Wardle: As usual, the hon. Gentleman is long on invective and short on substance. Removing appeal rights for visitors will improve the fairness and effectiveness of the immigration appeals system by enabling decisions to be concentrated on matters that are of fundamental importance to people's lives, such as questions of settlement or deportation.

Police Pay

2. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Police Federation to discuss the pay and conditions of police officers.

7. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive the report of the Sheehy inquiry.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I last met representatives of the Police Federation on 28 September. We discussed a number of matters, including the Sheehy inquiry which I have asked to report to me by the end of May 1993.

Mr. Nicholson: My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that the Police Federation represents the thin blue line which, even in Avon and Somerset, stands between the community and a rising tide of crime, including drug abuse. Is he aware that, at a recent meeting in my constituency with representatives of the Police Federation, I found that they were concerned about his proposal, on which we still await details, to take away from the police the registration and processing of applications for firearms certificates? Will my right hon. and learned Friend think carefully about that? Is he aware that for rural districts I believe that the police are the best people to consider who should and should not be trusted with firearms? In particular will he give an assurance to the House that he will not allow the manufacturers and retailers of firearms to have any influence over the processing of firearms certificates?

Mr. Clarke: Of course, I realise that the Police Federation is a responsible organisation, as was shown by its welcome to the Sheehy inquiry and its recent recognition of the need to accept a 1·5 per cent. pay restraint on behalf of its members in the interests of helping to revive the national economy. We are out to consultation on the issue of whether we should have a civilian firearms board and have not yet reached a conclusion. I am attracted by the idea of a civilian firearms board as it would release police officers for more direct policing responsibilities, but we need to recruit the necessary experts onto the board. I have not yet made a decision and I shall bear in mind submissions from the Police Federation in Somerset before I reach a conclusion.

Mr. Mackinlay: Is the Home Secretary aware of the continuing anxiety among police officers that the setting up of the Sheehy committee of inquiry may prejudice their pay and conditions of service? Will he reiterate to the House the categorical assurance that he gave to the Police Federation at its conference in May that the Sheehy inquiry will in no way alter or jeopardise the pay or other conditions of service of police officers in England and Wales, and elsewhere in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Clarke: I certainly gave no assurance in those terms. I said that the time had come to have such an inquiry into pay, terms and conditions of service, rank structure and other factors within the police force. The Edmund-Davies arrangements served their purpose extremely well, and the Government implemented them. The arrangements had a dramatic effect on the pay and recruitment of police in the 1980s. The Edmund-Davies arrangements have fulfilled their purpose, and the Sheehy inquiry is taking a fresh approach to settling the pay, terms and conditions of policemen in order to produce an effective, efficient and well-motivated force for the 1990s.

Mr. Shersby: Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that, following his speech to the Police Federation conference in May this year, a warm welcome was given to his remarks about working with police officers and ensuring that they were properly paid for the dangerous job that they do? When responding to my right hon. and learned Friend's speech the chairman of the federation made it clear that the federation welcomed the establishment of the Sheehy inquiry as the federation had been calling for many years for an inquiry by means of a royal commission into the terms and conditions of the police.

Mr. Clarke: That is exactly so. My hon. Friend was at the conference, and he and I remember the occasion well. The Police Federation made an extremely responsible and forthcoming response stating that it welcomed the inquiry and accepted the need to look at issues such as fair share of rewards for responsibilities, rank structures and other factors. The Police Federation has been submitting constructive evidence to that inquiry and we all await its outcome in May next year.

Mr. Blair: Is not the real problem that the police—like everyone else—face soaring levels of crime? Three times as many crimes are committed as are recorded, and there are 15 million crimes a year in Britain. Does not the Home Secretary recognise that, instead of the changes becoming an excuse for the Government to pass the buck to the police, the Government and Ministers have the responsibility to produce a strategy to cut crime and make our community safe?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman has the figures slightly wrong. There is nothing new about more crime being committed. There has been no change under any Government for centuries, when more crimes have been committed than reported. There is a maze of fairly useless criminal statistics and we are trying to make them clearer. If we consider the "British Crime Survey", the only accurate guide to the level of crime, we see that crime has —I accept—risen by about 20 per cent. in the past 10 years. We are suffering the same experience as every other developed society—rising criminality occurs in the richer and more developed countries of the world, particularly in western Europe and northern America. The Government respond by having an efficient and effective police force that they support, and by introducing reforms to the criminal justice law to keep it up to date and reforms to the prison system. We shall have and maintain an extremely effective policy on protecting the country against the problem of rising criminality.

Stolen Firearms

3. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the number of firearms stolen in the last three years for which statistics are available.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Recorded offences of burglary and theft in which firearms were reported to have been stolen were 1,774 for 1989, 2,024 for 1990, and 2,410 for 1991. It is possible that more than one firearm may have been stolen in some cases.

Mr. Ashby: Those are very worrying statistics, showing an increase in the theft of firearms. Is my hon. Friend aware that I sent the Department details of a disabling device that can be fitted to shotguns so that any shotgun with such a device could no longer be used for crime—and stolen guns will be used for crime? Instead of fobbing me off, when will the Department instigate a proper evaluation of the device and make it mandatory for all with shotgun certificates?

Mr. Wardle: There was a 19 per cent. increase between 1990 and 1991, but I hope that my hon. Friend will bear it in mind that controls were considerably strengthened after the introduction of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988. The latest figures are still lower than the figures for the early 1980s. My hon. Friend's recommendations will be considered and passed to the Firearms Consultative Committee.

Mr. Lewis: Is the Minister aware that in my area eight handguns were stolen from one source not many months ago, and that two have already turned up having claimed three lives? I suggest stricter controls on how many handguns can be held by one person—eight magnums in one flat seems a ludicrous number. Secondly, a court case is proceeding involving one of those stolen handguns, and the original owner of the gun has demanded it back even though it was used in one of the killings. That, too, is ludicrous; will the Minister put a block on it as far as is humanly possible?

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman's recommendations will be considered by the Firearms Consultative Committee. He will also bear it in mind that just one fifth of 1 per cent of all recorded offences last year involved the use of firearms, and that the Criminal Justice Act 1988 introduced stiffer penalties for the judiciary to use in cases involving the criminal use of firearms.

Mr. Conway: Will my hon. Friend accept from one who served on the Standing Committee that considered the Firearms (Amendment) Bill that there was considerable concern that, despite our best intentions, we would end up with a campaign against legitimate firearms holders in rural areas, particularly farmers and those who enjoy field sports? Does he agree that there is anxiety that if we move away from police certification the intimate knowledge that local police have about genuine holders of firearms in country areas will be lost if a civilian body is set up? Will my hon. Friend tread carefully in the rural parts of Britain?

Mr. Wardle: I hear what my hon. Friend says. He will know that responsibility is vested in the chief officer. The recent consultation paper that proposed a firearms control board spoke of a body of information being stored centrally, rather than constabulary by constabulary. My hon. Friend will know that when we consider responses to that consultation document the interests of public safety will be paramount.

Mr. William Ross: How many of the weapons that the Minister listed as stolen were handguns or bullet-firing weapons? Does he have any evidence that any of them turned up in the hands of terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Wardle: I cannot answer the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question now, but I will seek the information and then tell him. Most of the weapons stolen in each of the past 10 years have been air weapons. Fewer than 150 weapons stolen in each of the past five years have been pistols.

Burglaries (Urban Areas)

4. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to tackle the level of burglaries in urban areas.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Jack): Individual police forces continue to develop anti-burglary policies which reflect the needs of their areas. In addition, the safer cities programme and estate action allow agencies working with the police to tackle a wide range of urban problems, including burglary.

Mr. Ainsworth: Is the Minister aware that according to police statistics there are 95·75 burglaries for every [illegible],000 homes in one of the wards of my constituency? That means that 10 per cent. of the people there can expect to be burgled every year. Would the Minister be as complacent about what the Government are doing if he faced the same problem in his constituency? The Department has sat on the Morgan report for two years and has refused to extend the urban crime allocation fund—indeed, it has stopped it altogether. When will Ministers do something about this appalling situation?

Mr. Jack: I am saddened by the hon. Gentleman's lack of generosity, since Coventry already has a safer cities programme and he will know that the Woodend and Hillfields estate have benefited from improved security as a result of the estate action programme. He will also know that one of those estates has benefited from the expenditure of £185,000 from the safer cities programme on anti-burglary activities and that Coventry council plays its part on the safer cities steering and action group which mirrors what is said in the Morgan report.

Sir John Wheeler: Does my hon. Friend agree that research shows that 5 per cent. of people who are convicted before the courts are responsible for 70 per cent. of crime, that the number one area of the Metropolitan police also confirms that a small number of people are responsible for street crime and opportunist burglaries, and that when the police take those facts into account and organise with the community they can improve the arrest rate and reduce the burglaries?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend pays proper tribute to the excellent work achieved by Operation Bumblebee. *[Interruption.]* There is a certain buzz in the tail of my hon. Friend's point, to which Opposition Members should listen. A targeted police approach such as Operation Bumblebee has a real benefit in terms of reducing burglaries.

Mr. Clelland: It is not often that Opposition Members have the opportunity to thank the Government for much, but is the Minister aware of the success of the urban crime fund in fighting crime and improving the relationship between the community and the police in my constituency on Tyneside? Notwithstanding the Secretary of State for the Environment's disgraceful announcement that the urban programme was to be brought to an end, is the Minister actively considering the extension of the urban crime fund? If not, will the Northumbria police force be given additional resources to carry on its good work?

Mr. Jack: I am aware of the programme that the hon. Gentleman describes, and some of the interesting and innovative initiatives involving the community, particularly in some difficult areas such as the Meadowell estate, have shown that the type of community-based policing, which was occasioned by the use of some of the urban crime fund moneys, worked well. But the hon. Gentleman will also know that that programme was introduced on a limited time basis and we will wish to evaluate the lessons learnt from it.

Mrs. Angela Knight: Is my hon. Friend aware of the valuable contribution of neighbourhood watch schemes such as the one in my area? Does he agree that they have been particularly successful in that they make sure that each and every person is aware of his or her responsibility to lock up property properly?

Mr. Jack: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend's continuing support and interest in neighbourhood watch. She will be aware that there is shortly to be a national conference for neighbourhood watch organisers and I have every confidence that the new neighbourhood watch organisers' manual will give all those people who give so generously of their time further guidance to improve their effectiveness in the fight against crime.

Mr. Michael: Does the Minister accept that a project such as the safer cities programme is inadequate to tackle the problems of a city such as Coventry where crime has risen by 29 per cent. in just two years? As house burglaries are up by 16 per cent. nationally compared with last year, up by 25 per cent. in the west midlands and up by more than 50 per cent. in some parts of the country, does the Minister accept that burglary of homes is one of the few growth industries under the Government?

Mr. Jack: Growth in anxiety about burglaries and forms of crime prevention certainly are a concern of the Government. If the hon. Gentleman looked at some of the research that he has been doing through parliamentary questions, he would find that notifiable offences in safer cities areas rose between 1989 and 1991 by 25 per cent. while the national equivalent is 37 per cent. There is an important message there.

Mr. Marlow: Given that the vast majority of urban crime is carried out by pseudo macho little gits who get a kick out of crime, and given that we have no proper solution to the problem, will my hon. Friend consider instituting a punishment of judicial thrashing so that in future they should have a disincentive and a kick of a different sort?

Mr. Jack: In his own inimitable style and language, my hon. Friend has highlighted a point taken up by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary at the Conservative party conference in Brighton when he committed us to the policy of developing a new approach to persistent juvenile offenders. No doubt, when we consider our own recommendations, my hon. Friend's words will ring in our ears.

Terrorism

5. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the current terrorist campaign in England.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government condemn terrorist crime wherever in the United Kingdom it occurs, and support the police and others in their work to secure the conviction of those responsible.

Mr. Trimble: No doubt the Home Secretary has seen recent press reports suggesting that more than 20 tonnes of explosive was available to the Irish republican army in the London area this year. Most of it, thankfully, has been intercepted.

The explosive appears to have been manufactured and assembled largely in the London area, and it takes more than a dozen people to make up a large bomb. Does the Home Secretary agree that such activity is difficult to conceal, and ought to be readily detected by ordinary people who are vigilant?

Mr. Clarke: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have had some spectacular successes in recent weeks in intercepting bombs and explosives. I congratulate the police, security men and others concerned on their courage and vigilance. Obviously, we give no details of operational activity against the IRA, but I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is important for us to succeed in dealing with the IRA members who are operating in London. That requires sustained vigilance on the part of ordinary members of the public, as well as the police service and the security people.

Mr. Bowden: The House has expressed gratitude to my right hon. and learned Friend for praising the brave police officers who have faced armed men when they themselves have nothing but a truncheon. Is he holding discussions with police representatives to see whether anything can be done to improve the provision of rapid back-up with armed men when such incidents happen in the future? Does he agree that they will happen again, probably before Christmas?

Mr. Clarke: Regrettably, in modern circumstances we must deploy armed policemen in operations, and we can do so rapidly. It is best to deploy specially trained men who are disciplined in the use of firearms, and that is done on such occasions. PC Hall and his colleague in Stoke Newington were unarmed and on ordinary patrol; we all admire their courage in facing men who turned out to be armed. I am glad to say that PC Hall is making extremely good progress, and recovering from his injuries.

Mr. Eastham: Does the Home Secretary recognise that nowadays some very sophisticated policing equipment is available in the form of national fingerprint files, computers and communications? When I wrote to the Home Office recently about the budget for such equipment, I was informed that it was contained in the global figure for policing in the Greater Manchester area. That meant that less than 1 per cent. of the total budget was available for sophisticated equipment. Most of the money is being spent on trying to provide and pay for policing.

Mr. Clarke: In fact, considerable progress has been made. The national criminal intelligence service is now up and running, and is providing a very effective and sophisticated operation of intelligence gathering for the whole country. We are making good progress towards computer-aided fingerprint matching, which operates in a number of police authorities now, and we are on course for the introduction of a national system in due course.

Modern technology is being deployed very effectively in the police service. Over the past 10 years, we have sustained a high level of investment in the service, in terms of men, equipment and modern technology.

Roads (Camera Evidence)

6. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions there have been as a result of camera evidence on roads since their inception; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The police have been asked to provide statistics on automatic enforcement on a quarterly basis, and the first complete information is expected to be available in the first quarter of 1993.

Mr. Greenway: No one supports excessive speeding; however, will my right hon. and learned Friend explain why people travelling through west London pass through no fewer than six spy camera zones between Paddington and the Target roundabout in Northolt, and another six on the way back? In view of the importance of spy camera zones, why are not speed signs much clearer, and why are they placed level with the camera zones where they are shown? Is it police policy to prosecute drivers who are a few mph above the speed limit, or not? Finally, will the policy be to ensure that there is a proper space for a downward transition on the A40 from high to low speeds —say from 60 to 40 mph—rather than the few yards that are provided in some places at present?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend has asked a number of questions and I shall do my best to address them. He should bear it in mind that 13 per cent. of accidents are associated with red light running and 33 per cent. with excessive speed. To make the best use of scarce police manpower, automatic systems have been introduced. There are five cameras on the A40—two on traffic light jumping and three on speed. My hon. Friend knows that prosecution is a matter for the police. If he has any queries, I am sure that he will wish to take them up with the chief officer of the Metropolitan police. As for signposting, an inventory was carried out before the introduction of the cameras and improved signing was installed.

Dr. Marek: Does the Minister agree that the speed laws should be obeyed and that rather than campaigning to cut the number of cameras, we ought to increase the number so that people from Ealing who do 90 mph in the fast lane of the A40 are brought to book and do not threaten the life and limb of the rest of us?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman does a disservice to the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). People other than those from Ealing use the A40, but the hon. Gentleman is right to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the use of this type of equipment is designed to improve road safety. As I have already said, 33 per cent. of road accidents are the result of excessive speed.

Police Authorities

8. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to reorganise county police authorities along regional lines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are considering a range of issues concerning the future of the police service, including the role and structure of police authorities. We have yet to reach firm conclusions.

Mr. Dunn: The Home Secretary will know that, in the context of the organisation of police forces, I belong firmly to the school which says that reforms are all very well so long as nothing is changed. Can my right hon. and learned Friend give me an absolute guarantee today that the county of Kent constabulary will continue to be controlled from Maidstone and not from a remote regional centre such as Guildford?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend puts forward an approach to reform which would have done credit to Lord Palmerston. We have not yet reached any conclusions on the future structure or shape of police forces. We have not committed ourselves to any change and have not yet addressed the question whether Maidstone or Guildford is the best place for the headquarters of the police service in my hon. Friend's constituency.

Mr. Bermingham: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman bear it in mind that as the Crown prosecution service is divided into 12 areas throughout the United Kingdom, it would be wise to reconsider their distribution, bearing in mind that it is useful if Crown prosecution areas are coterminous with local police areas, as they are at present?

Mr. Clarke: I am full of praise for the Crown prosecution service, but, with respect, the delivery of a police service is somewhat different. The key question in the case of policing is how to retain the necessary local element for community policing, with responsibility being devolved to an officer who has charge of the beat officers in an area that he knows well and with the right headquarters structure above that—a structure which is not too oppressive and distant and can give the necessary headquarters support to a modern police service. The questions that we have to address here are not exactly equivalent to those which have to be addressed in the case of the Crown prosecution service.

Drug Abuse

9. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to prevent young people from becoming victims of drug abuse.

Mr. Jack: The prevention of the misuse of drugs by young people is a prime objective of the Home Office drugs prevention initiative, the annual progress report of which was published on Monday. In addition, the 20 local drug prevention teams are currently playing their full part in European Drug Prevention Week.

Mrs. Gillan: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Is it not right that this year £5·3 million has been made available to the drugs prevention initiative to fund such things as local drugs prevention teams? Will my hon. Friend join me in welcoming the contribution made by voluntary organisations such as Action on Addiction, which recently supported financially the setting up of the national addiction centre?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend properly draws attention to the role of the voluntary sector in drug prevention work. Our drug prevention initiative has shown the value of partnership in fighting the menace of drugs. I was pleased to confirm this week that the drug prevention initiative will be extended until 1995.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: How does the Minister's answer square with the lobby in the House this week of young people who have been victims of drug abuse and are struggling to free themselves from that travail in the face of the Government's broken promise on ring fencing drug and alcohol abuse services?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Lady tempts me into areas beyond the boundaries of the Home Office. She will know that Health Ministers have received representations and have issued enhanced guidelines to local authorities on the subject.

Mrs. Peacock: In all the hype of this week, will my hon. Friend ensure that he does not forget the problem of solvent abuse, which is often forgotten and seems to be the poor relation? Regrettably, West Yorkshire has a high record of young people who have died from this abuse.

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend is entirely right to draw the House's attention to that. If she saw some of the excellent work being done in our drug prevention initiatives, she would realise that many of the drama messages conveyed by young people to young people include a powerful one about the dangers of solvent abuse.

Mr. Battle: In response to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson), why has the Minister not made representations to his colleagues at the Department of Health? Is this not a classic example of his making encouraging and supportive noises while another Department undermines his initiatives by cutting resources? What representations has he made?

Mr. Jack: I have emphasised the Home Office's support for drug prevention work. That view is well known throughout government.

Asylum

10. **Mr. Sykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for asylum in 1991 were found to be multiple applications submitted by individuals using false names.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Separate figures for refusal of multiple applications are not identifiable, but in the past 12 months more than 12,000 applications have been refused because of failure to provide information or to attend interviews. We believe that there is a correlation with multiple applications.

Mr. Sykes: Does my hon. Friend agree with those of us in Scarborough and Whitby who want the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill to be enacted as soon as possible and regard bogus applications with the same contempt as we regard opponents of the Bill?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is right, for two reasons: first, fraudulent applications clog the system and delay the genuine applications of refugees who have experienced harrowing problems; secondly, they are an abuse of the social security system.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Was not the Minister's treatment of my constituent's family and their Yugoslavian friend last night a slur on the credibility of the Government and a disgrace to his name as Minister? Having deported that girl from Manchester airport at 6 am today, will the Minister confirm that she had lived in Switzerland for three years, that she had a return ticket to Switzerland dated 21 December, that she had £700 in her pocket, that she had credit cards from Swiss banks, that she had a full-time job in Switzerland with an employer who had given assurances that she would stay in Switzerland—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is somewhat abusing Question Time. Perhaps he will now come to his point.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: She was also due to return to Switzerland to be married next January. Does the Minister regret the disgraceful decision that he took last night, or is this the new form of barbaric Conservatism that we have to experience?

Mr. Wardle: I have written to the hon. Gentleman, who gave the House a long list of circumstances. I do not normally comment on a case, but he omitted to mention that the lady concerned told immigration officers that she was aware that former Yugoslavs needed a visa to come to this country but said that she understood that it was required only of ethnic Serbs. The refusal was mandatory. Had the case not been treated as it was—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The Minister's response must be heard in the House.

Mr. Wardle: Had the case not been treated in that fashion, it would have been an abuse of the change in the rules which imposed a visa regime on the citizens of the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. John Greenway: Will my hon. Friend take the oportunity to confirm that the Government remain totally committed to their obligations to asylum seekers under the 1951 United Nations convention, and that any person throughout the world who has a genuine fear of persecution is welcome here? Does my hon. Friend agree that the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill now before the House of Lords will strengthen the rights of the genuine asylum seeker at the expense only of those who seek to break the rules?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is right: the Government are absolutely committed to the 1951 convention. The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill will be an improvement on the existing system, and will provide an oral hearing for every refused asylum applicant.

11. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the training of interpreters used in asylum applications.

Mr. Charles Wardle: At present no formal training is provided for interpreters. The immigration and nationality department is currently undertaking an internal review of the provision of interpreter services, including the question of training.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister undertake to review all the complaints that have been received about the quality of translation provided for people arriving in this country and seeking political asylum? Is he aware that mistakes are often made because interpreters speak the wrong dialect or have insufficient training, or because people seeking political asylum have no confidence that the interpreters will maintain the important confidentiality of the interview? Will the Minister ensure that proper training is given and that there will be a proper examination of all the procedures? Otherwise, there is a grave danger that legitimate asylum seekers will be debarred from achieving refugee status in this country due to lack of proper translation services at the ports of entry.

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point about dialects. As he knows, the immigration and nationality department takes the matter seriously. At the end of an interview, an account of it is read to the interviewee, who is asked whether he or she agrees the account.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to page 6 of the annual report of the immigration and nationality department, which says that the total number of complaints received is about 400. Some of those will involve interpreters.

Crime Prevention

12. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what crime prevention programmes are currently funded by his Department.

Mr. Jack: The specific crime prevention programmes that we currently fund, in addition to those operated by the police, are safer cities, crime concern, the Home Office crime prevention centre, publicity programmes, Car Crime Prevention Year, the probation supervision grant scheme, and research and development programmes.

Mr. Taylor: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the first quarter of Car Crime Prevention Year showed a 2·5 per cent. fall in car crime? Will he ensure that such schemes continue? But will he also point out, much as we should like the people who carry out such crimes to be locked away, most people invite car crimes by not taking proper security measures and sometimes by not even locking their cars?

Mr. Jack: I confirm the statistics that my hon. Friend has put before the House. It is a tremendous result that in the first quarter of Car Crime Prevention Year there has been a 2·5 per cent. reduction in car crime. The fact that we have managed to achieve such a splendid result is a great tribute to the partnership approach of motor manufacturers, people in the second-hand car business, car park operators, and owners.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Minister acknowledge that the Government do not spend one hundredth as much on crime prevention as his Department has to spend on the criminal justice system, and that a better balance would be struck if there were more expenditure on crime prevention?

Mr. Jack: As usual, Opposition Members find it difficult to distinguish between quantity and quality. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would examine the quality of what we are doing and the range of programmes that we fund, and would acknowledge that involving the people in the communities of this country in the fight against crime is the most effective way forward.

Greyhound Racing

13. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received on the subject of the funding of greyhound racing.

The Minister of State, Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I have received a number of letters recently, and on 28 October I met representatives of the British Greyhound Racing Board. Following that meeting, further discussions between the bookmaking and greyhound racing industries have taken place. I understand that agreement has now been reached on the establishment of a joint body for distributing the money accruing from the reduction in general betting duty announced by the Chancellor in this year's Budget.

Sir Michael Neubert: Does my hon. Friend agree that eight months from the Chancellor's announcement of the year-long ¼ per cent. reduction in betting duty is long enough for the greyhound racing industry to wait for the bookmakers to come up with the 3 million smackers reckoned to be their due? What further part can my hon. Friend play in bringing the matter to a speedy conclusion?

Mr. Lloyd: The Government's role is to give encouragement to both parties to reach sensible arrangements. What they agree is up to them. I congratulate both parties, as both have made concessions in these discussions. They now have an arrangement. I hope that it will work very well and that the money will be used effectively in the dog racing industry, as the Chancellor intended.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 19 November.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Pike: Does the Prime Minister recognise that urban programme authorities, such as Burnley, which have been designated programme authorities because of deprivation, on the Government's own criteria, are devastated by the axing of the urban programme? That has brought despair and despondency to those areas. Will the Prime Minister now guarantee that those deprived areas will get more resources, not less, as a result of the change in Government policy?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is probably overlooking, first, the impact of city challenge, secondly, the impact of the measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and, thirdly, the fact that the urban programme has not been cancelled. Some £176 million will be available in 1993-94.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, following yesterday's publication of school league tables, there can be no turning back on providing extra information to parents about their schools? Did my right hon. Friend notice that while the Labour party and the education establishment mafia were opposing the league tables, parents throughout the country were jamming the switchboard of the Department for Education demanding copies of those very league tables?

The Prime Minister: It is indeed the case that the education service will never again be able to hide this important information. I hope that hon. Members of all parties will agree that this is information which should legitimately be available to parents, is now available to parents, and should continue to be available to parents.

Mr. John Smith: Can the Prime Minister none the less explain why his Government are so incompetent that they cannot even produce an accurate record of the examination results?

The Prime Minister: That is a bit rich coming from the right hon. and learned Gentleman. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman recalls his infamous Jennifer's ear broadcast not long ago, he will recall that the day after that, the Labour party's dossier of people it claimed had to wait for treatment was wholly wrong. Out of 10 people it listed, five were wrong.

Mr. John Smith: To return to the subject, can the Prime Minister explain why in the case of Manchester high school, which had a 100 per cent. pass, the figure was recorded as 16 per cent. and in the case of Holyrood comprehensive school in Chard, a 46 per cent. pass was recorded as 6 per cent? In both cases the schools contacted the Department to correct the misleading information that they thought was likely to be published. Why cannot the Department for Education perform the simple task of recording and transmitting information?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is seeking to hide the fact that he and his party want a cover-up on these statistics—*[Interruption.]* If there are errors in the statistics, the Department will correct them. The main point is that it is right to give this information to parents and astonishing that the Labour party should wish to hide this information from parents —*[Interruption.]*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Members must come to order instead of bawling and shouting all the time like this.—*[Interruption.]*—Order. Ministers must be heard in the House, as must every other Member. I call the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful, Madam Speaker. It would be interesting to know whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman agrees with this morning's *Guardian*, which said:

> "What's new is that parents have more information than they had before. No democrat should regard this as a reverse. This . . .will allow . . . a more informed choice."

Is Labour against more choice and more information?

Mr. John Smith: We favour, above all, the provision of accurate rather than dogma-ridden information. When the Prime Minister is engaged in the task of correcting the errors, will he look at the case of Cambridgeshire, where, according to the county council, there have been 53 errors affecting at least 30 schools? Why does the Prime Minister not admit that the Government have made a botch of this, take it away and start again, this time trying to reach the minimum competence levels which even this Government should be able to attain?

The Prime Minister: I am glad that the right hon. and learned Gentleman acknowledges that we shall continue to provide this information, and next year we shall go further with the information. This is the biggest exercise of its kind ever undertaken by a Government: a quarter of a million statistics in one complete set of tables. Every school had a chance to check its figures. In addition, some complaints may have originated in the information wrongly presented in the media, based on our figures—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] It is hardly surprising that there are some errors. We shall correct them. Next year—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members had better listen, because this is what they will get next year: extra information; national curriculum results in English, maths, science and technology, routes taken by pupils at age 16; truancy rates; and examination results. They will also get the first primary school tables giving national curriculum results for pupils aged seven. That is the information which the Opposition would hide and we shall provide.

Mr. Butcher: I commend to the attention of my right hon. Friend an article in the current issue of the Fabian reviews in which it is argued that selective education should be reintroduced and that our secondary schools should be reformed on the German model of vocational and academic education. If this is now a legitimate subject of interest for the more enlightened socialists, why are our own Ministers so coy about reintroducing grammar schools?

The Prime Minister: The main thing that we are concerned with is the highest quality of education across the whole of the public sector. That is what we are seeking to provide, together with the greater spread of information. With regard to what my hon. Friend has to say about the socialist party, he must speak for them in so far as he wishes to do so—I certainly would not wish to do so.

Mr. Ashdown: Leaving aside for the moment the 180 refugees for whom Austria has provided refuge because Britain would not, may I again remind the Prime Minister of the more than 6,500 innocent civilians without adequate refuge, trapped in Serbian prison compounds, their lives threatened imminently by starvation and cold because no third country will have them? Does the Prime Minister realise that they are there, at least in part, because of his failure as President of the European Community to provide a co-ordinated European plan for Yugoslav refugees? Why?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman knows that this country has taken the lead in most of the initiatives dealing with Yugoslavia in recent months. We have welcomed more than 40,000 visitors, of whom 4,000 have applied for asylum. This country has shown great generosity and will continue to do so, but we share the view of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that help should be provided as close as possible to people's homes, and not by taking them abroad when that is not absolutely necessary. That is the policy which we have been following and the policy which I believe it is right for us to follow.

Mr. Dunn: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the publication of league tables for local schools is entirely responsible? Is he also aware that the reason why certain parties in the House object to the publication of information for parents is that it brings into the open the mediocrity introduced into our schools by the left in the 1960s?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend—and, more to the point, so do parents up and down the country, who know very well where the bad education authorities are. The Labour party has tried to block every one of our education reforms, so it is hardly surprising that it is now trying to block information.

Q2. Mr. Hall: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hall: Is the Prime Minister aware that the ICI chlora-alkali factory in Runcorn has experienced a 60 per cent. increase in its electricity bills in the past 18 months? Unless it can negotiate a more realistic price for its electricity, or benefit from bulk purchasing, it will go out of business—putting 4,000 people in Runcorn out of work. Will the Prime Minister give a commitment that he will intervene on behalf of jobs in British industry and ensure that ICI is treated fairly in this matter?

The Prime Minister: I cannot intervene in the way in which the hon. Gentleman invites me to, and it would not be right for me to do so.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will the Prime Minister find time in his busy schedule to visit Portland to speak to those running the naval base there and, in particular, to examine sea training? It is not planned to reduce sea training, but simply to move it to Devonport. Is not the best place to undertake such training the place where it has always been undertaken—Portland?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend knows of the decision, which has been taken after careful examination. I am not able to announce any change in that decision this afternoon. I am, of course, perfectly happy to discuss the matter with my hon. Friend.

Q3. Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ross: Following the announcement today that 3,500 jobs are to go at the Royal Bank of Scotland and 550 at Blue Circle cement, does the Prime Minister realise that while unemployment continues to soar out of control no one will have any confidence in him or in the economy? Why does not the right hon. Gentleman admit that he has not a clue what to do about unemployment?

The Prime Minister: Given that the hon. Gentleman supports a party which wanted a tax on jobs, all the burdens of the social charter and a national minimum wage, I find his remarks a bit rich. It is odd that the hon. Gentleman did not notice the reductions in interest rates, the measures taken by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor last week, or the measures taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment over many months. Where has the hon. Gentleman been during all this time?

Mrs. Gillan: Will the Prime Minister join me in congratulating a company in my constituency—Amersham International—on winning the Queen's award for industry for its brain-imaging agent, ceretec? The company leads the world in the field. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is further evidence of the success of the Government's privatisation policy?

The Prime Minister: I most certainly agree with my hon. Friend. It is a fact that most of the industries that have been privatised have had a substantially better record in the private sector than they had in the public sector. That is why it is entirely right for us, wherever we can, to look to move enterprises from the public to the private sector, where they can be run by business men, run for profit, and provide secure, long-term, permanent employment.

Q4. Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Campbell: On 16 November the Prime Minister wrote a letter to the National Union of Mineworkers saying that the 10 pits in the review would have to close because they were not making a profit. *[Interruption.]* I am not reading. Is the Prime Minister aware that five of those collieries are currently making a profit and two of them are expected to make a profit at the end of the financial year? Who is telling the truth in the matter—the Coal Board or the Prime Minister? The pits are to close—yet they are making a profit. Does the Prime Minister not want to keep the pits open because he would tarnish his reputation again?

The Prime Minister: The Government are seeking to ensure that we can have a coal industry in the future which is sustainable, profitable and viable. That is in the interests of the coal industry, in the interests of energy users and in the interests of the local communities—and it is what the Government wish to see.

Dounreay Fast Reactor

3.30 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland), *(by private notice):* To ask the President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future of the European fast breeder nuclear research programme.

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government decided in 1988 that the Dounreay prototype fast reactor would close in 1994. In August we confirmed that decision.

In its report of 1990 on the fast reactor, the then Energy Select Committee recommended that the Government review their expenditure on fast reactor research and development once the design validation stage of the European fast reactor was completed in March 1993. In their response, the Government said that they would keep their position on EFR under review in the light of future developments.

The Government also said that once the design validation stage had been completed they would expect the nuclear industry to accept the responsibility for further work, should there be sufficient interest in the project.

The Government have now reviewed their position and concluded that funding of fast reactor R and D beyond March 1993 is not a priority, since there is general agreement that the commercial deployment of the fast reactor will not be justified until well into the next century. The Government asked the nuclear industry what priority it attached to this PFR research. The industry decided that it could not justify continuing this programme alone. The programme will therefore now be wound down.

The Government will discuss with AEA Technology, which carries out the R and D work in the United Kingdom, what contribution we might make to consequential restructuring costs, within existing constraints on public expenditure.

The Government will continue to fund the operation of the prototype fast reactor at Dounreay until its closure in 1994, together with its subsequent decommissioning and the reprocessing of its spent fuel. This work is likely to provide information of value to the development of fast reactors. The Government are also prepared to consider funding a small programme of experiments at the PFR at Dounreay as it closes. The knowledge gained from these experiments and the decommissioning work will be made available to our European fast reactor partners as our contribution to European collaboration.

Mr. Maclennan: Is the Minister aware that the Government's announcement will be treated with dismay by all the scientists in Britain, and especially by my constituents at Dounreay and in Risley, who have worked for almost two generations to put Britain at the head of this technology? The consequence of his decision will be to pass the work to the Japanese working in collaboration with the French and once again the Government's failure to support industry at the pre-competitive stage will lead to our losing a national lead.

Is it not extraordinary and unacceptable that the hon. Gentleman should have made that announcement before the conclusion of the 1994 review on nuclear policy, which the Government commissioned from the industry, and in the face of the advice of the nuclear and energy supply industries that fast breeder reactors should be backed and that they would be prepared to make a proper contribution to the funds, given the Government's commitment?

Mr. Eggar: My announcement does not affect the 1994 nuclear review, which relates to commercial nuclear reactors and not to the PFR, as the hon. Gentleman knows. On his comments about scientific consensus, I remind him that the Select Committee on Energy recommended that we should examine the position as we approach March 1993, when—as the hon. Gentleman will realise—the design validation stage will have been completed. My Department's advisory group on research and development has recommended that we consider seriously whether it makes sense to go ahead with PFR funding.

During the past 40 years, we have spent about £4 billion in today's money on that research, and we have managed to come up with a basic design which will enable us to proceed to a prototype commercial development, should it ever be economic to do so. Given the likely cost of uranium and energy demand, the industry has decided not to give priority to PFR research, and the Government and the nuclear industry have decided that further expenditure is not justified.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Surely the Minister will recognise that we should exploit our achievements, and that, as we have a lead, we should carry it further forward? Is it not odd that the Europeans, the Japanese and the Americans are going ahead with fast breeder reactors and that in the United Kingdom we are beginning to abdicate that responsibility?

Mr. Eggar: The Germans have taken almost exactly the same decision as we have. The German Government have decided to transfer responsibility for most R and D and design work to the nuclear industry. The French Superphénix project is not operating and is not likely to in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Does the Minister not realise that his decision will be a grave disappointment to those of my constituents who will lose their jobs because of it? Is that not more evidence of the Government's short-termism? Surely, if the PFR were developed, it would overcome one of the problems that has always been associated with the nuclear industry—the storage of nuclear waste—because it would recreate its own fuel. Obviously, that is the way in which the industry of the future will go, yet the Government are backing out. That is another sign that they are concerned with market economics instead of looking to the future.

Mr. Eggar: There is no doubt about the Government's commitment to the PFR—we have spent about £1 billion on research since 1979. We have now reached the stage when the Select Committee on Energy recommended, in 1990, that we should examine whether we want to spend more money on the PFR. We are following the advice of the Select Committee. After analysis, we have decided that, from the Government's point of view, further expenditure in not justified.

We have asked the nuclear industry whether it wishes to invest in further R and D in the PFR, and it has given us a clear sign that it does not attach sufficient priority to it to allocate additional funds from its resources. We now have the basic competence to move forward to a prototype commercial PFR, and that would seem to be the right stage at which to cease to provide Government funding, additional to that that I have already announced.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Is my hon. Friend aware that many hon. Members in all parts of the House saw the fast breeder programme as a source of abundant energy in the next century, particularly as we could get about 60 times more energy from uranium than through the conventional nuclear programme? Does his announcement mean that we have now abandoned for the foreseeable future the interest we had in the fast breeder programme, or will steps be taken to conserve the technology so that, in perhaps 20 or 30 years, we might be able to look at the project again?

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend makes the point. He was Chairman of the Select Committee at the time. It was recognised that, once we had reached the design validation stage, we would have reached the point when, if at some stage in the future it made sense to move forward to a commercial PFR, we would have done the basic research. I said that we shall be putting in hand additional research concerned with the decommissioning of PFR, and we shall make the information available as part of the Europewide collaboration. I am confident that we shall continue to keep a close watch on what is happening, particularly in other countries, should other countries decide to continue with additional research, which is by no means certain, particularly on the part of our European partners.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): Is the Minister aware that the whole of the scientific community in Britain will be stunned by his decision and the way in which it has been announced? Is he further aware that this is another example of Britain withdrawing from a major research and development and demonstration programme and handing it over to our major industrial competitors, the French, Germans and Japanese, and ignoring the interest that the Russians are expressing in the programme?

Mr. Eggar: No, I do not accept that. Britain has spent £4 billion in today's money on research going back over 40 years. That has been a considerable investment. Having done that, we have reached the point at which we have a basic design which we shall be able to develop should it make economic and scientific sense to do so in the future. It is widely accepted that further work would not get us another stage further and would not be justified as against other scientific research priorities.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): While the Minister's announcement is sad, may I ask him to accept that the real leader in nuclear technology in this country is Rolls-Royce and Associates of Derby, which for 40 years has been putting nuclear power packs—units that are small, robust and tremendously safe—into submarines, including conventional submarines? Perhaps that is the direction in which we should be going forward into the next century. Does my hon. Friend think that it might make sense to put some public money into that type of research instead of leaving Rolls-Royce to do it all?

Mr. Eggar: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right about the technological lead that Rolls-Royce has developed in the area in which it is operating. But there is a considerable difference between what Rolls-Royce is engaged in and the fast breeder reactor programme.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the Minister realise that in the next century there will be the most bitter recrimination about his announcement today? Nuclear physics cannot be mothballed. The Japanese and others will take advantage of all that we have achieved.

The hon. Gentleman talks about there having been consultation with the nuclear industry. Neither my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) nor I, nor many others who have followed these matters, know to whom he is referring. Many people—apart from Clifford Bloomfield and those who have been doing the work—including the chairmen of the generating boards and members of the British Nuclear Forum, whom hon. Members on both sides of the House have met, are absolutely against any such decision. It is a quite different matter to say that they would not fund it. At issue is a Government responsibility, and the Government are shirking it.

Mr. Eggar: I wrote to the chairmen of the relevant nuclear bodies at the end of July of this year telling them of the Government's position, which was that, having examined the matter, we were not ourselves prepared to make funds available and asking whether they regarded it as of sufficient priority for them to allocate their funds so as to take the R and D forward. The answer that I got from them at the end of October was that they felt, having examined all their priorities across all the R and D, that they could not give enough priority to fast breeder reactor research. That was a clear decision. The priority that the nuclear industry gave to the matter brought it to exactly the same decision as the Government.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Will my hon. Friend take it from me that the decision will not be welcomed in the north-west? How many jobs, directly or indirectly, will be lost as a result of the decision? Why have we decided not to go ahead with the research, whereas the Japanese and the French will continue to do so? Finally, what use will be made of the money saved? Will it be used for research into other sources of energy?

Mr. Eggar: There will be about 270 redundancies as a direct result of the decision, of which about 160 are expected at Risley and about 40 at Dounreay. I apologise for not giving that information to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). Obviously, the funds will be redeployed within my Department's budget.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is it not strangely ironic that, while the Labour party is attacked for being anti-nuclear, the Conservative party and the Government have systematically undermined the nuclear industry in recent years? Have not the Government threatened the privatisation of the nuclear industry; are they not threatening its future through privatisation; and have they not terminated the fast breeder reactor programme, with the loss, over the years, of potentially thousands of jobs? They are now questioning the future of the THORP project in West Cumbria. Is it not time that we had some proper decisions taken on a national economic energy strategy?

Mr. Eggar: I know that the hon. Gentleman is a strong supporter of nuclear power. The Government continue to believe that economic nuclear power can make a useful contribution to the United Kingdom's energy supply. As he knows, the Government will review the prospects for nuclear power in 1994. With regard to the point that is of particular interest to him—the THORP project—he will be aware that a public consultation process commenced at the beginning of this week, to which he and his constituents will wish to contribute.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Will the decision have implications for employment at Winfrith in my constituency? Will Winfrith be in line to pick up a contract for the decommissioning research which my hon. Friend has announced? Will the funds that will now be released allow funding to go into the small integrated reactor that was designed and outlined in my constituency? Furthermore, does my hon. Friend welcome the enormous support that he is getting from the Opposition for nuclear electricity?

Mr. Eggar: I have noted with interest the Opposition Members who have been on their feet and how they have phrased their questions.

I am informed that, unfortunately, some 40 people are likely to be made redundant at Winfrith. I suggest that my hon. Friend takes up the other matters that he raised with AEA Technology.

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): How much money is involved in the next phase of investment and research funding? How much was requested from the nuclear industry, and how much did it offer? Will the Minister bear in mind the fact that many of us are watching him and noting the attention that he has given to Select Committees' recommendations, and that we shall look to his attention being directed towards other Select Committees' recommendations in the near future?

How does he propose to deal with the number of people whose jobs and livelihood have been affected? Although only a comparatively small number may be involved, given the welter of unemployment that is emerging at present, does the Minister accept that those people are among the most highly qualified and skilled in the United Kingdom? Such teams will not be reassembled again with ease or with the possibility of success in future. To return to such a programme in 10, 15 or 20 years would need an educational programme on a scale beyond people's conception.

Mr. Eggar: Few people believe that a fast breeder reactor is likely to reach commercial viability until the year 2030 at the earliest. Those people currently working in the industry are unlikely to see a commercial reactor in place during their working lives.

On the issue of funds, the nuclear industry was asked if it wished to carry forward and fund aspects of future research and development. It made it clear that it did not wish to give priority to providing funds on the basis suggested. As for the individuals involved, I have already said that the Government will work together with AEA, particularly AEA Technology, to consider redeployment costs within the constraints of public expenditure.

I should have thought that Opposition Members would have welcomed the fact that the Government have responded to the Select Committee's recommendations in 1990. The Committee recommended, and the Government accepted, that it was now time to make decisions on whether to continue to fund as, by March 1993—when the decision comes into effect—we would have reached the end of the design validation stage and would have a basic design ready to be carried forward if that was considered appropriate.

Business of the House

3.52 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 23 NOVEMBER—Opposition day (6th Allotted Day). There will be a debate entitled "Conduct of Ministers on Arms Exports to Iraq" on an Opposition motion.

TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER—There will be a debate on the European Community White Paper, European Community budget and future financing, on a Government motion.

WEDNESDAY 25 NOVEMBER—Until about 7 pm, motion relating to Members' pay, followed by proceedings on the Car Tax (Abolition) Bill.

THURSDAY 26 NOVEMBER—Debate on the management of the public service, on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 27 NOVEMBER—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 30 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Social Security Bill.

The House may also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet on Wednesday 25 November at 10.30 am to consider European Community document No. 8586/92 relating to cosmetic products.

[Tuesday 24 November

Floor of the House

Relevant European Community Documents

(a)	*4829/92*	*Community Expenditure 1993-97*
(b)	*5201/92*	*Community Finances to 1997*
(c)	*5202/92*	*Own Resources*
(d)	*5203/92*	*Inter-Institutional Agreement*
(e)	*6569/92*	*Community Expenditure since 1988*
(f)	*SEC(92)1412*	*The United Kingdom Abatement*
(g)	*COM(92)140*	*1993 Budget*
(h)	*7933/92*	*1993 Budget*
(i)	*8209/92*	
(j)	*SEC(92)1990*	*Subsidiarity*
(k)	*Annual Report from the European Court of Auditors for the financial year 1990*	
(l)	*Cmnd 2065*	*Development in the European Community January-June 1992*
(m)	*8567/92*	*Establishment of a Cohesion Fund*
(n)	*9901/92*	*Proposed amendments and modifications to the Draft Budget*
(o)	*Un-numbered*	*Explanatory Memorandum submitted by Her Majesty's Treasury on 19 November—proposed amendments and modifications to the Draft Budget*

Relevant Reports of the European Legislation Committee

(a) HC 79-i (1992-93)
(b) HC 79-i (1992-93)
(c) HC 79-i (1992-93)
(d) HC 79-i (1992-93)
(e) HC 79-iv (1992-93)
(f) HC 79-vi (1992-93)
(g) HC 79-v (1992-93)
(h) } *HC 79-vi (1992-93)*
(i)
(j) HC 79-ix (1992-93)
(k) HC 24-xii (1992-93), HC 79-i (1992-93)
(l) —
(m) HC 79-ix (1992-93)
(n) —
(o) —

Wednesday 25 November

Standing Committee B

Relevant European Community Document

8586/92 Cosmetics and Animal Testing

Relevant Report of the European Legislation Committee

HC 79-vii (1992-93).]

Mrs. Beckett: As the Leader of the House failed to announced the resumption next week of the Committee stage of the Maastricht Bill, will he confirm that the vital issue of principle on which the Government and the Liberal party claimed that Labour's amendment had to be defeated is now down to a difference of precisely one week? Does that not show, first, the incompetence of the Government in courting defeat on such an issue, and secondly, what a mistake it is to trust a word they say?

Is the Leader of the House aware of the urgent demand for a full statement next week on the revenue support grant? That is especially true as, though there is considerable doubt about the extra revenue for local authorities that the Chancellor announced in the autumn statement, there is no such doubt about the impact of the withdrawal of funding for the urban programme. Will the Leader of the House ensure that our Scottish and Welsh colleagues have the fullest opportunity to question their Secretaries of State, and there will not merely be an announcement through a written answer?

Will the Leader of the House find time as soon as possible for us to debate the Government's transport policy—or lack thereof—in the light of the dispute about the planned support for urban transport in the autumn statement, the evidence given to the Select Committee, and the suggestions of road pricing?

Finally, as an aid to planning, will the Leader of the House soon be able to tell us the dates of the Christmas recess?

Mr. Newton: I will take the hon. Lady's questions, for once, in the order in which she asked them. Given the performance of the Opposition on European questions, I find it somewhat strange that words should be uttered about whether the Government can be trusted on the issue. The Government's position was that it was right to undertake some further consideration of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill before the Edinburgh summit. The issue in the debate involved, to some significant extent, whether that should take place, and the Opposition tried to prevent it. The Government still intend that there should be further discussion of the Bill before the Edinburgh summit, and I expect to say more about that in my business statement next week.

I do not expect that the hon. Lady will have to wait beyond next week for further details about the revenue support grant settlement. She will no doubt be aware that these matters are not dealt with in identical ways in England, Scotland and Wales, but I know that my right

[Mr. Newton]

hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales will seek to ensure that the House has opportunities to be informed.

I cannot promise a debate on transport policy of the sort that the hon. Lady requested, but I draw her attention to the fact that the Secretary of State for Transport will be here is person on Monday to answer questions from her and other hon. Members.

The recess dates must necessarily be subject to the progress of business, but I very much hope that it will not be too much longer before I can give the House some idea of those dates.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Monday's debate will be widened to include the conduct of Opposition spokesmen, to give Conservative Members an opportunity to quiz the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) about his campaign of insinuation and innuendo? The hon. Gentleman's own record, of course, includes a conspiracy to place a mole in the Department of Health, and his infamous "Jennifer's ear" election broadcast was condemned by Labour's own general secretary as inadequately researched.

Mr. Newton: Were it not for my desire to be emollient in this role, I would congratulate my hon. Friend on making points that I could not have put better myself. I can only hope that he finds the opportunity either to intervene in the speech of the hon. Member for Livingston or to catch the Chair's eye during the debate.

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): Will the Leader of the House find time next week for the Secretary of State for Education to come to the House to make a statement about the fiasco surrounding the publication of the school examination results league tables? Is he aware that the Government's expert survey control unit had no involvement in compiling the league tables, and that the responsibility was given to two organisations with no previous experience of an exercise on this scale? The House should have an explanation; parents and schools affected should have an apology; and these misleading and inaccurate league tables should be withdrawn.

Mr. Newton: My emollience is in danger of deserting me. I am almost tempted to give the hon. Gentleman the undertaking that he requests, if only to ensure an opportunity for the Opposition spokesman on education to explain why the Opposition want to deny parents the information which they manifestly want.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is a total waste of valuable parliamentary time to have a debate on Monday on a subject, the facts about which are being fully investigated by a lord justice of appeal? Does he agree that the Opposition know nothing about it and will use the debate only as an excuse for muck-racking—their sole activity in this place?

Mr. Newton: I shall retreat into emollience and say that I am sure that many will have sympathy with my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Will the Leader of the House require the Secretary of State for Education to come to the House on Monday to tell us how he intends to put right the grievous wrong done by the Department to Manchester high school for girls in my constituency? The Department announced yesterday that only 16 per cent. of the pupils there had GCSE passes, whereas in fact 100 per cent. of the fifth formers achieved them. It is intolerable that, after the school had pointed out this error to the Department before publication, the Department went ahead and inflicted this great damage to the school. What will the Government do to put it right?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education has already taken action. As the right hon. Gentleman may know—I hope so—an erratum slip has been issued with the tables for Manchester, the press were notified of the error yesterday, and the Under-Secretary of State has written to apologise to the headmistress in a letter which I have here, and which is dated yesterday.

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): Will my right hon. Friend initiate next week a debate on road safety, a matter of grave concern to my constituents and all those who live near motorways? Since 1988, all large lorries in Britain have had to be fitted with mirrors on each side. That requirement does not apply to lorries coming here from our EC partners or from non-EC countries—a matter of grave concern to my constituents and others who use motorways. Will my right hon. Friend initiate such a debate, so that we can obtain an assurance that we are pressing our fellow EC members to introduce legislation similar to ours so that my constituents can travel safely on motorways?

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's concern. As my constituency practically borders his and much of the same traffic passes through both, I too am aware of that concern. I shall alert my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to the fact that my hon. Friend may seek to question him on the matter on Monday.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Did I understand the Leader of the House to say that the revenue support grant statements to be made next week would include not just those for England and Wales but for Scotland as well?

While he is on his feet, will he say what the Government propose to do in order to give the House an opportunity to hear Ministers' reactions and to debate the situation surrounding the GATT negotiations, which have some important implications for agriculture, textiles and other sectors of industry?

Mr. Newton: I well recognise the importance of the GATT negotiations and the associated agricultural issues. As the hon. Gentleman knows, discussions are going on in various ways in the hope of achieving a settlement. I cannot promise a debate at the moment, but we shall keep the matter under review and discuss it through the usual channels.

I am sure that I did not give the commitment that the hon. Gentleman mentioned in the first part of his question. The matter is handled in different ways for the three countries, but I shall ensure that my right hon. Friend is aware of the concern that he has expressed.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Has my right hon. Friend had time to see early-day motion 878 in my name on Macedonia?

[That this House urges Her Majesty's Government to use its best efforts to secure the earliest recognition of that portion of the former Republic of Yugoslavia known as Macedonia as an independent sovereign state; and bearing in mind the present desperate economic and social situation there, further urges Her Majesty's Government to use its influence to help ensure a regular flow of oil needed to sustain the essential needs of the population and their economy.]

Is he aware that in that part of what was Yugoslavia there is a tremendous tragedy waiting to happen which is not being closely followed by the major powers? Will my right hon. Friend find time to debate the problems of Macedonia, particularly the question of its recognition as an independent republic?

Mr. Newton: I cannot undertake to find time to debate that matter, but I can assure my hon. Friend, whose close interest in the matter is well known, that the Government are working to secure the recognition of the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia on terms which will secure good relations with all its neighbours, but he will be aware how difficult that it.

Mr. Brain Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Will the Leader of the House invite the Secretary of State for Education to come here next week to explain how it comes about that, at seven secondary schools in Hackney, no pupils are recorded as having sat A-level or AS-level examinations, whereas in fact the seven schools all seconded staff and pupils to the sixth form centre, with impressive results?

Mr. Newton: I cannot undertake to bring my right hon. Friend here in that context, but I will ask him to be in touch with the hon. Gentleman on that point.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend acknowledge that there are many shades of legal opinion on all the substantial and important issues of the Maastricht treaty? It is very difficult for the House to understand how the treaty will be interpreted in Europe. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that, when the House comes to consider all the important sections of the treaty, we are told the views of the Commission and, if possible, the European Court, and the way in which they are likely to interpret the proposals involved? We shall then not be entirely dependent on a highly favourable gloss from the Government.

Mr. Newton: I undertake to ensure that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary's attention is drawn to what my hon. Friend has said.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): May I press the Leader of the House to clarify the answer that he gave to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett)? Did he not omit mention of Northern Ireland when he referred to income support? Scotland and Wales were mentioned, and the right hon. Gentleman has mentioned "three countries", but the kingdom has four parts, and supply comes from the House.

Has the right hon. Gentleman seen early-day motion 747?

[That this House calls upon Her Majesty's Attorney-General to examine the report from the RUC to the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Crown Solicitor as a matter of urgency and thereafter to commence proceedings for the extradition of Finbar Ross from the United States of America with a view to prosecution in respect of conspiracy to defraud investors, resident in Northern Ireland and Great Britain, in International Investments Ltd., Gibraltar (in liquidation).]

The motion is in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) and those of more than 100 other right hon. and hon. Members, and it deals with international investments. May we have a statement from the Attorney-General about why conspiracy charges against an associate of Finbar Ross, a Mr. Murray, were dropped? Why are such matters being let go?

Mr. Newton: I did not refer to Northern Ireland earlier, because I was not asked about it. As the hon. Gentleman will know, matters are not necessarily dealt with in the same way there as they are in the rest of the United Kingdom, but I shall bring his comments to the attention of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

The hon. Gentleman's second question is a matter for the prosecuting authorities in Northern Ireland, and I understand that they are considering it. The decision on whether to seek extradition is one for the relevant Secretary of State.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): In what way will the motion on Members' pay affect those who have left the House and are drawing pensions, and the widows of former Members? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, although we have responsibilities for ourselves that are conditioned by the economic circumstances, we have exceptional responsibilities to widows and pensioners; and that they should not suffer?

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's concern. The motion that the House will debate next week concerns only the forthcoming year, and I do not expect it to contain special provision for pensioners; but the House will need to give further consideration to longer-term issues relating to both pay and pensions, and I think that that will be the appropriate time at which to address the matter.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): No doubt the Leader of the House is aware of the possibility of industrial action on London Underground next week in connection with a possible 5,000 job losses. Will he find time for a debate next week—preferably before Tuesday—on the management of London Underground to give the Secretary of State for Transport an opportunity to account to the House for steps that he has taken to try to avert damage to London's economy?

Mr. Newton: As I have said, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will be answering questions on Monday. It is increasingly clear that he will have a busy day.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Will my right hon. Friend find time next week for a debate on the dilemma faced by a number of small private nursery schools—many of them voluntarily run—which face difficulties relating to the Children Act 1989? I am sure that those difficulties were not foreseen when the Act was passed, but they will lead to closures if something is not done very quickly to exempt such schools from its provisions.

Mr. Newton: I will bring that point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Is the Leader of the House aware of the continuing danger posed to the lives of Northern Ireland fishermen by the failure of the agreement regarding submarines in the Irish sea and the north channel? A couple of weeks ago, a constituent of mine nearly lost himself, his crew and his boats after being snagged by a United States submarine. No one went to him and asked what had happened, and what damage had been done. May we have a little time to debate that on-going and serious matter? The arrangements that exist are either ineffective or not being operated properly.

Mr. Newton: I shall ensure that that point, together with a number of others, is brought to the attention of the relevant Secretaries of State. However, as the hon. Gentleman's question is one that could be raised during Northern Ireland questions, for example, I ought to point out that on Thursday next my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will be here.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that one of the most worrying problems today is the serious growth in juvenile crime throughout the country, even in comparatively civilised areas such as the west midlands and mid-Warwickshire? In view of the apparent inability of the authorities to do very much about it, is it not time that we had a serious debate on the subject?

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's request and will bear it in mind, but I cannot promise an early debate.

If I may add to my answer to the previous question, I heard, from a sedentary position, the words "Ministry of Defence" being spoken. Defence Ministers will be here next Tuesday to answer questions.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Given the announcement that has just been made about the fast breeder reactor programme, will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate on the Government's attitude towards Select Committee recommendations, which so often in the past they have completely ignored? Does the Leader of the House recall the Energy Committee's recommendation that the research and development of alternative energy technologies should be removed from the ambit of the Atomic Energy Authority? If that were to be done, does it not mean that Dounreay would be the ideal centre of excellence for the pursuit of such research?

Does the right hon. Gentleman have anything to say that is positive—a message of hope for the north of Scotland?

Mr. Newton: I am not sure whether the promise of a debate, which is what I take the question to have been directed towards, would be interpreted as a message of hope, but I am afraid that I cannot undertake to provide time for such a debate.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Bearing in mind the subject that is to be debated next Monday, will my right hon. Friend give the House an undertaking that before Monday he will place in the Library the exact criteria by which Ministers decide to give public interest immunity certificates? Does he also agree that it would help the House in its deliberations on Monday if he were to give the same statistics for the period between 1974 and 1979, when Labour Ministers were required to sign these certificates?

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's request and will ensure that it is looked at by my right hon. Friends, including the Attorney-General.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): With regard to the debate on Members' salaries next Wednesday can we be assured that the Register of Members' Interests will be published by next Wednesday so that those Conservative Members who are so keen on pay freezes can have exposed to view their outside earnings, which inure some of them to such freezes? Many are earning more than their parliamentary salaries from parliamentary advisory jobs, directorships and similar activities.

Would it not be fair to the House for it to have that information by next Wednesday so that, when people stand up and argue that civil servants in particular who are on low pay should be subjected to a pay freeze, we know how busy they are in pursuing their own pocket-lining activities?

Mr. Newton: Leaving aside the more tendentious bits of the hon. Gentleman's question and coming to the question that is principally for me, I am doing everything that I can to encourage the establishment of a Select Committee on Members' Interests in order that the register can be published. I understand that some progress, but not yet enough, has been made with the usual channels. The hon. Gentleman may therefore like to urge the usual channels to come to a conclusion.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Has my right hon. Friend had his attention drawn to early-day motion 861?

[That this House demands that the President of the Board of Trade make known the information given to him by British Coal that led to his statement that the 10 pits currently in the 90-day statutory consultation period are uneconomic and have no prospect of being so; is concerned that the 7,000 men who work at these 10 collieries, their families and the wider public need to know the evidence which has decided their fate; notes that both the President of the Board of Trade and the Prime Minister have stated that these 10 collieries are not to be considered in the Government's review of energy policy, yet there is considerable evidence that a number of these pits are economically viable; believes that a simple assertion of the collective non-profitability of these collieries is not a sufficient basis for a decision of such magnitude but that it is imperative that British Coal prove its case by making public information on production costs, forecasts, reserves, recent investment, development work and markets on a pit by pit basis; and asserts that, if the case against these pits is so strong that they are to close, this information can no longer be regarded as commercially sensitive.]

It is sponsored by the Coalfields Communities Campaign. No one asks that unproductive and uneconomic pits should remain open, but is my right hon. Friend aware that the economic case for closing those 10 pits and throwing out of work many thousands of people remains unproven? Should not the House have a say? Ought we not to have a debate on the grounds upon which those pits are to be closed?

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's request. He will be aware, however, that I said last week that I would expect the next debate on coal, other things being equal, to take place when we have the outcome of my right hon. Friend's review. In the meanwhile, I understand that, under the statutory consultation process, British Coal has provided the relevant trade unions with an information package about the performance of each pit. Therefore, it seems to me that representations are best made through that process.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): Is the Leader of the House aware that Labour Members from the north are disappointed that there will be no opportunity to discuss the economic future of the northern region next week? May we have a debate on the subject in the future, bearing in mind our problems such as long-term unemployment and deprivation, and the fact that, as recently as yesterday, the other place held a very good debate on the subject? We need a debate on the regions, which would enable hon. Members to discuss the problems in their region.

Mr. Newton: We are in the middle of a two-day debate in which it should be possible to make such points. A number of Conservative Members feel that Monday's Opposition day might have been better used to assist the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): Is my right hon. Friend aware that 17 December is the launch date for the European Year of the Elderly? This will be a very important year for the European Community. May we have a debate on the subject before Christmas?

Mr. Newton: I am aware of the importance of the year, with which I was concerned in my previous ministerial capacity, but I cannot promise a debate between 17 December and Christmas, unless hon. Members wish to stay here closer to Christmas than I suspect.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The House is not exactly run off its feet with business, and has met for only 31 of the past 67 weeks. During that period, a miner lucky enough to have a job will have worked 58 weeks. Should we not at least find time to discuss the mining industry in Government time, rather than leaving it to a Select Committee?

Mr. Newton: The House may have sat on the basis that the hon. Gentleman suggests, but Members have been working for many more days than that—many of them in their constituencies.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that the Government are concerned about Scotland and the Scottish people, and that he will arrange an early debate on Scottish local government so that we can consider early-day motion 856?

[That this House is concerned at reports in The Sunday Times on 8th and 15th November which disclose that Monklands District Council is ruled by an elite of 17 Labour councillors, including the Leader of the Opposition's election agent, which has employed 22 wives, sons and daughters of councillors, and that preferential employment practices have resulted in employment for the provost's 'son in the council's work study section, a daughter in the housing department and a son-in-law in the parks department' as well as the Labour Council leader's 'eldest son . . . promoted to assistant safety officer, . . . other son works in the council's economic employment section; daughter . . . a post in the planning department'; notes that a green form system was used to distinguish the job applications from members of the ruling families from the pink ones from the general public; is disturbed that the articles suggest that the Leader of the Opposition has failed to convince his own Labour councillors of the importance of manufacturing industry; fears that the Leader of the Opposition is allowing himself to be dragged into a quagmire of mafioso-like intrigue, nepotism and corruption; and questions the judgment of the Leader of the Opposition in sending a message of support to the council's new free newspaper which has been set up by the Labour councillors in a mafia-like operation to destroy the free enterprise Coatbridge and Airdrie Advertiser and thereby enable the ruling Labour councillors to wipe out the only opposition; and believes that these actions are not in the public interest.]

Such a debate would allow us properly to discuss the attempts of Labour councillors on Monklands district council to cover up very strange matters by using taxpayers' money to fund a wholly unjustified legal action against the local newspaper, which has been exposing strange and undesirable practices in Scottish local government.

Mr. Newton: The Government share my hon. Friend's concern about the allegations and, I need hardly say, firmly oppose any form of discrimination. The allegations can be pursued through the courts, the local authority ombudsman or the Commission for Local Authority Accounts.

Mr. Alan Milburn (Darlington): May I draw the Leader of the House's attention to early-day motion 858 on drug and alcohol residential homes?

[That this House expresses its concern at the prospect of the closure of over 100 drug and alcohol residential homes following the Department of Health's announcement that the transfer of DSS income support payments to local authorities will not be ring-fenced; and seeks the introduction of an adequate alcohol and drugs specific grant in the United Kingdom.]

It has attracted all-party support. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that between 5,000 and 10,000 people face the prospect of being thrown on to the streets because of the closure of up to 150 of these homes. The Government reneged on a promise given during the passage of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 that a specific ring-fenced grant would be made available to protect the homes. Will he find time next week to ensure that we have a full and proper debate before redundancy notices are issued and people are thrown on the street?

Mr. Newton: I am aware of the points being made, which the hon. Gentleman has repeated, not least because on Tuesday I attended the launch of the European Drug Prevention week. I do not accept the conclusions that he draws from the announcements that my right hon. and hon. Friends have made, and nor do they.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I have been persuaded by Opposition Members that perhaps we should have a debate next week on the publication of examination results and the league tables, and Monday would be ideal for me. It would give me an ideal opportunity to talk about parental choice and education standards and would allow us to consider the results of schools at the bottom of the league, which all appear to be in Labour-controlled local authorities. Perhaps we could consider that and see what action can be taken against those schools.

Mr. Newton: If that was a question, it was a good one, and I wish that I had thought of it myself.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on the important issue of the removal of the urban programme, which is worrying in the city of Hull? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that what is happening adds up to the fact that there will be no rescue package for city challenge and that, contrary to what the Prime Minister said today at Question Time, there is now no effective grant regime to replace the lost money? If Hull loses its present assisted area status, that will have a devastating effect on our great city.

Mr. Newton: As the hon. Gentleman said, he heard what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said at Question Time, and I shall not seek to add to that. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is making representations on assisted area status in connection with the present review.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Has the Leader of the House considered a debate on the grave problems of the steel industry, not least the 20 per cent. cut in production and the huge financial losses announced this week? Does the right hon. Gentleman know that hundreds of jobs have been lost at Shotton steelworks in my constituency, that those manufacturing jobs are important to the whole of Wales, and that we should like the Government to help our steel industry?

Mr. Newton: I cannot undertake to provide time for such a debate, but again, what the hon. Gentleman is saying seems relevant to the debate currently taking place in the House, and his concerns are certainly addressed by the proposals in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement, which is being debated.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): In connection with the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) about the urban programme, does the Leader of the House accept that to announce a major change of Government policy which will have a massive effect on the lives of many thousands of people in the inner cities in a letter to the leaders of local authorities, with no opportunity for the House to discuss the matter or ask the Minister questions, is not a proper way for the Government to behave?

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the Secretary of State for the Environment should make a statement to the House next week and answer questions? He may come reluctantly, but does the Leader of the House not accept that it is his responsibility to bring the Secretary of State to the House so that he can deal with the matter properly?

Mr. Newton: I had better choose my words cautiously, but I believe that I have already hinted to the shadow Leader of the House that there was some possibility that the Secretary of State for the Environment would be here next week in connection with the revenue support grant settlement in England. If so, that would give the hon. Gentleman an opportunity to ask his questions.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Bearing in mind the fact that we have had nearly 30 minutes of bright and not so bright suggestions from Opposition Members for subjects for future debates, might it not be a good thing if in future, when the Opposition have a Supply day the following week, they made their initial inquiries to the shadow Leader of the House?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful for yet another helpful suggestion from one of my hon. Friends.

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): I am sure that the Leader of the House read with shock and dismay early-day motion 788, concerning the proposed closure of Withington hospital, in my constituency.

[That this House expresses grave concern about the North Western Regional Health Authority's proposal to reorganise hospital provision in South Manchester, involving the closure of Withington Hospital as a district general hospital; regards the proposal as one that has less to do with any rational provision of health care in the district than with the rationing of resources needed to provide hospitals as close as possible to the communities they serve; calls for reconsideration of the proposal forthwith in a review that would take account of Manchester's needs as a whole for hospital provision; and asks the Secretary of State for Health to consult urgently with the City's elected representatives and certainly before any definitive decision is taken.]

Barely four years ago, when the Leader of the House was Secretary of State for Health, he accompanied me and the Duchess of York at the opening of the new children's hospital in Withington, which will now be part of the closure programme. Will he agree to an early debate on the matter so as to secure the future of health care in south Manchester, and in particular to save a hospital which he proudly helped to open?

Mr. Newton: I certainly remember the occasion— although I fear that the hon. Gentleman has promoted me, as I was the Minister for Health, rather than the Secretary of State, at the time.

I understand that there are no formal plans to close Withington hospital, and that South Manchester health authority proposes to develop acute district services at Wythenshawe hospital, and to create a community hospital at Withington. All such proposals are subject to a decision by the various health authorities, and to consultation, before a decision can be made.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Will the Leader of the House allow an early debate on perfume companies holding consumers to ransom, forcing up prices by one third and blackmailing magazines and newspapers into refusing advertisements for cheaper prices? Will he ensure that the President of the Board of Trade bangs heads together to avoid another nine months of high prices so that you, Madam Speaker, and the rest of us may have a much merrier Christmas?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will be interested in the suggestion of vigorous physical activity on his part. I will undertake rather more calmly to bring the hon. Gentleman's remarks to his attention.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): In the light of the 3,500 redundancies announced today by the Royal Bank of Scotland, and in the light of the fact that there have been a number of job losses in the banking industry in the south-east of England, in Edinburgh and in Manchester, will the Leader of the House consider an early debate on the subject? If we are starting to lose jobs in an area that is this country's particular strength, it is an illustration of the extent to which the country faces tremendous job losses and a rundown in its economy. The Government should pay attention to that.

Mr. Newton: I and the whole Government regret these and any other job losses. However, they should be seen in the context of overall employment of 24,000 in the Royal Bank Group as a whole. I understand that the majority of the losses will be achieved by what is rather unpleasingly called "natural wastage"—that is, as a result of turnover.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): I take it that you have taken it out on me for being naughty earlier by leaving me to the last, Madam Speaker. I apologise.

Will the Leader of the House tell us about the future of the consultants' report into the operation of the House? Will he assure me that the story in this morning's newspaper that part of the report suggests a Members' wine bar in the Cellar is nonsense? It sounds a barmy idea at the moment.

Mr. Newton: These are matters principally for the Accommodation and Works Committee and for the Catering Committee. I will draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of both Chairmen.

Early-Day Motions

4.26 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I raise the matter of early-day motions with you as the defender of Back-Bench Members' rights. As you know, early-day motions are one of the principal channels through which Back-Bench Members can communicate. An early-day motion of mine has been turned down for the most extraordinary reason. I can find no senior Member who has ever heard of that reason——

Madam Speaker: Order. May I give a little guidance to the hon. Gentleman, because I want to be helpful in these matters? If the motion has been turned down, there are procedures that he has to follow, so the matter cannot be raised on the Floor of the House. If he goes to the Table Office, he will be informed of the procedures to follow, and I shall do my best to give him guidance in the matter. The matter cannot be raised on the Floor of the House once an early-day motion has been turned down. If the hon. Gentleman will do as I ask, I shall give him as much help as I can.

Mr. Flynn: May I continue a little further, because——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have dealt with the point of order. There is nothing further that we can do at this stage on the Floor of the House. I have given the hon. Gentleman some guidance, and I hope that he will follow it.

BILL PRESENTED

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. Secretary Lilley, supported by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lang, Mrs. Secretary Shephard and Miss Ann Widdecombe, presented a Bill to amend sections 3 and 85 of the Social Security Act 1986, to provide for the making of certain payments into the National Insurance Fund, and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 88.]

Orders of the Day

Autumn Statement

[Relevant documents: The Minutes of Evidence taken before the Treasury and Civil Service Committee on 16th and 17th November (House of Commons Papers Nos. 201-iii and-iv.]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on amendment to Question [18 November]:

That this House approves the Autumn Statement presented by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer on 12th November; welcomes the Government's continuing commitment to the firm control of public expenditure; supports the new expenditure plans, which honour the Government's commitments and provide protection of capital spending; applauds the specific measures the Government has taken to encourage confidence and foster recovery; and congratulates the Government on achieving a substantial reduction in underlying inflation, which has laid the foundations for sustainable growth.—*[Mr. Lamont.]*

Which amendment was: to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'regrets that the Autumn Statement confirms that the recession is continuing and that unemployment and bankruptcies will continue to rise; regrets also that investment which has fallen substantially during the recession will fall again for 1992 and will at best, according to Government forecasts, rise by only one quarter of one per cent. during 1993; deplores the worsening balance of payments and the failure of the Government to recognise the need for a policy for manufacturing and for the regions; demands an emergency employment programme to reduce unemployment and the fear of unemployment and additional investment measures to boost the construction industry and business as a whole; and calls for a long-term industrial and training policy for Britain'.—*[Mr. Gordon Brown.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Madam Speaker: I must announce to the House that, between 7 pm and 9 pm, there will be a limit on speeches of 10 minutes.

4.28 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Michael Portillo): May I first welcome to her new position the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman)? She is speaking for the first time today in her role as Chief Secretary—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shadow."]—shadow Chief Secretary. She brings with her the reputation she acquired, as health spokesman, of being a real big spender. Her translation to her present role where she is responsible for keeping tabs on the promises made by the Labour party is a case not so much of a poacher turning gamekeeper as of a fox being put in charge of a chicken coop—or a chicken co-op, as the hon. Lady would call it.

The achievement of last week's autumn statement is to create the conditions for a return of confidence and so to remove a barrier to growth in our economy. The announcements made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer provide the strongest reassurance that the Government will maintain the most rigorous control of public spending and have evolved a robust medium-term strategy for limiting its growth.

Equally, his statement provides well targeted encouragement to sectors of the economy badly hit by the recession. The statement demonstrates a finely judged balance between the toughness required at a time when national finances are under strain and a willingness to respond prudently to the needs of business at a time of prolonged recession.

Despite all the huffing and puffing from the Opposition, the economic fundamentals today are promising. First, inflation has fallen from nearly 11 per cent. to under 4 per cent. Second, we now have the lowest interest rates in the European Community and the lowest seen here for 15 years. Thirdly, our exchange rate makes our products highly competitive, whether we are selling in overseas markets or in home markets against overseas products.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): The right hon. Gentleman could also add that our share in world trade and manufactures has fallen from 6·7 per cent. in 1979 to 5·6 per cent. That might put his previous remarks into context.

Mr. Portillo: During part of the 1980s there was a decline in our share of trade and manufactures, but that stabilised around the late 1980s and has stabilised further since. So I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's point is at all well made.

As long as we continue to keep inflation down, the competitive edge provided today by a floating pound will be of significant advantage to British business.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The right hon. Gentleman talks about keeping inflation down. I can understand that he has some hopes of keeping down the levels of pay in the public sector, although that is very difficult, but can he really now, after what has been said in the past week, still believe that it will be possible to keep pay in the private sector down to 1·5 per cent.? Does he really believe that?

Mr. Portillo: The right hon. Gentleman is confusing two things. I was talking about inflation, not about pay. A part of my speech which I shall come to later is about pay. But, do I believe that my right hon. Friend has set monetary conditions at the right level in order to maintain downward pressure on inflation and to achieve his target of between 1 and 4 per cent. inflation? Yes, indeed I do believe that.

As growth returns, we need to be sure that its fruits are not simply gobbled up by an uncontrolled expansion of the state. The Government's objective over the medium term is to reduce public spending as a proportion of national income, because in that way an increasing share of the proceeds of economic growth will remain with individuals: those who created it. It is the wealth creators who work and invest who should enjoy the lion's share of what is produced by their efforts.

If public spending were allowed to grow too fast, it would absorb all the benefits of growth, and the recovery would serve only to fatten the state. The burden of spending could eventually smother the private sector. We must therefore keep a careful eye on the proportion of national income that is absorbed by public spending. That ratio next year will stand at about 45 per cent. It has climbed so high because of a static, or even falling, gross domestic product and a continuing real rise in public spending, largely driven by the demands of the recession on the public purse.

Although the ratio is no higher than it was in the last recession, the state takes too much of our national income today. The ratio of spending to GDP must be reduced. That is a fundamental objective of this Government, and I reiterate it now unambiguously.

It can be done. We can reduce the ratio of spending to GDP and at the same time reduce Government borrowing, and we shall do both. I speak with confidence, because the Government have done it before. In the 1980s, the share of national output taken from wealth creators and spent by the state fell from a peak of 47 per cent. to under 40 per cent. At the same time, our fiscal position became so healthy that we were able to repay debt. Over the first three terms of this Conservativve Government, we cut the country's debt burden by the equivalent of £10 billion per year—the cost of 160 hospitals or 500 road bypasses or 5p off the standard rate of income tax.

I remind the House that those achievements took time. We had to maintain our resolve year after year. But our perseverance paid off. Restraint and fiscal prudence in the 1980s delivered a formidable hat trick—cuts in income tax, increased spending on priority programmes and reductions in the national debt.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Was not the reduction from 46 per cent. to 40 per cent. during the 1980s partly achieved by the privatisation of telecommunications and water? Did not the privatisation of water lead to charges to the charge payer being equally great, if not greater? Does the Chief Secretary agree that we are talking not about greater personal incomes but about a redesignation that suits his purposes?

Mr. Portillo: My figures exclude the effects of privatisation. We always publish the figures and establish the ratio on the only reasonable and fair basis on which to compare the figures from year to year, and that is excluding privatisation proceeds.

The privatisation of water was an important and helpful achievement. It has enabled the industry to embark upon a major 10-year £30 billion programme of investment in our infrastructure. I am only sorry that the Labour party believes that, when a privatised industry invests in the infrastructure, the correct knee-jerk response is to offer to tax it. That is disappointing.

The effects of recession have hit all countries and, like that of many other countries, the United Kingdom's borrowing is increasing. I want to make it clear that I do not welcome that. It is a direct consequence of the recession, however, and we cannot hide from it or from its consequences. As borrowing increases, so does the cost of servicing debt. If those extra costs in turn feed through to higher borrowing, eventually borrowing will spiral. If we listened to the Opposition, scrapped the ceilings on public expenditure and gave in to every demand and every interest group, we might be popular today but would certainly be bankrupt tomorrow.

We must avoid the prospect of more and more Government money going to debt repayment rather than to refurbishing schools, building new roads and improving the health service. As the economy recovers, borrowing must be brought down towards balance. That makes it essential to control what the Government spend. Accordingly, this year, we introduced a new system for the control of public spending.

Before any Government can decide how much they will spend, it is essential that they should have a clear idea of what the country can afford. The rate of growth in public spending must be kept below the trend rate of growth of the economy. The Government have simply done what any family or business does every day—decided what they can afford and then decided how to spend it. If we had taken the Labour party's advice, we should have done the exact reverse—added up everything on which we would like to spend and then claimed that that was what we could afford. Labour plans its spending bottom up—an unedifying posture. The current round has been conducted on a strictly top-down basis, which is the only sensible approach.

In setting the annual ceilings for public spending, we have made allowances for the effects of the economic cycle, but without loosening our grip on total Government expenditure over time. It would be wrong to rein back on social security spending directly related to the recession and wrong to squeeze other programmes to find the necessary money to pay for it.

That does not mean, however, that the recession is an excuse for public spending to be let rip. We must not allow the temporary and unavoidable increase in spending to be absorbed into a permanent increase. If we do, spending will ratchet ever upwards. The new control total that we have introduced seeks to distinguish clearly between spending related to the recession and other spending. As we emerge from recession we shall ensure that, when the cost of unemployment declines, other programmes do not grow and take up the slack.

That strategy was endorsed by the Cabinet in July. We set ourselves the remit to stick to our cash plans on the old planning total for 1993-94, but to achieve growth in the new control total across the next three years of no more than 1½ per cent. per year in real terms.

That was a challenging target. It meant reducing by half the average rate of growth in the non-cycical part of public spending compared with recent years. We have now set plans that fully meet the remit. The planned growth rate in the new control total for the next three years averages just under 1½ per cent.: 2¼ per cent. in 1993-94, but ¾ to 1 per cent. in the next two years.

A top-down approach implies the need to address priorities very clearly and resolutely. My erstwhile boss, and now noble Friend, Lord Lawson was apt to quote Mendes France's dictum that to govern is to choose. Lord Lawson was apt to quote it in French. However, as foreign languages are rightly frowned on in this Chamber, I shall say it in English. Foreign languages are frowned on except gobbledegook talked on the Benches opposite.

To govern is indeed to choose. One might go further and say that to be in opposition is to avoid choice; to call for everything and have to pay for nothing. Labour has called for lower borrowing, more spending, lower interest rates and, recently, even no tax increases.

The Opposition Front-Bench team do not confine themselves to speaking gobbledegook: they employ it in their accounting methods. The House may remember that yesterday we heard the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) give his analysis of car tax; the clear voice of a new school of economics. After a week in which he could study all our press releases, all the tables, all the figures, red books, blue books, brown books and grey books, planning totals, new control totals and the total of those totals, the hon. Gentleman came up with one calculation. He divided the cost of abolishing car tax by the estimate of extra car sales next year. Wow! The computers laboured at Walworth road and brought forth

[Mr. Portillo]

a mouse—a Brown mouse. What a gift for "Spitting Image": the "Alas, Smith and Brown" school of economics at work.

The essence of good government is to choose, and we have ensured that money is spent on priorities. Under the new system, final decisions rest with the Cabinet. Decision-making has become collective. Together, we took the view that we were honour-bound to stick to our manifesto commitments. We have done so. We chose to direct our spending plans to support industry, to educate the rising generation and to ensure adequate protection for the needy. Again, we have done so.

We have kept our election pledges on child benefit and all the benefits which we promised to uprate in line with inflation. We shall deliver the 153,000 homes that we promised would be provided through the Housing Corporation. We are expanding the city challenge programme, and will set up the Urban Regeneration Agency. We shall keep our promise to spend more in real terms on health.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): In about three or four weeks, it will be a year since the Chancellor of the Exchequer promised that he would introduce a mortgage rescue programme which would rescue 40,000 people. So far, it has rescued about 100. When will the other 39,900 be rescued? Will it be in the next three or four weeks? That is all the Chancellor has before his promise runs out.

Mr. Portillo: The building societies—rather effectively —committed their resources to slowing down the rate of repossessions. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome that instead of carping about it.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I was most interested in my right hon. Friend's comments about the ability of the Opposition to add up. I was one of those who, as reported in column 313 of yesterday's *Hansard*, was extremely disturbed about it. Does my right hon. Friend have enough information from the Opposition to cost their programme and determine what level of tax and what level of borrowing they would preside over, and even to determine whether the City of London could even finance that level of borrowing? Or is it a massive Labour cover-up?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend will realise that those are questions for the hon. Member for Peckham, whom I described earlier as the Chief Secretary but who is in fact the shadow Chief Secretary. It is her responsibility to add up the promises that Labour makes and make sure that they can be delivered. Undoubtedly the hon. Lady will use her speech to enlighten the House.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East was pressed on his spending plans at a press conference on 9 November. He said that his proposals would increase public spending. Naturally, he was asked what was the figure involved. The hon. Gentleman said straightforwardly:

"I am not prepared to put a figure on it."

Thank goodness that the hon. Gentleman is now reinforced by the hon. Member for Peckham, who will undoubtedly ensure that a figure is put on it.

In our manifesto, we pledged to spend £6,300 million over three years on roads. We shall do that, but the money will now buy more roads than when it was promised. We shall build the Jubilee line extension, as we promised, provided that the agreement with the private sector can be signed.

Capital spending in the health service will reach record levels. Local authority spending of receipts will boost capital programmes on houses and schools. Our policy priorities will enable 25 per cent. more youngsters to have places in further education in the next three years, and enable more of our school leavers to join youth training. The present record level of students in higher education will be sustained. We shall reach the target set out in our manifesto of one in three entering higher education by the year 2000.

The hon. Member for Peckham issued a press release before the autumn statement listing all the promises that she thought we would break. We broke none of them. I hope that she will use her speech today to offer an apology, and possibly a word of congratulation. The decision that we took to protect capital spending stands in sharp contrast to the approach of some previous Governments. In the late 1970s, the Labour party was in power. It became temporarily converted to the need to control public spending. The House may remember that that was under the skilled tutelage, not to say psychotherapy, of Dr. Witteveen of the International Monetary Fund. After a few sessions on his couch, Labour's knee-jerk reaction was to cut capital spending.

Hospitals were cut by 29 per cent. Roads were cut by a staggering 33 per cent. Water investment was also slashed by a third. Labour's axe was swung with gusto, and its aim was unerring: always the capital project, the easiest target in the short term but the most damaging in the long term. The cuts were undiscriminating, unthinking and unwise.

The Labour party did not care. Well, one person cared. The junior Minister for Education, the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), cared, and she resigned. But some had fewer scruples. Into her place stepped the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), to implement the cuts of her Government.

Mr. David Shaw: Where is she now?

Mr. Portillo: She sits opposite me.

An important decision that we took in the autumn statement was to limit for one year pay settlements in the public sector to a maximum of 1½ per cent. This is not an incomes policy. It is a decision by a major employer—the Government—to control its costs. At about £80 billion a year, the public sector wage bill accounts for more than one third of Government current spending.

Since we are preserving capital spending and maintaining support to people out of work, it is essential to seek pay restraint from people in work. However much Opposition Members would like to protect capital spending, they cannot afford to agree, because they cannot afford to disagree with the National Union of Public Employees and the Confederation of Health Service Employees.

Our approach to public sector pay has received widespread support. People know that it is reasonable for the Government to ask their employees to show restraint when many people in the private sector have no choice but to be restrained.

For a good number of people in the private sector, the recession has already brought about low pay, no pay rises, or loss of jobs. By contrast, during the past two years only about 2 per cent. of the jobs lost have been in the public sector. In each of the past three years, average earnings for public sector workers have risen faster than for those in the private sector.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Does the Chief Secretary accept that his proposals, together with the Prime Minister's comments about pay in the private sector, amount to a Government incomes policy? Was that part of the Conservative party's election manifesto?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman may not have been listening carefully. I began this passage by saying that it was not an incomes policy, but an employer's attitude to the amount of money to be paid to the people who work for him, and I am now explaining that. I am happy to repeat to the hon. Gentleman that it is not an incomes policy.

My remarks about average public sector earnings during the past three years are true, not merely for doctors and teachers, but also for nurses, national health service ancillary workers, civil service clerical staff and local authority workers. Opposition Members should ask their constituents who work in the private sector what they think about automatic public sector pay rises, whatever the conditions in which we find ourselves. The state simply cannot make awards well above inflation, year in and year out, no matter what the state of the economy.

To return to the remarks of the hon. Member for Attercliffe, the Government should not and will not dictate what settlement levels are right for private sector businesses. It is up to each employer to decide what he or she can afford to pay. Everyone knows that, in general, the lower the growth in wage costs, the better the United Kingdom's competitive position will be.

The director-general of the Confederation of British Industry has said that, and has reminded us that previous experience is instructive. Often, Britain has had a competitive edge and has let the advantage slip because of higher real wage costs. It would be sad if history were to repeat itself and if the gains in competitiveness which flow from a lower exchange rate were to be frittered away in higher costs.

Growth in earnings is lower than for a generation. Even so, our unit labour costs are rising faster than in some of the countries with which we compete. During the past 10 years, we have come a long way, but more progress may be required if the United Kingdom is to succeed in the world of the 1990s.

People in prominent public sector positions should exercise restraint and set an example, especially hon. and right hon. Members. We cannot, as so many hon. Members have done, call for the protection of capital spending and the preservation of benefits unless we are willing to share in the sacrifice. The Government will therefore recommend to the House a resolution prescribing a nil pay increase for Members of Parliament from January, and I hope that there will be support for that proposition from both sides of the House.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): While wishing entirely to support and endorse what my right hon. Friend has said—it will be a sacrifice for many hon. Members to do that, but that is the example we have to set—what approaches has he made to the relatively newly privatised utilities whose chairmen and chief executives have increased their salaries by 100, 200 or even 300 per cent? Are they going to make a sacrifice?

Mr. Portillo: Although the levels of private sector pay should not be dictated by the Government, people in that sector have important responsibilities, and set examples. When I heard the message from the CBI conference that Members of Parliament should reduce their pay, I thought that a similar message might have been sent in the opposite direction, by some hon. Members to some of the people gathered at that conference.

The state of the Labour party worries me. In the run-up to the election, its members showed signs of beginning to understand free market economics. They talked about free markets, incentives and profits, but since then they have had a relapse. Yesterday, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East was again attacking the failure of free markets, sounding a little like a recording which might have been made in Poland in the late 1970s. Apparently, he seriously believes that a Government can spend their way out of recession—but they cannot.

The hon. Member made a famous remark at a press conference about the state being an engine of growth in the economy. Sometimes, I look across the Chamber and think that I see three great engines of growth—the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, the hon. Member for Peckham and the Leader of the Opposition. Three great engines of growth stoking up public spending—Gordon, the big blue engine, Harrietta, the pink railway carriage, and John, their fat controller, all huffing, puffing and shunting about, raising clouds of steam. The time has come to blow the whistle on all three.

Our new system of controlling public spending has forced us to distinguish between long-term and short-term objectives—between what is most important and what is less pressing. The discipline of working within fixed totals has obliged the Government to confront every increasing demand-led pressure. Every pound spent on one priority is a pound which is not available for another. We approach those decisions with determination and clarity.

An increasing proportion of our national wealth is taken by demand-led programmes: pensions, social security benefits and legal aid are just three. Every developed country is facing the need to support an aging population at a time when there is no increase in the size of the working population.

We shall need coolly to assess the impact on other programmes if those costs are allowed to continue to rise faster than economic growth. For the longer term, we need to consider the balance between provision by the state and by the individual. The Government have provided incentives for people to make provision themselves for retirement, beyond what is offered through state schemes, by building up their entitlements in personal and occupational pension schemes.

We face an evolving world in which, while the cold war is over, the country needs to face up to new challenges. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is implementing, "Options for Change" and we shall continue to ensure that resources available for defence match the changing requirements placed on our armed forces.

Also, we must recognise Government's responsibility to ensure continuing improvements in our transport

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infrastructure. We have decided that the task is too great and important for the Government alone. The Chancellor has invited the private sector to play a larger role in meeting the transport needs of a competitive economy through his proposals to encourage private finance, and many of my hon. Friends welcomed that yesterday.

Other services which have traditionally been provided by the state need not be state monopolies. We have embarked on a policy of involving the private sector, whenever it is cost-effective to do so, in the supply of services, from social housing to prison management. The autumn statement takes that further. Our proposals on leasing should bring a welcome injection of new provision and new management to essential services.

My right hon. Friend's autumn statement demonstrates the Government's clear-sighted approach, not just to the problems of this recession nor just to the year ahead—nor even just to the three years covered by our plans—but to our determination to address the fundamental challenges facing many Governments, and to bring fresh thinking to that task.

The Government have faced up to hard choices and made tough decisions. For that reason, the autumn statement has been well received in the House and widely welcomed in the country. In the Lobby tonight, my right hon. Friend and the Government will deservedly be supported with enthusiasm.

5 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): It is extraordinary that, on a day when another 10,000 redundancies have been announced, the Chief Secretary opened the debate without a reference to unemployment.

The Royal Bank of Scotland has announced that 1,000 jobs will go in each of the next three years, Blue Circle Cement is to axe 550 jobs, about one fifth of its work force, excavator maker JCB is to cut 80 jobs, and I understand that within the last few minutes it has been announced that about 5,000 workers are to be made redundant by British Rail.

In other words, we have today witnessed jobs disappearing in manufacturing, services, construction and energy in every region of the nation. Although the Chief Secretary found time to make quite a good joke about Thomas the Tank Engine, he did not find time to recognise just what is going on in Britain today.

We have seen in recent weeks some signs that the Government recognise that they have gone wrong. They must know that they have a problem on their hands. The trouble is that they cannot distinguish between the PR exercise that they think is necessary to create the good news story for the newspapers and the real programme for recovery that is necessary for the recession. So they make promises in which they do not believe and continue to say, as the Chief Secretary said today, that the ending of the recession can be left to the market. At the same time, they criticise those who call for Government action.

The autumn statement is a mix of measures in which the Government do not believe and which, even on their predictions, do not add up to achieving recovery. It will not bring an end to the relentless increase in unemployment, and today we have seen not only job losses rise but manufacturing output figures revealing a further fall.

Last month, the Prime Minister appeared live on our television screens, on ITN and on BBC News, and said, more in the way of a cry for help than a Prime Ministerial broadcast:

> "We are looking for a strategy that will deliver recovery, that will deliver growth, that will deliver jobs."

It is clear from the autumn statement that the Government are still looking.

Under pressure, the Chancellor has admitted the error of his ways, but, through lack of conviction, he has failed to apply the remedies that are needed. So instead of a housing policy to build, repair and modernise homes, we have the purchase—perhaps the nationalisation—of 20,000 empty properties. Instead of an industry policy, £400 is taken off the price of a new car. Instead of the release of the accumulated receipts of council house sales, we have the future release of receipts, if only councils can dump their houses and assets on to an already stagnant market. Worst of all, instead of an employment programme and policy, unemployment is left rising.

The Government have begun to admit their failures, but have failed to provide the solutions.

Mrs. Judith Chaplin (Newbury): The Labour party fought the last election on a programme of large tax increases. If, heaven forfend, Labour had won, would that programme have been implemented?

Ms. Harman: We did not fight the last election on a policy of increasing taxes. The Tories fought the election on misrepresenting our tax policies. Since the election, many people have lost their jobs, cannot pay taxes and are having to draw unemployment benefit.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): During that election the Labour party argued strongly and consistently that the upper earnings limit for national insurance was wrong and should be abolished. Does the hon. Lady still hold to that view?

Ms. Harman: Our policies were fair. In the current situation, we have set out how we would bring about recovery. To bring an end to the recession, we have suggested how our programme could be paid for. It is significant that Conservative Members can talk only about the programme of the Labour party prior to the last election, but have nothing to say about their autumn statement and the effects that might have.

Mr. Michael Ancram (Devizes) *rose*——

Ms. Harman: I will give way once more, especially to the hon. Gentleman, who spoke yesterday.

Mr. Ancram: In fact, I am hoping to speak later in the debate. In view of her remarks, will the hon. Lady put a figure on what Labour's programme would cost, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) having refused to answer that question?

Ms. Harman: We have set out what we believe needs to be done to bring an end to rising unemployment. We have said that the public sector must play an important part and that public spending will need to be increased. We have explained how our measures would be achieved. We have said, for example, that we do not believe it right to lift stamp duty on share dealing or that the recently privatised utilities should sit on billions of pounds in the bank when that money could otherwise be available for investment.

We have set out clearly our programme of what needs to be done and how it would be financed—*[Interruption.]* I am asked to give the figures. The Government throw out figures which, even on the day they are printed, prove to be wrong.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North) *rose*——

Ms. Harman: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not giving way. I must make progress.

The Government have begun to talk about growth, but there is no real expectation of growth. They have begun to talk about investment, but they have no strategy for it. They have also begun to talk about fairness, but they take money out of nurses' pay packets to make cuts in the national health service budget.

Many people believe strongly that the Government have simply stood by while the menaces of unemployment and recession have stalked us and engulfed every region of the country. People appreciate that there are worldwide economic problems, but they also know that our recession started earliest and is lasting longest.

Even against the background of worldwide economic problems, between 1990 and 1993, Japan's manufacturing output will have risen by 1 per cent. Manufacturing output will have risen in Canada by 2 per cent,; in Italy, by 2 per cent.; in France, 5 per cent.; in America , nearly 6 per cent.; and in Germany, 8 per cent. But manufacturing output in Britain will have shrunk by 5 per cent. The same story applies to business investment, total investment and the national income.

People hold the Government responsible for the way in which they have managed the economy, which has left us with soaring unemployment and public borrowing, with imports overtaking exports and with imports still rising, and with a stagnating housing market as we are about to enter our third winter of recession.

There is a strong feeling throughout the nation that the Government must act positively. They must provide a recovery programme that will lift the fear of unemployment, stimulate the housing market, provide stability and confidence for industry and provide incentives for investment. The recession has cost the nation dear. This year, we have spent £1·5 billion more on unemployment benefit because of it. It has also cost the Treasury in lost receipts. This year, Treasury receipts were £5 billion less than last year because of the recession.

Despite the upbeat talk, the autumn statement is not a recovery package. Without investment and growth, we shall not see an end to the relentless increase in unemployment. The fear of unemployment and high personal indebtedness hang over the economy. I was struck by the fact that, when the Chancellor spoke on the economy at the Tory party conference, the only time that he mentioned debt was when he mentioned his personal debt to the Prime Minister for keeping him in his job.

The personal sector's financial liabilities have increased from £204 billion in 1985 to £470 billion in the first quarter of 1992. The ratio of personal sector debt to personal incomes has risen from 86 per cent. in 1985 to 115 per cent. in 1991. Against that background, the Government will not end the recession simply by waiting for people to go out shopping. People are burdened by personal debts.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I, too, am concerned about investment and recovery. One of the biggest investors in East Anglia is Anglian Water, which has a huge programme for improving the environment and investing. If that utility is taxed, will it continue to invest in improving the environment?

Ms. Harman: We have been talking about profits made in the depth of a recession by utilities that have been privatised and are now running a monopoly. They can certainly find enough money to make donations to the Conservative party. We think that people in East Anglia would rather see that money invested to boost the construction industry and create demand in the economy than sitting in a bank account.

The lack of demand in the economy and the squeezing of profit margins mean that private industry will not move into recovery simply in response to lower interest rates. The Government have been forced to go some way towards acknowledging that public investment is important in ending the recession, although the Chief Secretary moved slightly away from that today. The growth in public sector investment is set to fall from 7 per cent. this year to 1·25 per cent. next year, and the Government forecast an increase of only 0·25 per cent. in total fixed investment.

With 400,000 building workers on the dole and 60,000 homeless families living in temporary accommodation, Tory as well as Labour-controlled councils, the construction industry, employers and unions are increasingly angry that the Government will not let councils use the £5 billion capital receipts from the sale of council houses to build more homes and provide a boost for the construction industry. The Labour party has consistently argued that it is plain common sense to allow the progressive relaxation of the constraints on capital receipts. The Government have refused to unlock that £5 billion of capital receipts. Instead, they have said that councils can spend all the receipts from their sales between now and the end of next year.

Thus, councils have thirteen and a half months in which to sell. In his statement yesterday, the Chancellor told us that that would stimulate extra capital spending by local authorities of more than £1·75 billion. But that figure is bogus. To reach it, councils must not only maintain the level of council house sales but increase it in that thirteen and a half months by 20 per cent. Does the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) think that his council will increase the sale of council houses in his local authority by 20 per cent. in the next 13 months, against a background of redundancies and a wage freeze in the public sector?

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Lady has outlined a number of problems facing us in the economy today, but does she honestly think that defying the 1·5 per cent. guidelines for public sector pay increases and going for bigger increases will reduce unemployment, increase investment or solve any of the problems that she has outlined? Moreover, has she any idea how she would pay for it?

Ms. Harman: I am trying to deal with capital receipts. I shall deal with the public sector pay freeze in a moment.

Does the Chief Secretary really believe that council house sales will even hold steady this year? Does he expect us to believe that council house sales will go up by one fifth

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next year? Will more people buy their homes against a background of rising unemployment? They will not, and the Chief Secretary must know that.

We have taken the time to check with local councils. On the basis of the latest right-to-buy applications, they expect not to keep council house sales steady but that there will be a dramatic drop in receipts from council house sales. In Trafford, applications for right to buy are down by 68 per cent.; in Sunderland, they are down by 50 per cent.; in Plymouth, they are down by 39 per cent.; in Calderdale, they are down by 55 per cent.; in Coventry, they are down by 52 per cent.; and in Enfield, they are down by 40 per cent.—that means a drop of 40 per cent. in council house sales.

Where will the £1·75 billion which the Chief Secretary promised come from if council house sales collapse, as councils know that they will? Is it that the money can come only from councils selling all their other assets—their pools, libraries and parks? Sunderland council said that it was even contemplating selling the pictures off the walls in the town hall. Is not the real story that either councils will not have that £1·75 billion to spend, or we are set to see an unprecedented asset-strip—a forced privatisation and a selling of public assets at the bottom of the market?

To produce false figures on such a key issue as capital investment is not the way to generate confidence in the construction industry. The absence of new construction projects and the uncertainty that hangs over those already announced will not bring confidence back to the beleaguered construction industry. The Jubilee line extension was first announced in January 1989. It was announced again in November 1989, and in May this year it looked as though it was off. It was re-announced last week, but still, we note from the Chief Secretary, with no start date.

Plans for the Heathrow express rail link project are near to collapse and the £400 million cut in the external financing limit of London Transport threatens a range of services that would not only provide work but improve the long-term economic competitiveness of our capital city.

The picture on overall investment is bleak and on private investment it is bleaker still. Business investment has fallen by more than 10 per cent. in the past two years. The Government have begun to express concern, but the sum total of their proposals will, according to their own figures, leave investment stagnating next year. Yet they plan to cut the Department of Trade and Industry budget in real terms from £1·6 billion this year to £0·9 billion by 1995-96. Hardest hit are regional and general industrial support, set to fall by 15 per cent. in real terms in just two years.

What justification can there be in cutting programmes such as those to create jobs in assisted areas, those to provide grants to development areas, or inner city training projects? Cutting the DTI's budget is not the way to generate industrial confidence and, by 1995-96, the DTI's budget will be the same size as the Department for National Heritage's budget. Perhaps the two Departments can be merged into one Department of Heritage, Trade and Industry, presided over by a Minister for Fun and Former Glory, as industry becomes our past, but not part of our future.

There are fears that the manufacturing sector will be so weakened that it would be unable to respond if there were to be an upturn in demand. For the first time in Greater London there are more people on the dole than there are employed in the manufacturing industry. As the recession hits, that will be the case in other districts as well.

Things are so bad that even the Conservatives' traditional winter ball is in trouble—I am glad to say. This year, many firms will not be going to the ball. Former staunch supporters that will not be attending this year include Taylor Woodrow, Charles Barker, a public relations company, and GKN. The chairman of Bauman Webber, glass manufacturers, when asked—as usual—to pay for an advert in the brochure for the ball, said:

> "It is the ultimate sick joke—asking British industry to lend support. Now I wish the function every possible failure."

Peter Edmundson of Anglia Secure Homes said:

> "The damage done by the inept dogma of the Government cannot easily be forgiven."

They are leaving the ugly sisters of recession and bankruptcy to go to the ball on their own. They will stay at home and so will many others.

The autumn statement predicts that growth is set to rise next year by only 1 per cent. But increases in productivity mean that growth of at least 2 per cent. is needed to stop the relentless increase in the dole queue. The Chancellor admits that unemployment is set to carry on rising. We now have the highest male unemployment since the 1930s.

The real level of unemployment is probably closer to 4 million than 3 million, and there is now a four and a half year high in the number of long-term unemployed. However, as the number of unemployed grows, the budget of the Department of Employment is to be cut. Training and enterprise councils are to have £36 million cut from the budget that they were promised for next year.

The Government preach about the iniquities of the dependency culture, but they create dependency on a massive scale as people who want to work are thrown on the dole. The Government are adding to the dole queue. After the threat to 30,000 miners' jobs, the squeeze on local government spending means that thousands of council workers across the country will be made redundant. The National and Local Government Officers Association estimates that up to 50,000 jobs will go. We are talking not about jobs that are to be moved from the public to the private sector under compulsory competitive tendering, but about jobs that will actually go.

Public sector workers face not only redundancy but a wage freeze. Cutting the real wages of 5 million public servants is not the way to generate consumer confidence. To freeze public sector pay, to have a centrally imposed pay ceiling, is an unfair policy which will not work. It also means that the Government are reneging on everything that they said about pay bargaining. It is unfair to make public sector workers pay the price of the Government's economic failures. The policy will not work. High wages in the public sector did not lead to the recession, and freezing those wages will not end the recession. However, it will mean Ministers going back on their promises.

In May this year the Secretary of State for Health said at the Royal College of Nursing:

> "The review body is safe. I can endorse the resolution demanding that the Government retains the nurses and midwives pay review body. We will."

The Chief Secretary has just said that the Government will impose pay restraints. If the Government keep the review body and accept its recommendation for nurses, other public sector workers who do not have review bodies will face either pay cuts or redundancies.

In order to impose pay restraints in the public sector, the Government have performed a U-turn in their drive to decentralise pay bargaining. National health service hospital trusts were recently told to set their own pay levels. Now they are being told that if they give workers an increase of more than 1·5 per cent., their services will have to be cut even further.

I hope that one of the Ministers will deal with the issue raised yesterday by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) as it was not addressed then. As my hon. Friend said, the Government have overlooked the effects on the public sector pay bill of increments, which are automatically paid as part of the contract, to nurses, doctors and many other public sector workers. That means that any workers who were denied their increments could take their employers to court. A decision not to pay the increments would require legislation. But if the Government stick to their 1·5 per cent. overall ceiling, paying the increments will mean that there is little if anything left for other public sector workers. I hope that the Minister will answer that.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): As my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General made absolutely clear yesterday, the 1·5 per cent. ceiling applies to settlements—the total amount of pay in the settlement for any given year that is awarded to a particular group. While the hon. Lady is listing the problems of a pay policy in the national health service perhaps she will explain why, under the last Labour Government, nurses' pay fell 3 per cent. in real terms, and has risen by 43 per cent. under this Government.

Ms. Harman: The Minister has not answered my question whether the increments that are automatically paid under contract are included in the 1·5 per cent. ceiling.

Mr. Dorrell: They are in the base to which the 1·5 per cent. is applied to calculate the amount available to that group.

Ms. Harman: Which means that other people who do not receive increments will either have their pay frozen or will have to accept pay cuts.

The Government say that they plan to use a public sector pay policy to make available an extra £1·5 billion. They say that public servants must make the sacrifice because there is no other way. But the Government who tell some of the lowest paid to take cuts in their standard of living plan to lift the stamp duty on share transactions next April—a move which will mean a loss to the Exchequer of £1·5 billion over the next two years.

On Tuesday the Prime Minister talked of the British people's instinct for fairness. People will not think it fair to take money out of the pay packets of nurses and put it back into the wallets of people dealing in shares.

Mr. Portillo: While we are on the subject of fairness, how will the hon. Lady vote on the issue of the pay of Members of Parliament?

Ms. Harman: I think that it is right that the pay of Members of Parliament should be taken out of the arena, and not be used as a political football. I believe that our pay should be tied to that of civil servants. That decision was right—our salaries should be pegged to civil servants' pay levels.

I should like to ask the Chief Secretary whether he and his hon. Friends who are baying for a pay freeze for Members of Parliament will accept that their directorships, consultancies and other jobs are to be kept within the 1·5 per cent. Do they want to have a spiralling increase —*[Interruption.]* There seem to be a number of different views among Conservative Members on that subject.

I do not think that people will think that the plans for the health service are fair. When we compare the expenditure planned for the health service with the figures in the autumn statement, we see that there is a fall of nearly £700 million.

The costs of the recession are not measured only in the wreckage of lives and communities. The costs can also be seen in our public accounts. Money pours out to finance the growing number of people who are forced to depend on benefits, and receipts drop as companies go bust. Those who survive see their profits fall. In just four years, the public sector accounts have gone from a surplus of £14 billion to a deficit of nearly £40 billion, and the debt is still rising. That is the real story of the recession as it affects the public sector borrowing requirement.

After the autumn statement Conservative Members cheered. They waved their Order Papers and breathless Tory Back Benchers enthused to waiting journalists that it was absolutely brilliant. One said, "He has given me everything I wanted and more."

There is no reason for anyone to have confidence in anything that the Chancellor or Treasury Ministers say. We can all remember the Chancellor saying that he had seen the green shoots of recovery, but astonishingly he still maintains that he did see them—he just could not explain what happened to them. These are the people who told us that a vote for the Tories on 9 April would bring recovery on 10 April.

The really impressive figures in the autumn statement, towering above all others, are the margins of error. The average errors in predicting growth in investment are now 17 times greater than the growth that they predict. The figures predict a quarter of 1 per cent. increase in growth of investment, yet the average error for such prediction in recent years has been a 4·25 per cent. overestimation. If the Government do no more than repeat their past errors, there will be, not an increase of a quarter of 1 per cent., but a fall in growth of 4 per cent.—I mean, a fall in investment of 4 per cent.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): The figures do not add up.

Ms. Harman: It is the Government's figures which do not add up. The 0·25 per cent. increase in investment figure must be set beside the next column of figures, which shows that there is likely to be an average 4 per cent. drop.

It is clear that the Government's belief that the market will sort everything out has left them and the Chief Secretary as spectators while the recession deepens and jobs are lost. The right hon. Gentleman has no idea of how to end the recession; he does not even mention the job losses. The market has failed to offer answers to the new challenges of the environment, the north-south divide or the changes in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe. Having been in power for so many years, the

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Government now talk about opportunities and say that everyone else must take up those opportunities—yet the Government have allowed their opportunities to pass them by.

Of course there have always been opportunities, but the Government have not been prepared to turn them into realities for Britain. Throughout the country people are fearful of unemployment and of businesses folding. They are desperate for a reason to be confident, but the Government have a blind spot: they will not see that when the economic situation is as serious as it is the Government, and the Government alone, can stem the tide of disaster.

Confidence cannot be restored to the economy unless confidence in the Government is restored, and no one can have confidence in this Government. It is they who are the obstacle to the recovery that we need.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I call Mr. Terence Higgins——

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which is highly germane to this debate. While my hon. Friend has been speaking, news has been coming in—she alluded to it briefly—of an announcement of 5,000 redundancies by British Rail——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Redundancies outside have nothing to do with the Chair; neither have I had any requests for a statement.

Mr. Wilson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would it be in order to request a statement on the redundancies announced by British Rail this afternoon?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have made it clear that I have had no requests for any statements. [HON. MEMBERS: "You have now."] Order. I have made it clear that I have had no requests for statements on any subject.

5.33 pm

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): I join my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary in congratulating the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on her new appointment. No doubt we shall be hearing her speak in that capacity for many years to come. Unlike her, I welcome the autumn statement and I believe that in retrospect it will be seen as a turning point in our economic affairs.

I begin by dealing with an issue that has been too little mentioned. In his Budget speech in March, the Chancellor referred to a decision to change the annual Budget timetable so that tax and spending proposals would in future be presented to Parliament at the same time. He then issued a White Paper on budgetary reform in March. Both the Budget statement and the White Paper were rather overtaken by the general election, so an important change in our parliamentary procedures has been overlooked.

My right hon. Friend asked for comments on the White Paper. I do not know whether he has received many, but right hon. and hon. Members have not fully appreciated what is proposed. It has always been a strange feature of our affairs that what we describe as a Budget is not what people usually regard as one, because ours is concerned only with raising taxation; it does not bring together the two sides of the equation—taxation and public expenditure. Hence my welcome for my right hon. Friend's proposal.

The bibliography at the end of the White Paper, curiously, does not refer to the report 10 years ago of the Select Committee on Procedure (Finance) which dealt at considerable length with this issue. Although the report —I had the honour to chair the Committee which produced it—received a very dusty reply from the then Financial Secretary, I hope that as the Chancellor has now agreed to take the two sides of the equation together, which was our main point, he will also look at some of the other recommendations that we made.

There is a case for putting the technical matters which usually appear in the Finance Bill into a separate Bill, and for introducing a taxes management Bill embodying the aspects relating to changing rates, and so on. New taxes should appear in the form of separate legislation. I hope that Treasury Ministers will consider a number of these points.

I welcome the fact that next year we shall have two Budgets—one at the usual time and, if the proposals go through, another in December. That will have a radical effect on some of the points that we debate in this House.

We should also consider another point from the Select Committee report that I have mentioned. In this House we exercise a degree of control over taxation and public expenditure but, strangely, we have never had any control over borrowing. There is certainly a case—it happens in the United States—for our having some control over it, if only as a trigger to provoke a necessary debate if borrowing reaches excessive levels.

As for the broader aspects of the autumn statement, we have been interested in how policy has been set out after the withdrawal from the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. We had an emergency debate, the Chancellor appeared before the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, he made his Mansion house speech, and now we have had the autumn statement. The pattern of policy has now been comprehensively and clearly stated.

A great deal of criticism has been launched at the fact that we joined the ERM and then withdrew. Even with maximum hindsight at the point when we joined—had we known then that we should be forced to withdraw when we did—it would still have been the best way to reduce inflation from 11 per cent. to 4 per cent. Any other way of achieving that objective, by deflation or other means, would have been much less satisfactory and a far more painful way of attaining the Government's fundamental achievement of reducing inflation to the point at which we can resume non-inflationary economic growth. That is the idea contained in the autumn statement.

Although my right hon. Friend's autumn statement was rightly acclaimed by Conservative Members, we shall be repeatedly told in the next three or four months by the media and by the Opposition that it has failed in its objective. Whatever had been done, unemployment is a lagging indicator and would have continued to rise. That does not mean that what my hon. Friend did in the autumn statement was wrong; nor does it mean that we shall fail ultimately to produce the necessary results if we are to get back to growth.

There is no doubt that the balance of payments is likely to deteriorate in the coming months. The well-known J-curve effect is bound to have an impact. Import prices will rise, with an adverse effect on the balance of payments, and it will be some time before exports pick up and reverse that trend. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will not be put off by anything that the Opposition say, either about the trend in unemployment in the immediate future or about the balance of payments. The measures that he has taken are the right ones and we shall see a resumption of growth.

When there is a devaluation or a fall in the exchange rate of the kind that we have experienced, it is usual to say that the Government should deflate in order to make that exchange rate stick. That was not necessary in the present circumstances. Had we remained in the ERM, we were heading not for zero inflation but probably for minus 1 per cent. or minus 2 per cent. inflation. Therefore, there is no reason to take further action in terms of deflation and the balance struck by my right hon. Friend in the autumn statement is about right.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I note my right hon. Friend's assessment that we might have had minus 1 per cent. or minus 2 per cent. inflation. At what stage did he think that the monetary squeeze imposed by the ERM was much too strong?

Mr. Higgins: The question that needs to be considered is precisely the one that I posed a moment or two ago. We saw a fall in inflation from 11 per cent. to 4 per cent., and we may see a further slight decline now. None the less, that was the least painful way of achieving that fall. In that sense, the fact that we were in the ERM was beneficial to Britain.

There are difficulties about the cross rate between the deutschmark and the dollar, over which we have relatively little control or influence, but the exchange rate is probably about right. The general level in relation to both those currencies is near enough correct. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said, we have had a substantial cut in interest rates by 3 percentage points in a short period and, in addition, a change in the exchange rate, which I believe will produce the right level of growth.

Having said that, we need to be clear that in those circumstances one should allow the so-called automatic stabilisers to operate fully. I was rather heartened by what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said about distinguishing between cyclical increases and non-cyclical increases in public expenditure. As the hon. Member for Peckham also rightly pointed out, one must not seek to offset by further reductions in public expenditure or increases in taxation the fall in revenue which is also the result of the recession in the same way as there is an increase in public expenditure on social security benefits. I hope that that is a point on which there can be complete agreement on both sides of the House; otherwise, there would be a dangerous situation.

There is clearly a problem with regard to funding. I welcome what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said yesterday about further privatisation proceeds. I have always argued, as has the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, that privatisation proceeds should be regarded as a means of funding the public sector borrowing requirement rather than looking at them in any other way. It is also important to stress the help to funding the PSBR which was the result of borrowing foreign currency before we withdrew from the ERM—selling deutschmarks and buying sterling—which has itself made a considerable contribution to the funding process.

Another point that I hope that my right hon. Friend and his colleagues will consider carefully is that the PSBR, M4 and all the other indicators are in many ways a deficient way of managing our economic affairs. I have always thought it strange that in private business one has an income and expenditure account and a balance sheet, but the Government have only an income and expenditure account and pay no regard at all to the balance sheet.

The reality is that over the years we have seen huge fluctuations in the net worth of the British economy, or the Government sector, which have clouded many important aspects of economic management. Now that we have better data on that, we shall gradually be able to construct a more sophisticated Government balance sheet and national balance sheet. Some attention needs to be given to that important issue.

I have already said that the devaluation, the cut in interest rates, and the autumn statement will return us to non-inflationary economic growth, but it has to be done in the international context. I am glad that the Prime Minister has taken such a tough line on the Uruguay round of the GATT negotiations. It would be absurd if a dispute about whether there should be a subsidy in a particular country for oilseed, or whatever, were to jeopardise the entire GATT negotiations and the Uruguay round on which the immediate and long-term future of the world economy so importantly depends.

Therefore, I hope that the negotiations now taking place will be brought to a successful conclusion. It would be absurd for narrow national interests within the EC to jeopardise our negotiating position, adherence to the GATT rules as they now are and the future improvements in that area.

Having said that, I believe that the Government's overall policy is now right and that the autumn statement will be seen as a turning point in our economic affairs when we review these matters in the future.

5.46 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) was right to draw attention to the importance of GATT, something on which I am sure that the House is united. He mentioned that we shall have two Budgets next year, but he will realise that we have had two Budgets this year. There is no question but that this autumn statement has been rather more of a Budget than the usual autumn statement.

This autumn statement owes its origins entirely to the consequences of black Wednesday, 16 September. It is a great pity that all the voices that we heard from Germany and elsewhere did not penetrate the Treasury to bring about an agreed devaluation which would have saved £1 billion or £2 billion. The voices were strong and the nonsense of going up to 12 per cent., then 15 per cent. and then coming down, was one of the more shameful aspects of the whole affair. We were behaving like a banana republic when we should have had greater sense and a greater feel for the situation. The Treasury always used to

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have that, the Bank of England certainly had it, and it is a great pity that, at a time of crisis, their tentacles did not spread to an understanding of those matters.

We are seeing a discontinuity. There has been a fundamental change, quite rightly; one would expect it, following the events of black Wednesday. Old policy had to be thought out afresh, and I do not grumble at that. However, those who try to pretend that that is part of the continuing pattern of reacting to the kind of dogmas that we had in the past fail to understand the fundamental change that we are seeing.

In order to illustrate that, we need only consider the autumn statement and what would have happened if we had not had black Wednesday. It is fairly clear that there would have been some big changes in the autumn statement. Let us look at one or two.

A 1½ per cent. growth is expected in domestic demand. I suspect that that would have probably been zero. Non-oil GDP is going up by 0·75 per cent. Again, it would have been zero or perhaps less. The right hon. Gentleman talked about negative inflation and he could well have been right. Manufacturing output certainly would not have grown; it would probably have shrunk further. The retail price index could well have gone down and it might even have met some of the true definitions of deflation—negative inflation.

Those things have changed. We heard that the Chancellor was singing in his bath, but for someone who has lost Britain £1 billion or £2 billion that seems to be an excessive reaction.

Inflation is not the main priority. It has been the main priority for all Chancellors of the Exchequer in the past, and it has now changed. Clearly, levels of inflation will be rather more than had previously been thought.

The Government's main priority is moving towards growth, and I am delighted to see that—in terms of words, if not entirely in terms of actions—they are moving towards growth in manufacturing industry. About time too. At least the Government are making the right sounds, even if they are not doing the right things. In the past, people have looked to the City for the salvation of our economy. When Churchill pointed out that finance should be less proud and industry more content, he may have been acknowledging that finance depends on industry. The lesson that must be learned is that manufacturing industry is not just an add-on, but a fundamental part of the whole.

London owes its development as a financial centre entirely to manufacturing industry, which, in the past, produced the goods that made London a means of putting money into industry. Similarly, New York became the financial centre of the United States, because it provided the means of putting money into the big steel makers and so forth. Today, Frankfurt is a major financial centre because it is responding to the needs of German manufacturing industry. Formerly, no one had heard of Tokyo as a financial centre; now it is one of the two or three major financial centres of the world, for the same reason.

The Bundesbank has become powerful not because it is the cause of German success, but because it is the result of that success. If our industry were equally successful, I might be prepared to adopt the view of the Bank of England that so many Germans take of their Bundesbank; unfortunately, however, our manufacturing industry has declined. Even today, the *Financial Times* contains pages of great manufacturing names that are going under, and we have not yet reached the end of that unhappy roll.

I am delighted to learn that the Government are now talking of manufacturing industry in more respectful terms than they have ever used before. When he was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Nicholas Ridley—now Lord Ridley—said:

> "I do not think it is a disaster if we become an economy primarily based on the service sector. It isn't vital that we have a large manufacturing sector."

I think that it is indeed a disaster that we have allowed manufacturing industry to decline so badly. It is not just a question of jobs, although of course jobs are important; it is a question of output.

When manufacturing industry is becoming more efficient, it is possible to employ declining numbers, and to use the wealth that is created to improve the infrastructure and our social services—to help our fellow citizens, in fact. The more we make, the more we replace imports; the more we make, the more we can export; and the money that produces can pay for the improvements I have cited.

Not so long ago, we used to make virtually everything in this country. That certainly happened in my lifetime: indeed, it was happening when I was a young man working in industry. If a customer wanted to buy something, he turned to the various directories that were the equivalent of today's Yellow Pages, which advertised any number of goods. We made everything—from typewriters to washing machines, from cars to textiles. We may have imported some goods, but in the main they were curiosities.

I appreciate that the world has changed, and that there is now international specialisation. Nevertheless, the most important aspect of our former dominant industrial position was the fact that, if the Chancellor of the Exchequer increased demand, he also increased production at home: the two went together. Now that we import so many of our manufactured goods—more than we export—the use of demand management to control the economy is not the same as it used to be. If demand is increased, the number of imports also increases. That is why, for the first time for 10 or 15 years, manufacturers must be helped directly if they are to be helped at all. They cannot be helped in the same "macro" ways that were used in the past.

Mr. Bellingham: I agree with some of what the right hon. Gentleman is saying, but I think that he should be careful not to sell Britain short. According to the German magazine *Director*, 27 of the top 50 European companies are British.

Mr. Sheldon: That has always been the case. Fifty or 100 years ago, we had the largest companies in the world; unfortunately, size did not always go together with efficiency or performance.

I welcome the Chancellor's acceptance of the importance of capital allowances, for which I have argued throughout my parliamentary life. Obviously Labour Members must welcome it, as it was part of Labour's programme. However, I would have preferred the allowances to be rather higher. Until now, they amounted to 25 per cent.; that was nonsense, as salesmen often received 25 per cent. commission on orders, and in most cases the true depreciation—the price that could be obtained for the sale of the asset—was well below 75 per cent. of the purchase price. That was not an investment incentive; it was an investment disincentive. Those who invested in plant and machinery lost money.

I am also delighted that the Chancellor has restricted the measure to plant and machinery. I have repeatedly argued for that as well. Much so-called investment is not real investment at all: it may be spent on office furniture and fancy reception areas. Investment in plant and machinery is the closest that we can get to a definition of true investment. I should, of course, have been happier if the Chancellor had increased the allowance to 60 or even 70 per cent. There was a time when free depreciation operated.

I understand that the allowances are to be time-limited, but I do not believe it. I think that they will be built into the new sensible approach to manufacturing industry, and will become a permanent memorial to the Government's change of attitude. At least they are now facing the realities. It is a pity that this is happening during a recession, because we shall not see the desired levels of investment; but at least something is being done.

I was pleased to note that Howard Davies of the CBI was inching back to a better understanding of manufacturing industry. I also welcomed the formation of the National Manufacturing Council. Its members, however, cannot forget their past: they still feel constrained to make a bow to their past political errors. They talk of the record of the 1980s, and state that manufacturing made considerable strides then. That is obvious nonsense. I lost 33 per cent. of my companies between 1979 and 1981. The council also mentions progress since 1985, but its views sound like those of Tory politicians rather than representatives of manufacturing industry.

As I have said, I lost one third of my companies, and I feel badly about it. They were not old-tech companies; they were medium-tech companies of the kind that can be seen in France, Germany, Japan and indeed every country in the world. Those companies went bust and closed their doors, and it is possible that a further 10 per cent. will go.

The country as a whole has experienced a similar decline. These are serious matters: the narrowness of our present industrial base is one of the country's main problems. We have an horrendous balance of payments deficit, in the middle of the deepest recession since the war. Along with that deficit—a deficit of historic proportions —we are experiencing the miserable failure of our export performance. We must ask why that is happening. In the past the two developments would never have coincided, but we have grown accustomed to experiencing a balance of payments deficit in the midst of a slump.

Sir Terence Beckett, the former director general of the CBI, once called for a bare-knuckled fight. He did not like the Government's attitude to the slump between 1979 and 1981. He came from manufacturing industry and realised the damage that was being done to it, but he did not realise that powerful importers and financiers were members of the Confederation of British Industry. Conservative party voices had high places in the CBI. Unfortunately for manufacturing industry, therefore, Sir Terence was soon brought to heel. That was very sad. He understood manufacturing industry. He thought that the CBI represented it, but it did not. At least the CBI is making up a bit for that now. Howard Davies and a few other voices are moving in the right direction. It is up to us to encourage them.

British producers have been helped by the depreciation of the pound. It was fixed at an absurd level. I should have preferred the pound to be somewhat lower than it is now against the deutschmark. Failing a revaluation of the deutschmark, it is a pity that we and the other European Community countries found it impossible to get together and devalue our currencies so as to force a revaluation of the deutschmark. That cannot be done, though; the differences between us are insuperable.

I have always been and I am still in favour of a fixed exchange rate. Wildly fluctuating rates of exchange are a barrier to competitive pricing. We cannot price finely when the rates are going up and down every day and every week. There has to be a readjustment of exchange rates every two or three years, though. Even if the readjustment is 10 per cent. or 15 per cent., it is less expensive than the violent fluctuations that force manufacturers to fix high prices in order to cover their profit margins.

At one time it was possible, depending upon whether one was importing or exporting, to hedge in the forward market. If one sold a batch of goods that went on a certain ship on a certain day, one could hedge perfectly. We cannot do that now. The home and the export markets are much the same. People buy over a long period, then cancel, or hold one up. If one hedges against that, one may lose money on one's currency as well as losing money on one's sales. Therefore, manufacturers cannot operate in that way. We must therefore accept the need for fixed exchange rates that will have to be readjusted every so often. We cannot fix the exchange rates for ever.

Capital programmes take time to come to fruition. The new deal in the United States resulted in the great Tennessee valley authority, but it was several years before they began to feel the effects. We are experiencing the same problems. It takes time before people can be employed. However, we can do something about housing starts. We can free the capital resources held by local authorities, though not enormously. I have enough of the Treasury mentality still in me to know that one cannot throw those resources away, but we can do something in that direction.

We can do something even better in the case of housing repairs. They get people working next week. There are jobs that I could hand out straight away to people who come to my advice bureau. I am sure that every other hon. Member is in the same position. It is a pity that we have not turned our attention to that aspect.

As for the international dimension—GATT and Maastricht—the economic aspects of Maastricht do not bother me that much. I do not believe that monetary union will ever work, so I am more relaxed about it than are some of my colleagues. Does any hon. Member really believe that Italy will fit in with a German-dominated, fixed and unalterable economy? I just cannot see it. It is dreamland. I have seen the results of some of the intervention policies in relation to farm subsidies.

In one instance, Germany had about 500 cases of fraud each year; we had about 600 cases; and Italy had about three. There are differences between countries. Anybody who thinks that we can merge countries together just like that is mistaken. I am not bothered about that, however: it will not happen. It is a pity that all the European Community countries will not consider the Bill in Committee. Committee stages expose such nonsenses. I am sure that they will be exposed during our Committee stage.

Mr. Budgen: Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that he has touched upon one of the many arguments used by those in the Conservative Whips Office—"Vote for the treaty," say they. "We know that it's a complete nonsense, but if you're right in saying that it's nonsense, it will break up and it won't have the effects that you say it will have". Is it not a fact, however, that to vote for nonsense probably imposes upon the British people the risk of a return to the over-tight credit that they have endured for the last two years, and that, before it breaks up, a great deal of damage will have been done to our fellow citizens?

Mr. Sheldon: My feeling, although it is not so strong as it is in relation to my previous comments, is that we shall not get that far. We can see the cracks now. We shall not need to wait very long. The danger about bothering about that is that we are not bothering enough about what is even more important. The Prime Minister was right to draw attention to the difference between Maastricht, which is a nonsensical problem, and the real problem of GATT and the equally great economic problems of Russia and the eastern European countries. It may not be long before they cease to be economic problems. They could become political problems, and even military problems. It is wrong to concentrate on these preoccupations and to ignore the greater problems that could yet face us.

The return to growth promises very little. It also depends upon the Government's incomes policy—compulsion in the public sector and exhortation in the private sector. The first will not work very well. The second will be a complete failure. The Government talk about the failures of the past. They need to think about the failures of the present. The autumn statement suggests that they have quite a bit to learn.

6.6 pm

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): It has been extremely interesting to hear the old and the new economic voices of the Labour party. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) made a strong case for manufacturing industry. I suppose that he is unaware of what is happening in the far east, in the ASEAN countries, and I suppose that he is unaware that China is building hundreds and hundreds of factories, using local labour. British, Hong Kong and Taiwanese companies are investing in China and are producing exactly what the right hon. Gentleman looks back to—almost to the old Commonwealth preference days when it would all have come right again.

I have visited the Shanghai Tool company. I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman has visited it. It is an enormous conglomerate. It makes tens of thousands of tool kits, spanner sets and all the other goods that we import. If we went into any hardware shop, we should find that nearly 80 per cent. of the goods on sale there come from the far east. They certainly come from Taiwan. They certainly come from the Shanghai Tool company. Apart from our own peripheral problems, we shall be forced to compete with giants, in manufacturing terms. Sometimes we lose sight of what is happening in the rest of the world.

This debate ought to be called a confidence debate. Our society needs to place more confidence in our banking industry, our investors and our shippers. Anyone listening to Opposition Members today would have gained little confidence from them and would not immediately have rushed out to phone their broker and say, "Buy me into UK Limited."

Years ago, we had the British disease in manufacturing, but now we have despondency. We cry immediately that nothing will work out. I view the autumn statement as a good step towards restoring confidence in the private sector. Shadow Ministers have a great responsibility to advance their party's policy, but they must ensure that they do not denigrate everything that this House or the other place is doing. That is a road to disaster.

I do not think that everyone needs to have run a business to understand business. We are more a university of business than a house of business and sometimes our theories go a little awry.

Some years ago, I tabled written questions on joint ventures between the public and private sectors on road and bridge construction. I am pleased that at long last we are moving strongly in that direction. That is exactly what is happening in China, Taiwan and Singapore, and it is a good example to follow.

One of the best confidence-boosting measures in the autumn statement is that designed to deal with the problems of the housing market. Once again, it has been denigrated as being too little, too late, but £750 million has been allocated to buy unoccupied homes which are falling into disrepair. We have some magnificent housing associations, and I can think of two in my constituency—Hythe and South Bank housing association and Swaythling housing association. They will be eager to obtain some of those millions, with which they could buy quite a number of empty properties that are being vandalised. In the short term, it will do much to house homeless people and to reduce council lists.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): It will not work.

Mr. Hill: The hon. Gentleman obviously did not listen to the first half of my speech: we must have some confidence, and £750 million is not an insignificant sum.

Mr. Howarth: But not false confidence.

Mr. Hill: I eagerly await the hon. Gentleman's speech, which will be very depressing.

The issue of councils being able to spend capital receipts has been running for some years. It became apparent during the election campaign that councils could spend 25 per cent. of their receipts from sales, but now they will be able to spend 100 per cent. That is a good move, but not all local authorities have been assiduous in selling their council house stock. Some of them have made it almost impossible for tenants to buy, and we had to enact legislation to force them to sell. Tremendous incentives are now on offer to councils which have not been politically inspired to sell council houses.

My right hon. and hon. Friends in the Treasury could consider the provisions on the purchase of capital equipment. Increasing allowances from 25 per cent. to 40 per cent. is a bit mean. Manufacturers are looking forward to selling JCBs, tractors or anything made in the United Kingdom and to a higher allowance than 40 per cent. Perhaps that could be considered in the next Budget.

I am pleased to see that an extra 8 per cent. has been allocated to further education colleges, but we now have a problem with primary schools. In Hampshire, 72 primary schools are consulting on whether to close, merge or continue. At little cost, some of them could be turned into joint primary and middle schools and could be used to the benefit of the community. The community is adapting to primary school policies, and volunteers have much to offer. Sometimes the most run-down areas have the most enthusiastic volunteers, but a little more expenditure should be allocated to primary schools.

We have honoured our manifesto commitment to pensioners and families. That was surprising, given the despondency about the Government's proposals.

We must deal with the desperate state of our communications infrastructure, which is as essential to industry as industry itself. If a factory incurs extra cost in getting its products to a port or airport, or has to use a long winding route, that increases costs.

I hope that I have not spoken for too long. We must ensure a successful conclusion to the GATT round. I shall mention that to Delors and Mr. Mitterrand, who are playing a very dangerous game. Until they come round and see the benefits of GATT for the whole world, rather than a few hundred French farmers, we shall be in difficulty. It appears that there will be a push to get a decent settlement to the GATT talks, but I dislike the nationalistic approach to world problems.

6.18 pm

Ms. Janet Anderson (Rossendale and Darwen): The autumn statement represents the vacuum at the heart of the Government's policy—the gap between what Ministers promise at the election and what they do when they are re-elected. It is a question of trust, and the Government can no longer be trusted. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), the shadow Chancellor, said yesterday, it is more a matter of misrepresentation to the people than representation of the people.

The Chancellor, who claims to favour capital investment, has cut the capital programme for London Transport. Much-needed renovation to lines that cause misery to London commuters is to be cancelled, and he refuses to provide urgently needed funds.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Anderson: I will not give way at this stage.

The Chancellor refused to provide urgently needed funds for the electrification of the west coast main line, which is vital to the economic regeneration of the north-west and is of considerable interest to businesses and people in my constituency.

I have to tell the Chancellor and other Conservative Members that the business men and women of Rossendale and Darwen view that omission with considerable concern and regret. It came as no surprise to me recently to receive a letter from a business man in my constituency who told me that, although he was a former Tory voter—he voted Conservative at the general election—he would vote Labour from now on. His letter ended with the words:

> "Never has so much harm been done to so many businesses by so few".

The Chancellor talks about giving the construction industry a kick start, yet he refuses to allow local authorities to spend the £5 billion of existing capital receipts to fund new housing. The builders in my constituency will not forgive him for that, either.

The Chancellor talks about growth, and the need to boost consumer confidence, yet he imposes a 1·5 per cent. ceiling on pay increases for some of the lowest paid workers in the country.

Meanwhile, the Secretary of State for Employment—I am sure that by rights he—[HON. MEMBERS: "She."]—should now be renamed the Secretary of State responsible for unemployment—proposes to turn the screw further by abolishing the wages councils.

Devaluation has cut the living standards of ordinary people, and so will the new incomes policy of a Government who are supposed to believe in the free market. While Lord King awards himself a pay rise of no less than £1,000 a week, those who work in the public sector are being asked to shoulder the burden of the Government's economic incompetence. According to the Government's logic, the cosseted privileged public sector workers must take their fair share of the pain of the recession. I suggest that Ministers tell that to the 3,500 staff who have lost their jobs in the national health service since the general election.

We are told that nurses can afford to take what amounts to a pay cut because they have greater job security than workers in the private sector. If that is true, the Government should guarantee that there will be no more nursing redundancies. Why should nurses take the blame for the Government's failure? Yet that is what has happened. The council tax is bad enough, but the tax on nurses, on whom we rely for our health care, is not only morally reprehensible but unjust and shortsighted. It is indicative of the Government's short-term approach to everything.

Another example of that misguided philosophy, hidden in the small print of the autumn statement, is the postponement of nurse prescribing. The general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing says that nurses have suffered a double blow in the autumn statement. Not only do they face a pay cut, but their long struggle to win prescribing rights has been swept aside in favour of short-term cost cutting.

The Department of Health's research into the cost of nurse prescribing proves it to be cost effective, and recognises that patients would be treated faster and nurses would gain increased job satisfaction if nurse prescribing were introduced. The Government fought a general election on a pledge to introduce nurse prescribing, and the Secretary of State for Health has made several commitments to the scheme, including one to implement it by October 1993.

The Conservative manifesto said:

> "We will introduce powers for nurses to prescribe where appropriate".

The Secretary of State said in the House on 3 May that the Government were fully committed to the idea of nurse prescribing. In a speech to the Royal College of Nursing congress on 22 April she said:

> "Nurse prescribing makes sense. It is a proper recognition of community nurses' skills. We will implement nurse prescribing by October 1993."

In November 1991 the Department of Health published a cost benefit analysis of nurse prescribing which found that the savings that it generated almost exactly offset the cost of implementing and running the scheme, even before a value had been placed on the improved service to patients.

[Ms. Anderson]

The declared aim of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 was to put patients' interests first. Similarly, the citizens charter and patients charter are based on that philosophy. If the Government are serious about putting patients first and delivering an effective health service, they should reconsider their decision to postpone nurse prescribing.

6.25 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I join other Conservative Members in welcoming the autumn statement as an important step in the right direction, but I shall also sound two possible notes of caution. The first is that there is still a danger that the money supply may be too tight. The second is that, in common with several of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I am concerned that the fiscal side is in danger of becoming too loose. The combined effect of those two factors could be a double squeeze on the private sector—which, after all, generates all wealth.

Two monetary features of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's public spending announcement are welcome. The first is the 1 per cent. cut in interest rates. The second, and the more important, is his commitment to a monitoring range for broad money—M4.

After a third successive cut in interest rates and a substantial devaluation against all other currencies, it may seem churlish to suggest that the money supply may still be too tight. None the less, if we look around us at the economy, all the indicators are still of tight money, with the solitary exception of the narrow money measure MO. This morning's figures confirm that M4, which has fallen from a peak of more than 18 per cent., remains at about 5 per cent. I believe, as does the Bundesbank, that M3 is a better measure of economic output—and that has fallen from 22 per cent. to about 3 per cent. now.

The anecdotal signs in the economy, too, still suggest that money is too tight. I welcome my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's initiative with the banks. I believe that bankers are being thoroughly greedy at the moment, but we must recognise the fact that, as well as being greedy, they are frightened.

The situation in the motor industry is definitely improving; yet Ford has recently announced that it is substantially increasing its payment period to small suppliers in stages from 30 days to 120 days. That, too, is a sign of the tightness of money in the economy. What one company is doing is reflected in many others.

A third factor which suggests that money is too tight is the kind of national balance sheet analysis carried out by people such as Tim Congdon——

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro) *rose*——

Mr. Brazier: I will give way in a moment.

Such a balance sheet analysis shows, for example, that the ratio of mortgage debt to the value of the nation's housing stock is at an all-time high. The situation is similar in the commercial property sector, and that is especially important to the banks.

I am certainly not a gloom monger. I firmly believe that the measures announced by my right hon. Friend last week are exactly what we need to move us on towards recovery. However, I suggest that in at least one respect—on the residential side—there is a danger that the property market may go further.

There are two reasons for that, the first of which is historic. The ratio of house prices to earnings is now 3:1. It is important to look back to the last sustained period of low inflation for a comparison, because I believe that the Government have cracked inflation, so I shall look back to the decade from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s. The ratio then was exactly 3:1. Because that ratio is a lagging indicator, in a recession, especially in the latter portion of a recession, one would expect it now to be rather below trend. So there are historical reasons for believing that house prices may fall further.

That reason is reinforced by a geographical fact: for the first time in its history, this country is about to have a land border—via the channel tunnel. The extreme disparity between house prices in south-east England and those in north-west France cannot continue to be as wide as it now is. Several of my constituents are already buying second homes, or even retirement homes, across the channel.

I suggest to my hon. Friend that it is possible that the housing market will have one further stage of readjustment to make and that that may result in further monetary tightening as people become less willing to spend as a result.

I do not suggest for a moment that we should try to persuade water to run uphill on house prices, but I believe that there are two respects in which it is important that we keep our eye on monetary policy. First, my right hon. Friend should think of tightening the monitoring range for broad money from a monitoring range to a firm target. If we find that M4 moves below the 4 per cent. bottom, we should then be willing, whatever is happening to the exchange rate, to loosen the money supply.

Secondly, and in some ways more importantly, we must look again at our funding policy. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) was right to suggest that borrowing some of our money from abroad had a welcome loosening effect on monetary policy, which shows up in this morning's figures. I suggest that we should be willing to do not only what we did 10 years ago, but also what the Americans are doing now through the Federal bank: we must be willing, up to a certain point, to underfund. That is a way in which to get more liquidity back into the banks.

The fear of a £40 billion policy of gilt-edged sales next year is a significant factor in the tightness that we find in the market now. Long-range interest rates did not fall at all last week when base rate came down. Long-term interest rates actually marginally hardened, and they are now about 8·5 per cent.

That point brings me naturally to fiscal policy, the other side of my speech. As I stressed, we should underfund. However, no serious economist of any school believes that we could monetise the whole of next year's prospective deficit. Like others of my hon. Friends, I feel that we must be willing to consider some very unpalatable and painful choices in the medium term. We should plot a path over the medium term of five or six years back to a balanced budget and we should firmly commit ourselves to that path.

We must be willing to look at some unattractive choices, on both the tax and spending sides. I mention three items on my own shopping list on taxation, none of which would be very painful and each of which should be considered. First, we should end the anomaly whereby married couples can opt to have it both ways. Married couples can opt to be taxed separately and to claim the married person's tax allowance. I am all in favour of choice, but it seems wrong that a couple should be allowed to choose to have it both ways when public borrowing is so stretched.

Secondly, with the welcome measure to abolish car tax—a thoroughly sensible measure to assist a very important industry—it would be reasonable to complete the sensible move towards full fiscal neutrality on cars as a perk. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has already gone a long way towards that. He should complete the move in next April's Budget.

Thirdly, we should abolish the 50 per cent. discount on council tax for second homes, if they are genuinely second homes. There should, of course, be sensible safeguards for those in special circumstances, such as those who have had to move although the sale of their original residence has fallen through.

One area on the spending side in which I would not suggest further cuts is defence spending. That may come as no surprise to my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary. I make two points. First, in a single decade—from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s—on our present plans we shall have cut defence spending as a proportion of GDP from 5·2 per cent. to 3·2 per cent. Even if the international changes were as rosy as we thought they were when "Options for Change" was launched—I am not convinced that the international outlook is especially rosy—that is still a massive reduction in spending. It is far larger than the planned reduction in manpower. I suggest that further cuts in defence spending beyond our present plans would be unwise.

Secondly, it is now the defence procurement budget, almost alone of the various areas of Government spending, which directly and immediately reaches forward into manufacturing industry. When companies have short order books in other areas, it is potentially economically costly to cut defence orders. Such a cut could undermine the design bases of the companies involved.

We must face the fact that there will have to be some cuts on the spending side. I shall mention three areas that we could consider. The first is one aspect of higher education. I am a strong supporter of the increase in opportunity for higher education that we have provided. Participation in higher education has doubled. However, there is waste in one area of higher education. We have an extraordinary system—I do not know of any other country which has such a system—of sending the majority of our students away from home to study on courses, hundreds of miles away in some cases. In most other countries, the majority of people study at their local university, so neither taxpayers nor parents face the cost of accommodating them elsewhere.

The second area that we should consider is the legal aid budget. I welcome the modest step that my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor has taken. When I hear some of the howls of outrage, I am reminded of the old adage that hell hath no fury like a vested interest masquerading as a principle. The legal aid budget has doubled in four years and a 10 per cent. real increase is planned in each of the next two years, so we should look harder still at it. We should consider reducing the scope of legal aid as well as eligibility on which we have started.

The third area is spending on local government. We should ask ourselves whether we can justify each of the extra duties imposed on local government over the past few years. Many of them are welcome, but do we really need all of them? Last week, I came across one small example involving £30 million to £40 million a year. How could we have agreed to a new arrangement for the typing of Crown prosecution service documents which will cost an extra £750,000 in Kent alone next year? We must go through the fine print of such arrangements. We must be willing to take every step that we can, in little bits and in larger bits, to get the fiscal deficit down so that we can see a return to a balanced budget within five or six years.

I end where I came in. In a number of ways, the autumn statement is the package that we need for recovery. We have seen a substantial easing of monetary policy, although I should like to see us go further. We have seen a return to a monitoring range for broad money, and we have seen a number of welcome individual fiscal measures which will help vital industries towards recovery.

If the Government develop their policy further, we shall see a return to growth—sustainable growth—over the next year or two. It will be non-inflationary growth. We have beaten inflation. It is right that the clear, single objective of non-inflationary growth has been the Government's consistent objective since 1979.

6.38 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): My speech will be mercifully short because of the weakness of my voice. Autumn may be a season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, but in the House of Commons it is a time of sniffles and hacking coughs. I am no exception.

I suggest that the autumn statement may be a turning point. Sadly, it is not a turning point in the nation's economic fortunes. As the autumn statement itself shows, the economy is still in profound recession, with rising unemployment, falling investment, and a large and growing balance of payments deficit at a time of recession, which must be very worrying.

It is, however, I believe, a turning point in the Government's approach to fiscal policy, and here I want to refer to the area about which the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) was speaking, although perhaps in a rather different way. Many commentators have concentrated on devaluation and the ability to reduce interest rates since we were forced out of the ERM. But of course there is little new about this. All that has happened is that we have returned to the floating world of the 1980s, a world which I thought had very grave disadvantages.

What is different in the autumn statement is that for the first time since 1979 the Government are overtly using fiscal policy in what can be described as a Keynesian way. Of course, Ministers are denying that this is the case. The Chancellor continues to say, as he said to the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, that he does not believe in kick-starting the economy by "some artificial stimulus or device." This new approach has been forced on the Government by the depth of the recession, and of course the measures that the Government have adopted are too little and too late. Even so, most people would see measures such as the £750 million to buy empty houses, the temporary freedom of local authorities to use future

[Mr. Giles Radice]

capital receipts, the capital allowances for industry and the removal of the tax on motor cars as stimuli or devices to assist recovery.

Anybody who really believes that Tory economic policy is a seamless web, which is the line that is often peddled before our Select Committee, should compare the 1992 autumn statement—which I agree is a sort of mini-Budget —with the Budget of 1981. In the March Budget of that year the Government drastically tightened the fiscal stance even though the economy was in deep recession. The then Prime Minister's economic adviser called it the biggest fiscal squeeze of peacetime. We have been reminded by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) what that did to industry.

The 1992 autumn statement, with its £37 billion public sector borrowing requirement, its automatic stabilisers—I agree with the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), who was such a good Chairman of our Select Committee, that the automatc stabilisers are fully working —and, of course, the so-called recovery package, modest and inadequate though that is, is totally different in tone and emphasis from what happened in 1981.

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): Does the hon. Gentleman not recognise that in the circumstances of the 1981 Budget we were looking at inflation of over 10 per cent.? Does he not accept that now, with inflation below 4 per cent. and still falling, it is a very different economic situation?

Mr. Radice: I agree that it is a different economic situation to this extent: that the recession is deeper, probably, and has lasted much longer. Therefore, it is right that we should be doing something about it.

Mr. Budgen: Since many hon. Members are concerned about the comparison between 1981 and 1992, there is a further difference. The period before 1981 had been marked by very considerable increases in the money supply and there was no doubt that for quite considerable periods credit had been much too lax. On the other hand, the period before today has been one in which credit has been much too tight.

Mr. Radice: I do not want to intervene in the grief of the monetarists because I do not really believe in all that stuff, as the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well.

Unfortunately, though it may be different in tone, it is unlikely that this package will be enough to bring about the recovery that we all want. The Chancellor has pointed to interest rate reductions as his main weapon in bringing about recovery, but it will not necessarily do the trick. We have only to look at what has happened in the United States, where interest rates are much lower than they are in the United Kingdom, yet, even so, there is not a full recovery taking place there.

Anybody who wants to see what has happened to our debt ratio need only turn to chart 3.8 on page 65 of the autumn statement. It really puts the problem in relief, and it is a very severe problem. Lord Lawson, who was, of course, the chief architect of our financial liberalisation, has admitted that he underestimated the impact that it was likely to have, and it has brought this debt problem with it. The question is whether the reduction of interest rates will be enough to stimulate consumer spending. I do not believe that it will and I do not think that we can risk it. That is the case for Government action and for a more significant package than the Government have brought to the House in the autumn statement.

The Government have missed a tremendous opportunity in one area. They should have used all the existing capital receipts so that local authorities could go ahead with investing in useful projects. I believe that the package should be paid for by borrowing at this time. In a slump of this scale and length, the proper reaction is the Keynesian one of deficit Government financing.

I share, however, the worry about the size of the PSBR; it is £39 billion, I think, in the coming year and it could go up to £50 billion the year after, which would be 7 per cent. of gross domestic product, according to the Grey Book. I agree with my pair, the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), that we cannot allow the PSBR to continue at that level for any length of time. We see only too clearly the consequences in the United States not only in inflation but of the fact that, if the PSBR continues at a very high level for a long time, the Government lose their ability to act, their flexibility.

That is why I agree with the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North and believe that there is a case for increasing taxes, not necessarily in the next Budget but when the economy is on the path to recovery. We have to use all the weapons at our disposal and it is about time the Conservative party stopped its ideological objections to putting up taxes, even direct taxes, because they may need to do so and they should face up to that.

Mr. Higgins: The PSBR that the hon. Gentleman is talking about here is the one before the automatic stabilisers have worked through. He needs to place his worries about taxation against the background that we are back in a situation where they have worked. So I do not share the view expressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) yesterday about taxation.

Mr. Radice: The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North wanted it in the next Budget; I do not want it in the next Budget. I want recovery on the way before we start operating. The right hon. Member for Worthing is, of course, right that once there is a recovery that in itself improves the PSBR, because expenditure on unemployment, one hopes, begins to come down and the tax take increases.

I also believe that there are very considerable problems with Keynesianism in one country, as we saw in France in 1981-83. There is always a danger if one expands one's economy when others are contracting theirs. That is all the more true in the United Kingdom when we have this enormous structural balance of payments deficit. I was very alarmed to see on page 65 of the autumn statement that the Government, or at any rate their forecasters, are predicting a further rise in import penetration. That must be extremely worrying and it suggests, as the Confederation of British Industry has pointed out, that our manufacturing base may now be too small, so that if we start to expand we shall suck in imports from abroad.

That makes the case for a European-wide programme of infrastructure projects, as suggested by Mr. Jacques Delors, but turned down by the Prime Minister at the Birmingham summit. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will take a more sensible attitude at the Edinburgh summit. Certainly there is a case for European-wide recovery. If we expand alone, our balance of payments deficit could become so large that it would be impossible to finance, and that must be a serious problem.

The autumn statement shows that old-style monetarism and primitive laissez-faire economics are out, and I am glad about that. There is a new agenda, in the United States and elsewhere, and that new agenda implies a more active role for Governments in economic affairs. In the autumn statement, the Government have moved half-heartedly in that direction. But their heart is not in it and, over the next few years, the country will turn to those who really believe in more purposive government—the genuine article, as represented by my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench.

6.51 pm

Mr. Michael Ancram (Devizes): Although I may not agree with everything that the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) said, I think that we would all agree that his new voice of mellow fruitfulness suits him; we hope to hear it again in the near future.

The debate to which I have listened over the past two days has been one of contrasts—not least that between Conservative Members' optimism and the considerable gloom and doom of the Opposition. I find it difficult to relate the attitude taken by the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) to the reaction that I found in my constituency last weekend.

Some time ago, when I asked Honda and Rover in my constituency what they wanted the Government to do, they told me that it would be helpful if the car tax was abolished. That has happened in two phases, and the necessary legislation is now before the House.

Given that jobs are at stake in this essential industry, it is surprising that the hon. Member for Peckham should say, disparagingly and somewhat dismissively, that all that the Government had done was to take £400 off the price of an average car. Car workers in my constituency welcome the change because it makes it more likely that they will keep their jobs in future. I should add that, although £400 may not be much to the hon. Lady, an awful lot of people will regard it as the deciding factor in considering whether or not to buy a car. Some Labour Members' suggestions show them to be quite out of touch with reality.

One or two hon. Members who have spoken have touched on the Government's attempt, which I warmly welcome, to use public sector money to increase private sector investment. That affects a number of areas, the first of which is housing. The Chancellor has told us that £750 million will be made available for the purchase of repossessed houses. I welcome that, because I believe that anything that firms up the housing market must, in the long run, be good for housing. I am sure that I am not alone in knowing of constituents who are holding back from buying a house not because they are frightened because they think they may not have the money to pay the mortgage, but because they think that if they wait another two or three months the price will have fallen; it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Any measure which firms up the housing market will bring purchasers back into the market and give it the boost that the construction industry and housing in general so badly need.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will talk in detail to the building societies and housing associations. There is a fear that, as the housing market recovers, a case may be made in the building societies for repossessing houses which are not being repossessed at present because their equity value is too low. That would totally undermine everything that the Government seek to achieve. I hope that my hon. Friend will make that point to the building societies.

I hope, too, that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary was as disturbed as I was to hear suggestions this morning that housing associations would not use the £750 million to buy repossessed houses but would buy new ones. That will not produce the desired effect on the housing market. I hope that my hon. Friend will tell the housing associations, through the Housing Corporation, that the Government have provided the money for a particular purpose. If we are to make money available, we must ensure that it is spent in the most effective way.

I strongly endorse the proposal in the autumn statement to crack open, if not completely abolish, the so-called Ryrie rules. If ever rules prevented public sector finance increasing private sector investment, it was the Ryrie rules. As my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary knows, I have campaigned for some time for their removal, so I welcome that change—even though, at the moment, it does not go far enough.

I was delighted to read the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor at column 996 of *Hansard*:

> "I have asked my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to carry forward and develop our policy in this area, encouraging the private sector to bring forward proposals and to help us identify any obstacle which frustrates its success."—[*Official Report*, 12 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 996.]

There is enormous scope for private sector investment, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will explore it to the full. Certainly in respect of joint ventures, where the risk can be reasonably shared, there is enormous scope for the Government and the private sector to work together on projects which will earn in future and which, in the end, will show a return not only for the private sector but for the public sector.

I was interested to hear what the Chancellor said about leasing, which also has great potential—not just leasing on an ordinary rental basis but leasing on hire purchase terms. Some years ago, it was suggsted that prisons, for example, could be built by the private sector and paid for by the Government on an annual basis over, say, 21 years. That project was prevented by the Ryrie rules, which demanded that the total cost was counted in the first year. I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will explore such projects, in which I see enormous scope.

If the rules are further relaxed, the private sector can be brought in to provide the investment that we so badly need. I am talking not only about prisons. I hope that my hon. Friend will talk to the construction and engineering industries about projects to build hospitals and colleges, and possibly even to build or repair schools. Such projects could all be handled through the leasing system if it were properly organised. Ultimately, it is for the construction industry itself to produce proposals, but I hope that my hon. Friend will set the scene so that the industry understands its limits and remit and can produce proposals that the Government can accept.

The autumn statement is about hope and confidence, as the hon. Member for Peckham said, though listening to her speech I had the horrible suspicion that she was keen to avoid any hope or confidence for fear that it would destroy her case on behalf of her party. I hope that I am

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wrong in that suspicion, but I have to say that that was the tenor of her remarks and of those made yesterday by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). I have confidence and hope, and I believe that the autumn statement represents the beginning of a new dawn for the British economy.

6.57 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I agree with some of what the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) said, especially about the introduction of private capital into public sector services, although I take issue with his remarks about the reaction to the autumn statement.

When I went to my constituency last weekend, I found that a local creamery was about to close its cheese-making line, with the loss of 250 jobs, that the Inland Revenue was to contract, which may result in the loss of another 200 jobs in the area, and that, instead of spending money on training, the training and enterprise council was to build itself brand new posh offices for senior management, taking another 80 jobs away from my constituency. I suspect that most hon. Members will be able to identify with my constituency experience. If the hon. Gentleman's experience is different, all well and good, but I feel sure that his constituency is not typical.

We have recently heard the alarming news that 5,000 British Rail employees are to get the chop. That will mean dirtier stations, more vandalism, poorer maintenance and a smaller back-up crew in case of illness. Whatever the Government say about improving our infrastructure, they are doing the opposite. As usual, black is white.

Last week *The Sun* contained a good article entitled "The wisdom of lament". There were four photographs of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in various poses. The article compared what he said last year in his autumn statement on 6 November with what he said this year. The article says:

> "Last year he said:
>
> 'It has become increasingly clear that we are emerging from recession. Our exporters have performed remarkably well.' Fact: Since last November unemployment is up, while output and business confidence have slumped."

The Chancellor is also quoted as saying:

> "The monthly rate of increase in unemployment peaked in March and is likely to moderate further in coming months as recovery gets under way."

But the article says:

> "Fact: The monthly rise was in fact higher in July 1991 and January 1992 also beat the March 'peak'."

Last year the Chancellor said:

> "Consumer confidence has increased this year and is likely to go on rising as the fear of unemployment begins to abate."

But the fact is that unemployment rose by 380,000 in the past year to 2·85 million, or 10·1 per cent. of the work force.

Last year the Chancellor said:

> "We have followed a prudent and cautious monetary policy, whose credibility has been underscored by our commitment to the ERM."

But the article says:

> "Fact: The pound is in free fall after Lamont blew billions trying unsuccessfully to stay in the ERM."

That was billions of our money. Those are the facts of the matter. That is why Opposition Members do not believe all the talk about the recession being over and the sun rising in the sky.

We have been treated to a remarkable litany of rows between our Government and those of other member states of the European Community. It began with the social chapter. We had to negotiate an opt-out purely as a result of the dogma of the Conservative party. We did not endear ourselves to other member states.

A special provision for Britain on economic and monetary union had to be written into the Maastricht treaty. The Government have always denied that there is any need for harmonisation of excise duties, yet now they are slowly beginning to talk about the problems that will face us on 1 January when it will be legal for citizens of Britain to import cigarettes in quantity and wine in almost unlimited quantities.

Even Chancellor Kohl had to rebuke the Chancellor of the Exchequer for his interpretation of events leading up to black Wednesday. Today, the French have attacked us for what they say is the aggressiveness, incompetence and selfishness of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in his tendentious statements about how the GATT negotiations were conducted.

Whatever the truth of the matter—I do not say that all the criticisms of the Government are right—the rows, taken in their entirety, show that we are not popular in Europe. As the Chancellor had to take us out of the ERM, against all his policies, he has no credibility with our colleagues in Europe. I do not make any personal attack on him, but he got it wrong, and he should be given another job so that someone else with more credibility can take over the extremely important position of Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Unfortunately, integrity is not a trait of the Government. Members of the Government hang on to office. Black is often white. This afternoon, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said that the 1·5 per cent. limit on public sector pay rises was not an incomes policy. I guarantee that, if he went out into the street and asked members of the public, they would say that it was an incomes policy. Yet the Government say that it is not, simply because they want to be seen to adhere to their political dogma. They know full well that they cannot, so they act differently but maintain that they are not doing so.

The Chief Secretary said that building up a good infrastructure was too great a task for the Government alone. That is a clear-cut example of black being white. The House will not need to be reminded that the Government went to extraordinary lengths in section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 to ensure that they were prohibited from providing any money for the development of the fast link from London to Folkestone and the channel tunnel.

Yet the Chief Secretary told us this afternoon that infrastructure is too great a task for the Government alone, and they must bring in private investment. I do not believe the Government, and I have not believed them for many years. In this matter, they have not changed their ways one iota.

It is true that, after black Wednesday, certain facts dawned on the Government. They realised that one needs a sound economy to back up any political or monetary theory which one may wish to put into practice and on the basis of which one may wish to experiment with the British people.

The autumn statement contained some changes. Let us take British Rail as an example. Leasing will be allowed. There has been great talk about the Jubilee line, as if it will save the whole country from John O'Groats to Lands End. On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday—every day—we are told in press releases that the Government will build the Jubilee line. Great—I have no objection whatever—but is not a policy or a philosophy: it is a tame excuse for the Government's inadequacy and unwillingness to do anything else.

Why can we not have a fast link between the capital and Heathrow? Why has there been delay and procrastination for years? Other modern capitals in western Europe, such as Frankfurt and Amsterdam, have a fast transport system between their main airport and the city. Yet the British Government refuse to act. Their policy is abject, and our condemnation must be total. Tonight we hear that 5,000 jobs are to go at British Rail. That will make our infrastructure even worse.

I conclude on a slightly more technical point, but one which demonstrates the inability of the Government to govern the country properly. On 3 November, British Rail issued a press release saying that it intended to sell its consultancy subsidiary, Transmark. It said:

> "Last year Transmark had a turnover of nearly £10m and an operating surplus of £1·1m. Its team of consultants worked on more than 200 projects in 30 countries. The company also carried out work for the BR businesses, for Passenger Transport Executives and for County Councils in the UK."

British Rail drew upon that subsidiary's expertise and resources. There might have been a book transaction for services rendered between one part of British Rail and another.

If that subsidiary is sold, British Rail will be forced to go out to private consultants elsewhere: or, if it has financial difficulties, it will not seek the expertise of consultants. It follows as day follows night and night follows day that the quality of decision-making and management at British Rail will deteriorate if Transmark is sold and its services are not available to British Rail as part of its inherent structure.

Yet the Government, in a triumph of political dogma over common sense, are forcing British Rail to put that small subsidiary on the market and obtain a few measly millions of pounds to reduce the borrowing requirement from perhaps £47 million to £49 million.

Mr. Radice: My hon. Friend means "billion".

Dr. Marek: Yes. But the Government will not save even £1 billion. They will save £0·1 billion or perhaps even £0·01 billion.

There is a long way to go, and the Government have not learnt much. They are on a learning curve and some things have been done, but they must answer the questions, "Why privatisation? Is it good for the country?" and decide whether there should be a policy change. Is privatisation absolutely necessary for British Rail, since not one expert has backed the Government's plans for the rail system and the Select Committee on Transport has asked the company to delay privatisation for some time?

I must finish, as I see flashing lights ahead of me. The Government have been listening for once. I commend them for that—they do not often do so—and I hope that they will take some notice of what I have said.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I remind the House that between now and 9 o'clock speeches will be limited to 10 minutes.

7.10 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): People who try to protect me from myself often tell me that I ought not to talk so much about interest rates and monetary policy. However, even people who are uninterested in the subject should notice the cost of the most recent—and most fortunate—occasion when we broke out of a great monetary mistake.

Before and around white Wednesday, the Government lost three times as much money as they hope to save in the public sector pay freeze. They borrowed $10 million in ecus, partly to encourage support for the exchange rate mechanism, and that cost will be increased by the 15 or 16 per cent. devaluation. Then they tried—on their own behalf—to support the pound, which is likely to cost between £1·5 billion and £2 billion, although they say that the amount can never be crystallised. If it could be today, it would be at about £1·5 billion. The Government will receive a large bill from the Bundesbank for the activities that it carried out on their behalf. Many people in the markets think that that bill will also be about £1·5 billion.

So I shall tell constituents who ask me why I do not ask more questions about the level of public pay or ask for more money for this or that industry that getting monetary policy wrong is expensive. It can be seen to be three times as expensive as the savings made at the expense of public sector employees.

During our recent history we have made two important monetary mistakes and we may make yet another vast mistake. The first mistake was when Lord Lawson shadowed the deutschmark with the pound between 1986 and 1988. Secondly, it has now become politically correct to remark that it was perhaps a mistake to have such a tight monetary policy between 1990 and white Wednesday. I always know when things become politically correct because my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) enunciates them and he said that it was clear that monetary policy was too tight in our recent history. My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) also gave a clear sign that monetary policy was too tight before we came out of the ERM.

The issue is not merely academic. It is not academic to someone who has a negative equity in their house, or to small business people who have been squeezed into the ground in the past two years. It is not academic to the banks—I understand that it is popular to attack them—because their credit base has been severely eroded as a result of the considerable fall in property values. Having lent so unwisely to big property companies, it is understandable that the banks have to preserve their position at the expense of small borrowers, who are being screwed into the ground. Those are not mere academic mistakes and they could be repeated.

I take up the argument put so well by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). By way of an aside, he said that he was in favour of fixed exchange rates but that monetary union would never come about. As I pointed out to him, the rougher but more eloquent members of the Tory Whips Office tell recalcitrant Conservative Members that that is why they should vote for Maastricht. They say, "Okay lad, if you say it's a complete mess-up, it will come apart at the seams so you might as well vote for it rather than ruin your career."

Voting for nonsense is an integral part of the political process, but Maastricht is nonsense which could do a great

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deal of damage before it breaks up. It is important to understand that, under the proposals for monetary union in the Maastricht treaty, it is at least arguable that we are under a legal obligation to return to the ERM and to stage 2 of monetary union. The fact that we could be forced by the European Court back into the ERM and thus into stage 2 after 1 January 1994 has been well argued. If that happens we shall be ruled by German monetary policy, as we were between 1990 and 1992. I am not attacking the Germans: they are perfectly entitled to run their economic policy in the manner that they regard as appropriate to their economy. The people who put us under German surveillance should be attacked and anyone who votes for the Maastricht treaty is likely to submit us to that.

I have a helpful suggestion. We are fortunate in having an extremely persistent and persuasive barrister, called Martin Howe—I do not know whether he is also learned —who also has the good fortune to be Lord Howe's nephew. He has written some interesting documents which comment on the Maastricht treaty. In one paper, which was recently published by the Centre for Policy Studies, he said that if we ratified the Maastricht treaty and did not go into stage 2 and join the ERM we might find that the court ordered us to do so. Mr. Howe also says of the opt-out, which has been such a source of pride to the Government:

> "The implications of the UK's Treaty obligations would appear to render its position, if opted out of Stage 3 monetary union, quite invidious. The UK would then be obliged by Treaty to seek to maintain a narrow band parity against the ECU block. However, the UK would be excluded from voting on the Governing Council which takes interest rate decisions for the ECU currency. The UK would be obliged to follow ECU interest rates in order to maintain its parity, but would have no say in setting them. This consideration renders the UK 'opt-out' from Stage 3 so unattractive that it must be queried whether its insertion in the Treaty can be regarded as anything more than an attempt at window dressing."

I assume that he does not want to be hit on the head with a frying pan by Lady Elspeth Howe at Christmas, and so I assume that he must have thought carefully before he said that.

We need an advisory ruling from the European Court or, at the least, an indication of the view of the Commission towards the whole subject. We do not want to vote for the Maastricht treaty and for monetary union and then find that we are under increasing pressure, to which our leaders may give in, to go back into the ERM and stages 2 and 3. We must make sure that we retain the right to run our monetary policy in the way that is appropriate to the British economy.

7.20 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I suspect that we shall hear a great deal more of the subject raised by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) in the coming weeks and months. Indeed, it might be a good idea to apply the 10-minute speaking rule to all stages of the Maastricht Bill.

Our problem was not that we were in the ERM but that we were in it at an over-valued level. We said in October 1990 that the pound was at far too high a parity. Having settled down at about DM2·40 to the pound, with a 7 per cent. interest rate, it seems now to be at a reasonably sustainable level. People in other EC countries recognised way back that a realignment was inevitable, as I discovered when I discussed the matter at length in Brussels in February.

Developments have occurred in an uncomfortable manner, and the whole issue could have been better arranged. Even so, there appears now to be some basis of stability. Does the Treasury see the autumn statement as contributing towards greater convergence or divergence within the figures that are monitored when considering the likelihood of our re-entering the ERM? In that context, will the Minister comment on the Government's latest thinking about the likelihood of our re-entering the ERM, a subject that must have considerable significance for the economic policies that we should be following?

The objective of further pressure on inflation, towards which the Government have been working up to now, is no longer necessary and could be dangerous. It is possible for us to live with somewhat higher inflation—of perhaps 4, 4·5 or 5 per cent.—with an interest rate of 7 per cent. We now need more than anything a period of stability. We also need some strategy. We still face the danger of short-termism, which, particularly on the industrial scene, causes much of our difficulty.

I hope that the autumn statement will lead to greater confidence in industry and that that confidence will be based on stability and a willingness to accept greater risk-taking. That has been missing for a long time. We must ensure stability of demand, stability of interest rates, stability of currency and stability of inflation. I am not yet convinced that those have been achieved, although I have no doubt that the autumn statement reflects a basic change in Government policy.

It will be interesting to see how that change works through. After all, the requirements to which I referred are needed not simply for manufacturing industry but for housing. In particular, they are needed to encourage risk-taking in housing by private individuals. I also hope that the GATT round problems can be solved. It would be disastrous if the GATT position went wrong.

I am perturbed about the lack of reference to unemployment in the speeches of Conservative Members. Unemployment must remain an overwhelming worry. Hundreds of thousands of people in Britain with a contribution to make to the economy are denied the opportunity of contributing. It must be part of the Government's strategy to create employment so as to overcome unemployment, and I hope that when he replies to the debate the Minister will say how the Government expect their employment strategy to work.

There is also concern about what will be the policy of the Department of Trade and Industry towards regional investment. The figures coming from the autumn statement suggest that there will be a rundown in regional spending, and that may result in our not being able to take full advantage of the resources that may come from the European Community in terms of regional policy, with areas such as Wales and Scotland, and some of England's depressed areas, missing out.

The Chief Secretary said that the level of public expenditure as a proportion of GNP had dropped from 46 to 40 per cent. It is projected to increase to 45·5 per cent. Despite his intervention, I suggest that the Chief Secretary misled us by suggesting that the effects of privatisation had been totally taken out when formulating the figures.

I accept that money received from privatisation is not taken into account in the figures, but taxation revenue that used to come in to pay for, say, the water services in years gone by, certainly in the early 1980s, is now in the private sector lock, stock and barrel. The industry is no longer part of the public sector. People are now paying water taxes, as it were, and are thereby paying the water companies for what used to be public sector services but which are now private profit-making activities. That must be taken into account.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, if the water companies had not been able to go out to borrow money, financed by slightly increased charges, taxes would have had to be increased and they would have had to be paid by the very people of whom he is speaking?

Mr. Wigley: Perhaps, but that should be taken into account in the money that is being spent on public sector or quasi-public sector activities and be part of the overall services that in 1980 were in the public sector.

I wish to examine the figures applying to Wales, although most of the figures that we need to see the true picture are not available. I hope that the Welsh Office will be forthcoming in providing the figures in due course. I am disturbed by the fact that the figures for 1993-94 show a reduction for the Welsh Office of £50 million compared with the previous plans.

That is worrying, because the areas that come under the Welsh Office, from the point of view of its activities in Britain as a whole, show increases—agriculture by £590 million; trade and industry by £1,220 million; employment by £170 million; housing by £230 million. All those areas are analogous to Welsh Office responsibilities, but in Wales the total expenditure is to go down by £50 million. In Scotland, expenditure will go up by £70 million and in Northern Ireland by £50 million, but in Wales it will go down by £50 million. We must have an explanation for that, because the implications could be far-reaching.

The figures for Wales have been fudged by the changes in definition. Expenditure on our university and further education has come through to the Welsh Office, along with additional spending on care in the community and the effect of the coal closures, which no doubt are being taken into account. We need clarification from the Welsh Office and, once that has been provided and the figures are available, we must have a debate on the implications of the changed Government economic strategy for Wales.

I press the need for investment programmes in the long term. Those programmes must provide not only financial but social and environmental benefits. For example, I have pressed in the past for house insulation programmes. The implementation of those would save energy costs and, by that means, help disabled and elderly people, who are particularly dependent on energy and spend a large proportion of their budgets on it.

Proper energy-saving policies would also reduce the demand for energy, and that would have implications for the depletion of energy reserves and the avoidance of large-scale capital spending on unnecessary energy projects. That money could be redirected to hospitals and schools. The provision of energy is labour-intensive, so it could be geared to areas of high unemployment.

I also press for more capital expenditure on renewable energy sources, in particular on hydro, tide and wind power projects. The post-1998 position applying to the non-fossil fuel obligation must be clarified as soon as possible. We must spend more on recycling. Such capital expenditure would bring great revenue and environmental benefits in the longer term. We must spend more on public transport, including the electrification of the railway line to Holyhead and the south Wales line right through Pembrokeshire.

We have heard that £700 million will be devoted to the purchase of houses. I hope that the Government, and the Welsh Office in particular, will allow part of that money to be used to buy houses that have been used as second homes or holiday homes, many of which are for sale because people cannot afford to retain them. When the market is depressed, there is often a negative equity element in such homes. Those houses can then be used urgently to provide homes for those on waiting lists.

The cuts taking place in the legal aid scheme are the largest since its introduction 40 years ago. I am concerned not for the well-being of solicitors but because those proposals could hit at least 10 million people who are dependent on legal aid to get justice out of society. If they lose their ability to take their cases to the court and get justice, they will miss out. I hope that that is not the Government's intention.

7.30 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I welcome the recovery package in the autumn statement, because it includes a number of initiatives that my hon. Friends and I have been calling for for some time, particularly to stimulate the housing market and encourage exporters and investment. I welcome it also because it brought an interest rate cut.

Although the package should bring the confidence that we have been lacking for several months, it would have been better to have it five months sooner. That was not possible because we were locked into the exchange rate mechanism in a straitjacket. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) said, the Chancellor is now on record as saying that, because of those constraints, monetary policy was too tight during the summer. My hon. Friend spoke about the adverse effect that that had.

I remind those who criticise the Government that both the Labour and Liberal parties supported our membership of the ERM to the bitter end. Now that that debacle is over, I wish that the Government would remove uncertainty and make it clear that we shall not return to the ERM. I am afraid that they will not do so, because of the ratification of the Maastricht treaty.

I want the Treasury to reduce interest rates much less frequently but, when they do so, in bigger tranches. Interest rates have fallen by 3 points since white Wednesday. Because they have gone down by one point at a time, there has not been the fillip to confidence that there would have been had they been reduced by 3 points immediately we came out of the ERM, and had we taken the strain off the exchange rate in one go. Nigel Lawson made the same mistake when the economy was overheating. Instead of putting interest rates up by 2·5 per cent. to bring that overheating to a halt, he imposed death by a thousand cuts—two cuts of 0·5 per cent. and one of 1 per cent.

The subjects of public expenditure and Government debt have exercised my mind ever since I have been in the House. Indeed, I have spoken in every autumn statement

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debate since 1979. As a chartered accountant, my natural instinct is for sound money, control of public expenditure and a balanced budget. However, far too often I have had to chide my Front-Bench colleagues for planning to spend too much or for having spent over their budgets. That failure has resulted in frequent changes in Government spending.

Way back in 1981 or 1982, I said in a speech in the Chamber that the problem of controlling spending was that we had a system in which everybody demanded what they wanted and every spending Minister put in a bid, inevitably causing upward pressure on expenditure. I said that we should change that system and that the total should be fixed and then divided among spending Ministers, who should be told that that was all they would receive and must do their best with it. I am therefore delighted that the Government have now accepted that suggestion, which has long been forgotten, and have adopted a top-down formula, which will go a long way towards preventing slippage in expenditure plans, particularly in the second and third years of the cycle.

Owing to the inexorable rise in public spending and the sharp decline in revenues caused by the fact that the recession has been longer and much more severe than anticipated, our public finances are deteriorating significantly. This year, the public sector borrowing requirement will be £37 billlion, probably rising to £44 billion next year. These two years alone will increase interest costs by some £6 billion, which means £6 billion more taxation or £6 billion more expenditure. Naturally, it will cause upward pressure on interest rates and difficulty in funding, which might crowd out private investment.

I was delighted to hear the Chancellor's commitment to return to a balanced budget, and I strongly supported him when he said that it would be a tough spending round. With our public sector finances in such a state, it could not be tough enough for me this year. I welcome the limit on public sector pay. Indeed, a couple of weeks ago I suggested that there should be a freeze. However, when one looks at the figures in detail, one must ask how tough it has really been. Has the Chancellor really made the spending Ministers' pips squeak? Where is the evidence of blood on the floor? I regret to say that there is not much.

After allowing for inflation, the planning total will go up by almost 4 per cent. and even the new control total, which excludes the cost of recession, shows an increase in real spending of 2·3 per cent. Considering the fact that public sector wages will be fixed at 1·5 per cent., the real increase in programmes is considerably more than 2·3 per cent. That is hardly a tough spending round when our budget deficit is soaring.

If one looks at individual departmental budgets, one would think that those Departments with a high labour content—Education and Health—would show a reduction but, even with the pay freeze, the education budget will go up by 3·6 per cent. and the health budget by 1 per cent. in real terms. Clearly, the money that we are saving in public sector pay restraints will not reduce the budget deficit but will increase programmes. I just hope that the Minister can convince me that that increase will go into capital projects, but I do not believe it will.

Overseas development will go up by £100 million this year. When we have large balance of payments and budget deficits, is it sensible to spend £2 billion a year in that way? We are borrowing from foreigners whom we have to pay back with interest to give to foreigners. We could easily have cut £500 million off that budget, and I hope that the Chief Secretary will consider doing so next year. That would leave us plenty of money for famine aid, disaster aid and other such relief.

I am delighted that, at long last, the outdated Barnett formula for Scotland and Wales, which gave those countries an excessive share of our public expenditure, has been abolished as regards future increases. It was a difficult nettle to grasp, but I congratulate the Government on doing so. However, they have not dealt with the backlog of the past 20 years whereby in Scotland expenditure per head of population on education is 36 per cent. higher than in England, and on health is some 29 per cent. higher. It is higher than in the north of England, which is not the most prosperous area. Next year, the Chief Secretary should look at redressing the balance of the past 20 years. Expenditure in the other countries of the Union should be fixed until the expenditure per head in England has reached the same level.

I accept that the plans for years two and three are slightly tougher. I do not understand why we should start increasing expenditure again in 1995-96. The test will be whether the figures for the next two years will stick. Even if they do, I do not believe that we shall have done enough to reduce the PSBR. If we are to have a strong free market economy, we must bring spending down to below 40 per cent. and balance the budget.

The autumn statement takes us in the right direction but does not go far enough. If we are to deal with the serious problem of the budget deficit, we need another assault on spending next year; otherwise, we must face the unacceptable alternative of increasing taxation. If the Government are in any doubt about which course they should take, I remind them that the pubic elected us because they believed that we would not put up taxes and that the Opposition would. If my right hon. Friends need any help in deciding, I suggest that they look at what happened to George Bush.

The autumn statement sets out a coherent economic policy for recovery. Anyone who believes that it will not be a long haul is fooling himself. We face the serious problem of a double deficit: a budget deficit and a balance of trade deficit. This country is living beyond its means. This year is the first of what will have to be a number of years of financial stringency if we are to reduce those enormous deficits.

I hope that all Cabinet members have the stomach for the fight. Conservative Members will support them, because what is at stake is the creation of a strong and successful economy. If Cabinet members falter, they should realise that we are behind them and will not hesitate to give them a friendly push.

7.41 pm

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): The hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) welcomed the public sector pay restrictions and said that they could not be too tough for him. I wonder why it is that hon. Members with safe jobs and regular incomes are able to call for sacrifices from those who are low paid. Why is it that the call for belt tightening is always directed at the working people of Britain? It always seems that the people who are the greatest scrooges when it comes to public sector spending and pay for the low-paid workers become the biggest Santas when it comes to giving tax cuts to millionaire fat cats.

In as much as the autumn statement gives the Government a policy where for two months there was only a vacuum, it is to be welcomed, but the statement will not bring recovery or tackle the fundamental problems of British industry. I also suspect that it will not restore to British industry the long-term confidence that it needs. The Chancellor and the Prime Minister cannot bring confidence because no one can guarantee what their policy will be next week. Indeed, there have been so many U-turns, S-bends and policy gymnastics from the Chancellor that I wonder whether his parents, too, were circus acrobats.

The new economic strategy has been forced on a Government who have appeared out of control and very much at the mercy of events. Many of the more sensible U-turns in the autumn statement—for example, capital allowances—have been forced on a reluctant Chancellor. Now that the Chancellor has lost most of his totems—from the exchange rate mechanism to M3—we have to rely on his judgment to guide our economic policy.

The quality of the Chancellor's judgment will not, however, inspire confidence in British industry. After all, he is the Chancellor who said no to devaluation, no to leaving the ERM, no to a public sector borrowing requirement of more than £35 billion and no to necessary interest rate cuts in the months up to September, on the basis that we needed to stay in the ERM. The Chancellor's judgment is unsound. He is in partnership with a Prime Minister who was responsible, when he was Chancellor, for guiding the economy into the ERM at too high an exchange rate—also not a man of good judgment. Industry knows that the Government's judgment is unsound, which is why confidence will be slow to return and recovery will not come easily.

The unemployed know only too well that few of them will find jobs as a result of the autumn statement and that many more people will lose their jobs. The two years since the Prime Minister took office have seen unemployment rise by 71 per cent. or 1·2 million people. During that time, the number chasing each job vacancy has risen from 11 to 30. Can Ministers understand the dispiriting desperation of a family man looking for a job when he knows that he has to compete with 29 other people for that job? The number of young people out of work has risen by 323,000. The number of lost manufacturing jobs has risen by 541,000.

In my constituency of Warwickshire, North the jobless total has more than doubled, from 2,070 to 4,632. Some 587 miners at the Daw Mill pit were told just a few weeks ago that they were about to be made redundant. They have been saved until now only by the review in the coal industry.

The taxpayer pays an average of £9,000 per year—in extra benefits and tax lost—for every person out of work. It has cost my constituents £41·7 million—or more than £560 per voter—to maintain the Prime Minister's high unemployment policies.

After 14 years of Thatcherite policies, the long-term Government policy of individual tax cuts and deregulation of industry has resulted in escalating unemployment, a manufacturing trade deficit, cuts in public services, lack of confidence in the Government, and dismay among the British people such as I have never experienced before. There is a desperation among the people that the Government are incapable of finding a solution and are just plain unlucky. People feel that the Government do not know what they are doing and are a bunch of amateurs.

The Government's stated overall long-term aim of further tax cuts and deregulation will only make matters worse, as the price of doing so will be the Government's failure to provide the necessary infrastructure. In pursuit of their ideological objectives, the Government have succeeded only in damaging the economy.

The basic Tory philosophy of government is at fault. For too long public policy has been solely geared to the myth that Britain's future hangs on helping the mini-entrepreneur, the little man in the garden shed. The aim has been to reduce individual taxation and force self-reliance. However, as Robert Reich, economic adviser to President-elect Clinton, has said, in the age of new technology a nation's economic progress depends not so much on individual entrepreneurs as on collective entrepreneurial talent. It does not depend on little men in garden sheds, but on research scientists in well-funded universities developing advanced conductors, on systems analysts devising new software for international companies and on designers applying new technology to consumer requirements.

For the collective entrepreneur, taxation and tax cuts are peripheral, and a policy of tax cuts is peripheral to the future prosperity of Britain. Good education, a highly skilled work force and an effective infrastructure are essential, as is a Government working in partnership with British industry.

Japan, Germany, Austria, Taiwan and other countries with successful economies long ago learnt the lesson that the collective entrepreneur, not the mythical individual, is the steam engine of change in the economy. They have recognised the interdependence of the components of the modern economy, including that of Government spending. They know that tax cuts are inefficient if they restrict increased spending on universities, transport and infrastructure.

It is clear that this hands-off Government have produced not more prosperity, but market instability and long-term decline. The ideology of less government has produced less public transport and less education, and less of many of the factors necessary to an economy. The free market has its place, but the hidden hand of the market is not enough. The failure of Thatcherism over the past decade has made that clear. As other economies have found, the hidden hand needs a helping hand—not an interfering hand, but a guiding hand. Governments, through intervention and a clear sense of direction, can be that guiding hand.

The Government have spent 14 years saying that they cannot do much except create a low inflation, low tax regime. Clearly, that policy has failed and we need a Government who are prepared to intervene and work in partnership with industry to end the abdication of responsibility which persisted through all those years of Thatcherism. The Chancellor and other Ministers have spent so long saying that they cannot intervene that now no one has any confidence that they could do so even if they wanted to.

The one nostrum that the Government now believe in is that low inflation is, of itself, a prerequisite to recovery. That is one of the few totems left to them after the death

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of M3 and M1, shadowing the deutschmark and the ERM. However, the intellectual gap in the argument is that our industrial base has been undermined in pursuit of that objective. Industry is now in fundamental trouble. The idea that low inflation of itself will somehow lead to recovery does not make sense. We need a motivating factor and a full-blown Keynesian recovery package if we are to get genuine recovery. Low inflation can only be part of that package. It is the overall package of policies that will bring recovery, and it is the inadequacies of the rest of the package in the autumn statement that will ensure that recovery is still a long time away.

This autumn statement is bad for my constituents, bad for the unemployed and bad for the industry in my constituency. It is also bad for the Conservatives in my constituency. Warwickshire is a Conservative-capped county council and a Conservative council; I would expect the Government to defend it, but I heard this week——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Bellingham.

7.51 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): The hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) made an eloquent speech, but he wrote it before he heard the autumn statement. He has asked for a package for recovery, including some intervention, and that is exactly what the statement contained. The response to it from builders and people connected with construction and housing in my constituency has been one of pleasure. Small businesses are very pleased; medium-sized businesses are extremely pleased, because they know that there will be a definite boost for construction and housing. They are particularly pleased that certain crucial infrastructure projects will be preserved and boosted. They are also pleased about the preservation of some of the defence procurement projects.

A number of extremely important road schemes are in the pipeline for my constituency. One of them is dualling on the A47, just west of King's Lynn. We hope that it will come on stream soon. There is also the crucial flyover at the Hardwick roundabout outside King's Lynn—a notorious bottleneck. The flyover should be built in the near future. This is why my constituents and many other people in west Norfolk are extremely pleased that the Government are getting their act together.

I also welcome the 1 per cent. cut in the base rate. I only hope that it will be passed on to customers by the banks. The banks have begun to learn that base rate reductions must be passed on. I received a letter the other day from a small business man in my constituency. He was complaining not about the base rate that he was being charged but about the arrangement fees—£1,500 for a new overdraft, a staggering sum. I hope that the Financial Secretary will tell the banks to be more sympathetic to small businesses.

Recovery is all about confidence, which until now has proved elusive. It will start to return, however. Many people have been worried about their jobs and worried because they have detected that the Government have been locked into a system of limitations that has reduced their room for manoeuvre. I believe that the autumn statement can present a new way forward which will help to generate confidence, particularly among the crucial people who will start moving house or improving their homes and spending more in the shops. That in turn will have a knock-on effect throughout the economy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) and the hon. Members for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and for Warwickshire, North all mentioned the ERM, although the hon. Member for Caernarfon was a good deal kinder about it than was my hon. Friend. I am extremely pleased that we are not tied into what is going on in the German economy any more. I think of it this way: we went into the rottweiler's kennel and we did not get just scratched and nipped—we had a limb bitten off and we came out of the kennel severely mauled. I hope to goodness that we will not go back into that kennel for a long time to come.

I welcome the fact that the Prime Minister said the other day that it is not our policy to go back into the ERM tomorrow or the next day but that we will take stock of the situation and take a decision some time in the future. He has also made it clear that the decision will not be influenced or constricted by the fact that we ratify the Maastricht treaty. The Prime Minister is an honourable man, and I prefer his view on the subject to that of my old friend——

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Bellingham: No, because of the 10-minute rule. I was referring to my old friend the former Chancellor's nephew. I spent some years of my life in a part of the Fens renowned for its spires and gargoyles, and I had many a happy evening with the former Chancellor's nephew. He is sound on many points and a first-class barrister—I practised with him for a while—but on this issue his interpretation is over-sentimental and unduly restrictive. I prefer the Prime Minister's view to that of Martin Howe.

I welcome this package, but I am still worried about home owners in my constituency and about those trapped in mortgage equity debt. A home owner told me the other day that he had bought a house for a considerable amount of money and then seen its value drop. His fiancée had left him, he had lost his bonuses at work and he was in dire straits. He had thrown the keys back at the building society thinking that everything would be all right, but he came to my surgery having received a letter from the building society asking what was to happen to the £20,000 that my constituent owed it—he did not understand that the money was his liability.

I ask the Financial Secretary to consider carefully what it would cost to give tax relief to constituents like mine who have lost huge sums of money when their houses have been repossessed. May we have the figure? I urge my hon. Friend also to consider a scheme to encourage mortgage insurance. Many people do not insure their mortgages, but they could. It would make life a lot easier for budding home owners if they knew that they could get tax relief under a mortgage insurance scheme.

Many hon. Members have been selling Britain short, but I do not think that we should. We must try to build up confidence, which is what my constituents need. Small business men who are determined to get going and medium-sized businesses that want to invest—they all need confidence. We have heard a great deal about the decline of British manufacturing, but the figures do not add up to the gloomy totals that the right hon. Member for

Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) proposed. Twenty-seven of the top 50 European companies are British. The other day *The Economist* carried out a survey which discovered that 13 of the top 30 medium to small-sized firms in the world were British. Statistics from America the other day, published in "Week's 5th Global 1,000" showed that 110 of those 1,000 companies were British. It is time we stopped selling ourselves short.

I do not often listen to Radio 4 in the morning, but the other day I tuned in to "Thought for the Day" at the absurdly early hour of 7.50 am. A bishop was speaking and he quoted a remark that I think came from the Bible. He was not asking to avoid trouble, turmoil and tumour; all he was asking for was to overcome, not to be overcome. I hope that the Chancellor will overcome. This autumn statement is a step in the right direction, and I shall back it wholeheartedly.

7.58 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): It strikes me that much of the reaction to the autumn statement derived not so much from what was in it but from what was not in it. Many of the plaudits that it earned were a result of briefings emanating from Ministers and their officials before the statement, suggesting that there would be tax increases, cuts in benefits, measures to send people who rely on disability support reeling, and so on. They also suggested that, against the wishes of those who have campaigned for so long to increase overseas aid from this country, it would be cut.

After all these behind-the-scenes briefings, reported in the newspapers, we were meant to cheer—Conservative Members did—because these terrible things had not come to pass. It was not a particularly original political trick, nor did it produce an autumn statement that will start to turn around our economic problems. That is the other respect in which the statement was remarkable not for what it contained but for what it did not.

Much of the autumn statement is welcome. We argued for many of its measures a considerable time ago. Those who have lost their job in the meantime might well be looking for an apology from Ministers, not just a U-turn. However, its measures go nowhere near far enough to turn the economy round. The job losses and business failures that followed the previous Budget and autumn statement when Ministers made similar predictions prove the point. The action being taken now is too little, too late, a phrase which has been used a lot about the autumn statement.

That the action is too late can hardly be denied by Conservative Members, let alone by the Chancellor and the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. It is self-evidently too late to be taking investment measures—which were advocated so many months ago—for all those people who have lost their jobs and for all those businesses that have gone bankrupt in the meantime, waiting for precisely the kind of U-turn that the Government now claim to have made.

But the action is too little as well. A few weeks ago my hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) and I led a delegation of people from Cornwall to Downing street. It was not party political. It was composed not of party politicians but of representatives of a cross-section of businesses, jobs and political viewpoints in Cornwall. It included an architect, a farmer, a postmaster, a builder, an hotelier and others who once worked but are now unemployed, who once ran businesses but are now unemployed.

Those involved in the delegation were united, not by a political ideology but by a belief in their county and in their ability to put things right for themselves if only they are given a fair wind and the necessary support from the Government. Each member of the delegation wrote to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor outlining the problems in their own sector of the economy. That presentation, "Cornwall's charter for jobs", concluded:

> "We now ask this Government to recognise the difficulties we are facing. Most are not of our own making. They have been created by national policies that have treated Cornwall, its people and communities harshly. Our wish is for the Government to behave as any business and employer must: we ask it to become pro-active. We ask it to remove the obstacles to Cornwall's success. We ask it to provide its people with the tools it needs to create jobs for its jobless, and a future for its children."

Those sentiments would be echoed by people throughout Britain, particularly in the rural, so-called peripheral, areas that have been particularly disadvantaged by so many of the Government's policies.

Along with millions of people in Britain, people in my part of the world are suffering from the devastation of the economy that the recession has wrought. In Cornwall, male unemployment is approaching 20 per cent. Business failures in the south-west are up 40 per cent. this year on last year. High street banks are closing and tourism, fishing and farming are suffering terribly, too.

I do not ask merely for expenditure; there are other things that the Government can do. One is to tackle the problems within the banks, not merely the lack of interest rate cuts, but, even more significantly, the way in which the banks treat so many small businesses. I campaigned at the general election, as did my colleagues, for a banking charter. The Government have done nothing to make the banks establish a proper contractual relationship with small businesses that would ensure that when the banks sting their fingers abroad and with big businesses, it is not local small business men who are asked to pay the price.

The cut in interest rates is welcome, but promises of a new economic strategy raised hopes of much more. In many areas such as my own, businesses need a reduction in the uniform business rate, a fully funded development agency and assisted area status to aid investment. Instead, in the longest recession since the 1930s, the Government are proposing to review assisted area status, reducing the area of the country that is eligible for help from 35 per cent. to around 30 per cent. That will cut off the blood supply, the lifeline, for so many more businesses.

More generous investment in the infrastructure would have put our builders, plumbers and electricians back to work on projects for the future. To suggest that future capital receipts will be released for that is a some time, one time, maybe never, kind of promise. Cornwall has money from its capital sales, particularly the council house sales. We have people who are now jobless with the skills to build homes. We have one of the worst problems of homelessness in the country. All we need is the political will from the Government to release even a proportion of those funds for the investment that is needed, but that political will is still not there.

Our businesses face further threats of continued high water rates, higher electricity charges because of the distance from generating stations, the possible termination

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of inter-city rail services at Plymouth and Exeter. Time and again, we have to put up with Conservative Members in the south-west and elsewhere complaining about the effects of the very policies for which they voted in the first place. They have shed crocodile tears about electricity price increases, when they voted for the system that has led to those increases; about water rate increases, when they voted for the system that led to those increases; and about rate increases, when they voted for the system that created those increases. Worst of all, they have had meetings with Prime Ministers and Ministers when they hold in their own hands, through their votes, the chance to change Government policy and to defeat Government policy merely by coming together and exercising the power that they have—crocodile tears indeed.

To those Ministers and other Conservative Members who may be worried about taking such a wide turn away from past policies I say that half a Keynesian is better than no Keynesian, but full-hearted policies are what our county and country need.

The British public are forgiving of people who make U-turns. They know that if one drives down the wrong road, the most sensible action is to turn round at the earliest moment and find the right route. They ask only two things—first, an apology for the mistake and, secondly, that there is some indication that, having turned round, the Government know where they are going. For a start, it is better to go back up the road one has come down than to drive off into the fields or woodlands on either side where one is only likely to become bogged down and in a worse situation than when one started.

One area that is being attacked because the Government believe that they must tackle spending in some small way is legal aid. The legal aid changes are designed to save money for the Government, but they will make no great difference to our general economic problems or fortunes. However, they will make an enormous difference to those individuals who can no longer obtain the legal help that they would once have had.

Millions who were once eligible for legal aid have already been taken out of it. The Government say that legal aid costs have increased, but that is because of the complexity of cases, not because more people are eligible for it; fewer are eligible for it.

The Government should be tackling the legal system, not the legal aid. They should be seeking to create simpler routes by which people can obtain the genuine redress to which they should be entitled in our modern society. The Government are tackling the symptom, not the cause, and millions of people, many of them those hit hardest by the recession, will suffer as a result.

Those changes could have been included in the autumn statement. They could have been made. I fear that the Government have realised their mistakes and pulled into the field only to find themselves bogged down. I fear that unemployment will continue to increase this autumn——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Douglas French.

8.8 pm

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): I have no hesitation in welcoming the autumn statement as a reasonable formula to provide a short-term way out of our current economic problems, but I have the greatest difficulty in being persuaded that it was the logical next step in a long-term policy strategy. We must consider carefully what our long-term aim for the economy is.

Like other hon. Members, I remain extremely uneasy about the planned level of public borrowing. In the 1991 autumn statement, borrowing was set at £19 billion; by the time of the 1992 Budget, it was at £28 billion. We are now told that it will be £37 billion in 1992-93—about twice the original estimate. The forecast for 1993-94 puts it at £44 billion. I cannot help fearing that it is heading inexorably towards £50 billion, which would be 8 per cent. of gross domestic product and would take us back into IMF territory. We must avoid that at all costs.

Some forecasts—even those of reputable City analysts—now suggest that the figure may reach £65 billion in 1994. Goldman Sachs, using a 1·5 per cent. growth projection, puts it at £80 billion. If such figures are really being contemplated, they are much too high. As we know, a burden of debt must be serviced. In the past 10 years we have made impressive progress in reducing debt servicing; we do not want to make a deliberate decision to return to it now.

My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said that we had managed to cut the debt-servicing burden by £10 billion. It seems, however, that we are now set on moving in the opposite direction. We had a hard lesson to learn, and I am disturbed by the possibility that we shall have to learn it again.

Many hon. Members have mentioned the 1981 Budget. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) and with the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) that the situation in 1981 was different from the present situation, but there is some common ground. The public borrowing level was then far too high. I well remember the difficulty experienced by the then Chancellor—not his nephew—in trying to decide how to handle the deficit. He had to make the difficult decision to raise taxes—not a welcome decision, given that the 1979 general election had been fought on a platform which preached the virtues of a low-tax economy, but a decision that had to be made to reduce public borrowing. Within a short time, things were moving reliably in the right direction.

Although I am a great advocate of low-tax regimes, if I had to choose between borrowing moving out of control and increasing taxation, I would reluctantly choose to increase taxation. One of the worst courses is to pretend that tax increases may not be necessary, before eventually finding that they have to be imposed after all.

What worries me particularly about the present circumstances is the speculation now rife in the press that taxes will have to rise in the next Budget. Such speculation is most unhelpful and pulls us in exactly the opposite direction from the one in which we should be moving. If the aim is to create confidence, the chances of creating it will be undermined when people start worrying about facing tax increases before long. The prospect of an increase in indirect taxation—in VAT, for example—may conceivably have a beneficial effect in bringing forward a purchase, but it will result in a vacuum later. Threats of income tax increases cause people to worry about their household budgets and are likely to prevent the renewed confidence that the rest of the strategy seeks to promote.

It is very unwise to let it be known that taxes are likely to rise or, indeed, to set out a package in which the arithmetic points inescapably in that direction. If tax increases are eventually to be necessary, the longer they are delayed the more damage there will be. More debts are incurred, more uncertainty is caused, confidence is undermined, and the economy remains further away from where we want it to be.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) mentioned the change in Budget timetables. I think that mini-Budgets should be avoided wherever possible. They do not help the continuity of policy, they do not increase confidence, and they do not provide the reliable framework that businesses need. If judgments are sound at the time when a Budget is made, they ought to remain in place for at least a year.

I welcome the bringing together of the income and expenditure statements, but I view with dismay the prospect of another Budget in March and a further one in December. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) referred to two Budgets in a year; in fact, there will be three in a little over a year. That is unnecessary, and almost certain to undermine confidence.

I am also not in favour of time-limited incentives. I thought that we had learnt our lesson when Lord Lawson ended the system of dual mortgages on single properties, and in doing so caused no end of trouble. We then tested the market with a temporary moratorium on stamp duty, which had absolutely no effect. Now we have a 40 per cent. capital investment allowance, which is apparently to end towards the end of 1993. Trying to concertina people into making decisions in such a limited time is likely to undermine the quality of the decisions made. I firmly oppose time-limited incentives as they merely distort markets and increase speculation.

I accept that some of the measures in the autumn statement were necessary because the recession was so deep, but I suspect that some would not have been necessary if interest rates had come down earlier. Here I entirely agree with what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend). The policy of dribbling the rate down one percentage point at a time strikes me as being open to considerable doubt. The single percentage point was invariably heavily trailed, discounted in advance and implemented in a diffident fashion, with an obvious fear of the exchange rate consequences.

At no time did it look as though that would be the end of the matter. It always looked as though there might be a further instalment, and the reduction was frequently accompanied by a warning that in the event of adverse consequences the rate would have to rise again. It never looked to business men as though rates were set to remain at a particular level for any length of time; the old enemy, uncertainty, was a constant factor.

It is hardly surprising that in such circumstances a business man should defer decision making, and hardly surprising that it should be concluded that low interest rates alone were not enough to get his business moving and to move us out of recession. It was clear that a further raft of measures would be needed.

From the point of view of the international capital markets, it is clear that capital movements are influenced by comparative interest rates, but interest rate levels are only one indicator of the health of the economy.

Capital, after all, seeks out currencies in anticipation of potential movement in their capital value. That is bound to be a reflection of international judgment of the underlying health of the economy involved. Capital likes to move into a currency when, on a balance of probabilities, it is likely to be at its lowest and ready to move up; strong currencies are those that markets expect to move up, and weak ones are those that they expect to move down.

That perception could better have been created if at some stage in the downward spiral a reduction of two percentage points had been made. It could have been done without adverse exchange rate consequences. I very much regret that the Chancellor did not choose to make that reduction. Had he done so at the right time, I believe that much of this package of measures would have been unnecessary.

8.19 pm

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Last Thursday Conservative Members waved their Order Papers after the Chancellor's speech. The same Members waved their Order Papers after the Budget statement earlier this year. The difference is that in his Budget statement the Chancellor forecast that growth would be 1 per cent. this year, but in his autumn statement he forecast a 1 per cent. reduction in growth. In his Budget statement, the Chancellor forecast a current account deficit of £6·5 billion, but he is now talking about £12 billion. In his Budget statement, the public sector borrowing requirement was to be £28 billion, but it is now forecast to be £37 billion. With that forecasting record, one has very real doubts about whether the forecast for next year of 1 per cent. growth is right. If it is not, the economy will continue to decline.

It is not just the figures that have changed. The words have changed, too. Last spring, unemployment was still "the price worth paying" for reducing inflation. Now the accent appears to be on growth, jobs and dealing with unemployment. Even borrowing is no longer a dirty word on the Conservative Benches. It hardly could be, given the amount of Government borrowing.

When one looks at the details of the autumn statement, which we have had the opportunity to do since last Thursday, one finds that they contain no coherent or effective plan of action to deal with the depths of the recession and depression that the Government have created. There is no effective plan of action to create the jobs that people require.

We find that there is no new money in the autumn statement, but if we are to create jobs we shall have to spend money. The Government are constrained by their own problems with the public sector borrowing requirement—a self-inflicted problem. The Opposition support a major expansion of investment in the infrastructure. We make no apology for saying that the public sector has to be the motor for recovery. Of course we want investment in the private sector, but, at a time when confidence in the private sector is so low, the public sector has to be the catalyst to get the private sector going. That may demand, in the short term, a further increase in the public sector borrowing requirement, but if it is properly managed it will generate the revenues that are necessary to pay for it in the medium term.

Before the Government accuse the Opposition of wanting to increase the PSBR, I should like them to explain how they calculated the autumn statement figures relating to public expenditure and the PSBR. Why do the Government believe that they are the right figures to deal with our present economic problems? The figures for public expenditure have all the signs of having been

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decided before the Government made their U-turn, to some extent, and of the Government not having altered them in the light of the circumstances that we now face.

As well as there being no overall increase in expenditure, most of the schemes put forward are not new, either. The Government have highlighted certain key projects, but in the last few months there were suggestions that they would be cut. The Government now claim a victory and a boost for recovery, simply by maintaining schemes that were already in the programme.

The Government admitted to some cuts last Thursday —cuts in legal aid and invalidity benefit, which I deplore. Since last Thursday, however, we have found hidden cuts that were not declared. There is to be a cut in the urban programme, which represents the expenditure of money that is targeted directly on the most deprived areas of the country. The Government have placed particular emphasis during the past few years on spending to help to generate economic activity in the most deprived communities—in particular, expenditure on infrastructure projects. The end of the urban programme will affect people who have the least change of getting jobs and will increase unemployment where it is already at the highest level. That cut ought to have been explained openly to the House. It is a disgrace that it was not.

When we hear about local government expenditure proposals next week, we shall no doubt find that there are further hidden cuts. Every local authority—not just Labour local authorities—is talking about the jobs it will have to shed next year and the people it will have to get rid of. It is yet another aspect of the autumn statement that will lead to increased unemployment, not to more jobs.

On the question of public sector pay, we were told this afternoon that this is simply a matter of employers dealing with the employment costs of their workers. That is an incredibly narrow view for the Government to adopt. They are an employer, but they are also supposed to be managing the economy. If we take spending power away —for that is what reduced wages mean—from the poorest in our community, we shall reduce demand in the economy. That, in turn, will create job losses in other sectors of the economy. This is yet another measure which will have a depressing effect on jobs in general.

Where the Government have acted, they have acted insufficiently. Why did they not let local authorities spend the housing capital receipts that they now hold? My hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) well illustrated the problems that local authorities will face in trying to sell assets in a depressed market. Why force local authorities to do that when they already hold sufficient resources? New homes are needed. Houses and schools need to be repaired. Expenditure on housing repairs could be put into effect very quickly. The need is there; the money is there; and the private sector has the capacity to carry out the work. Why will the Government not put the money held by local authorities to work in the private sector and therefore meet the needs of local communities? It would be a simple matter for the Government to do that.

It is worse than that, however. The Chancellor of the Exchequer referred to adjusting the capital control totals of local authorities. I have an awful feeling that when local authorities are told how much their capital allocations are to be, they will find that part of the miserable amount of extra money that they received through the capital receipts initiative will be clawed back by means of a reduction in the credit that they are allowed to have in the next financial year. The effect of the measure, therefore, will be even less than the Government pretend.

I welcome the reduction in interest rates and the relaxation of the ridiculous rule that prevented private sector capital expenditure in the public sector. That rule is nonsense. We ought to get rid of it. However, the Government will not face up to the fact that the lack of confidence in the private sector means that these measures will have little impact. We can reduce the cost of money to as low a level as we want, but if the private sector does not feel that the risk of investment is worth taking, investment will not occur. That is the problem that the Government face. The reduction of interest rates by 3 per cent. in the United States has not stimulated much investment in the private sector. That is why a major public sector thrust is needed.

The autumn statement contains no reference to European-wide initiatives. We have the presidency of the European Community for six months. What a wasted presidency it has been. The Government refused to put European economic recovery on the agenda. By doing so, they have failed not only the British people but all the people in the European Community. They should be ashamed of themselves.

There is a medium-term problem for the housing market. We have heard a great deal about the immediate crisis that faces the housing market. In real terms, house prices are falling. Money is relatively cheap. People are using their savings to reduce indebtedness. Building societies are not lending much money. No new houses are therefore being built. If confidence returns in two or three years' time, it will amount to a potentially lethal mixture that will lead to another massive increase in house prices.

The autumn statement will do nothing to get the economy moving. There is no coherent strategy, beyond the immediate survival of the Government. There is no new money. There are few genuinely new schemes. There are hidden cuts and missed opportunities. There is no European perspective. The package is long on rhetoric but short on any real strategy to assist the unemployed and to create the climate for economic success. It is a missed opportunity for the Government, but, more importantly, it is a missed opportunity for the country.

8.29 pm

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): I should like to give a wholehearted welcome to the autumn statement. I should have liked to give it a fulsome welcome, but, with the constraints of the 10-minute rule, suffice it to say that with the lowest interest rates and tax rates in Europe we now have the basis to rebuild consumer confidence, which is crucial. We hear so much talk about investment as though it were virtuous and consumption was somehow naughty. The only reason for investment is that there is already consumer demand, which the investment is aimed at meeting. I have no hesitation in emphasising the elements of the Budget that will encourage consumers to spend more.

The figure for lending in October was £5·1 billion—the highest since November 1990. That is one small sign that perhaps consumers are feeling more optimistic about the future. It was an encouraging indicator.

I know that many people in the Treasury still have at the back of their minds the terrible warning of 1972, when we left the previous attempt at a fixed exchange-rate link with the continent of Europe. It was the basis on which the Barber boom subsequently took off. We allowed borrowing to rise out of control and eventually suffered the inflationary consequences.

Although I welcome the cuts in interest rates, I hope that the Chancellor and the Financial Secretary will be able to make it absolutely clear that, if there is any prospect of inflation rising above the target range, and particularly if the growth of M0 and M4 are rising towards the top of their target range, they will have no hesitation in increasing interest rates. The only thing that would be worse than the recession of the past two years is if it were to be followed by the same mistakes as happened during the Barber boom.

I want to dwell briefly on one exciting element of the autumn statement—the proposals on private finance for public projects. I welcome the special responsibility that the Financial Secretary is being given to carry that initiative forward. I am sure that he well knows that there is a history of Treasury teasing on the subject.

We have been told before that liberalisation of the rules on private finance for public projects is to take place. Ingenious schemes are proposed by merchant banks and construction companies for building and operating prisons, roads or hospitals, but the Treasury says, "This is all very interesting and is a good idea, but, of course, it would be cheaper if it were carried out in the public sector, with borrowing at gilt rates"—and, sadly, we decide not to carry them forward. According to that argument, we would nationalise ICI to reduce the cost of borrowing to finance investment. I hope that this time around the changes are serious.

I have noted in particular how the stress has been put on private sector road building and toll roads. Of course I welcome interesting innovations, but the significant feature of the roads example is that there is a private stream of revenue that the firm operating the road can enjoy. The significant challenge or test for the Treasury is whether it is prepared to bring private finance into schemes where services will be sold to the public sector.

I am rather troubled to see that such schemes are described by the Treasury in the autumn statement as leasing arrangements. I regard leasing as financial engineering to get around a public expenditure constraint. I would not support leasing fiddles where something impossible under normal public expenditure disciplines was allowed simply because of a change in the financial structure. That is not what we are looking for. We are looking for Treasury recognition that, if the private sector is free to build and operate a private prison or hospital and sell its services on a long-term contract to the public sector, that arrangement may release new ideas for better management, use of labour and maintenance of capital and achieve improvements that, sadly, have not been realised in the public sector.

Hitherto, Departments have not registered the fact that, if the public sector is to run a hospital in a different way—possibly by saving staff or using them differently —it wants to be able to design the hospital so that the physical plan matches the way in which it wishes to use staff. In other words, if I may slip into the jargon of economics, it wants the physical capital for which it is responsible to embody working arrangements that it can achieve but which have not proved possible in the public sector.

The ultimate argument in favour of private finance and private management for such projects is that they are better managed and more efficient and innovative than if they remain in the public sector. They are far from being leasing fiddles. I therefore very much hope that the Financial Secretary will be able to assure us of the energy with which he will approach his exciting remit.

The Chief Secretary should be congratulated on the way in which he has conducted the Treasury's negotiations. He has at last been able to get the message home that, if public expenditure negotiations are to be responsible, they should be on priorities within an agreed total rather than attempt to overturn financial discipline. I welcome the new public expenditure control arrangements, which seem to have achieved that conspicuous success.

I welcome the statement's focus on the medium term. Too often, public expenditure negotiations have degenerated into horse trading about next year, with years two and three in the survey largely being ignored; they are left for next year's negotiations. This time, we had serious negotiations on years two and three, and the Treasury achieved new figures for growth in years two and three of 0·75 per cent. real growth and 1 per cent. real growth. That is a conspicuous achievement, on which I congratulate the Chief Secretary.

Having achieved those marvels of public expenditure control under the new Cabinet Committee arrangements, I am surprised that the Treasury is further considering more institutional change next year. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) spoke about that. I am worried about the change in the timetable for economic decision-taking, so that expenditure and tax announcements are brought together in the autumn.

There are three reasons for my concern. First, I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will accept that I am truly concerned about the work load that is falling on him and other Treasury Ministers. I am sure that being a Treasury Minister is a tough job. Between September and December, there will be the major international conferences, the tough public expenditure negotiations in the Committee that is now chaired by the Chancellor, with the Chief Secretary actively involved; and at the same time the Chancellor and the Financial Secretary will be considering Budget starters and trying to reach tax decisions. That is a heavy burden.

My second concern is an operational one. Many public sector bodies such as local authorities and district health authorities need to know as soon as possible what their budget will be for the following year. After the autumn statement, Departments spend weeks working out what the overall expenditure figures mean for local authorities, health authorities, the remaining nationalised industries and other public bodies. Next year's autumn statement may be a month later than this one, so there will be less time for public bodies to take important operational decisions.

Finally, there is a risk of the Treasury, having established control over public expenditure this year, sacrificing control over taxes next year. If public expenditure negotiations and tax negotiations are being conducted together, spending Departments may be tempted to press for tax increases to finance higher

[Mr. David Willetts]

departmental expenditure or at the very least to undermine the Treasury's wider fiscal position. I therefore hope that Treasury Ministers will be able to make it clear that the new arrangements to be implemented next year will avoid those pitfalls.

8.39 pm

Mr. Roger Godsiff (Birmingham, Small Heath): When the Chancellor of the Exchequer made his statement last week, there were scenes of wild delight on the Government Benches and much shouting in parts of the Tory press that the economic recovery had begun.

There may have been wild delight on the Tory Benches, but if Ministers had cared to visit Birmingham and the rest of the west midlands—the real world outside this place—they would have found no wild delight. On the contrary, they would have found disbelief, anger, bitterness and real frustration among the people of Birmingham and the rest of the west midlands who have no jobs or spending power, and who have seen their industries destroyed in the past 13 years. Those people were saying, "Why have the Government missed their opportunity yet again? Why have we gone through all that, and seen the Government make so many U-turns? Why, even in the autumn statement, which takes half a step forwards towards a Keynesian policy, are the Government still not prepared to admit the mistakes that they have made in the past and do something to regenerate British industry?"

Let us see how good the autumn statement was, and how much it will do for British industry. What will it do for GDP and growth? The forecast is for 1 per cent. growth in 1993—and that will follow a drop this year. What will the statement do about unemployment? Unemployment now stands at 2·8 million, but everyone in the House knows that the unemployment figures are massaged and that 2·8 million is not the true figure. Everyone knows that the true figure is nearer 4 million. What will the statement do for those 2·8 million-plus people who are unemployed? By 6 o'clock this evening, anyone who cared to look at the ticker tapes of news coming in could see that in one day a further 10,000 jobs had disappeared. What did last Thursday's statement do for those people?

Will investment increase? On the contrary, it is still falling. Will the balance of payments improve? Will we suddenly see a great narrowing of the gap? That will not happen. We have only to examine the Government's own forecast.

What about public borrowing? In 1988 the Prime Minister said that public borrowing of £25 billion was unacceptable. He asked why we should pass on to the future the burden of the follies of the present. The figure was £25 billion then; it is £37 billion for 1992; and it will be £44 billion for 1993. Why should we pass on to future generations the burden of the follies of the present Conservative Government? That is what the Prime Minister asked in 1988.

The Chancellor told us that from now on we could spend some of our capital receipts, that the money received for every public asset—every council house, school playing field or piece of land—which local authorities sell between now and the end of 1993 could be used for new capital projects. Local authorities throughout the country are saying, "Thank you very much, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer. That is very kind of you. That will really solve our problems. Here we are in the middle of a massive recession, property prices have collapsed, and for everything that we can sell—if there is anything that we have not already been forced to sell, and if we get a decent price for it—we shall be able to use the money for new capital projects."

What about the £5 billion which is locked away and which the Chancellor will not allow local authorities to spend? Why will he not allow them to spend that money to build desperately needed houses, to improve roads which are falling apart, to improve the infrastructure of the inner cities, to improve people's quality of life and make some amends for the follies of the past 13 years? "No," says the Chancellor, "You cannot spend that money—you must use it for debt repayment."

Outside in the real world, the Chancellor's statement was greeted as a nonentity. In my constituency, 26 per cent. of the population is unemployed. There was one small cheer for the Chancellor's statement: my constituents were grateful that their social security benefits would not be cut. Most of them are on social security. They do not have jobs—their jobs have disappeared—and they were thankful that the Tory Government who destroyed their jobs did not intend to victimise them again by cutting their social security.

That small debt of gratitude was more than outweighed by a feeling of despair and anger. In Birmingham, four out of 10 people have been unemployed for longer than a year. That may be of little concern to certain hon. Members, and to others it may be an irrelevance, but it means a lot to the people who have experienced it.

I do not know how many Conservative Members have ever joined a dole queue and waited to sign on. I am sure that some of them have, but I think that most of them have not. I wonder if many of them have even gone to see what the process is like. As somebody who experienced unemployment, although for a relatively short time, I can tell them that it is not a pleasant experience, and certainly not an experience that we should want to pass on to others. The present Administration seem impervious to that.

The west midlands used to manufacture cars and export them all over the world; it was the hub of the British car industry. The motor manufacturers were pleased that the car tax was abolished last week. Hon. Members may think that throughout Birmingham people will stampede down to the car showrooms with £10,000, £12,000, £15,000 or £20,000 in their pockets wanting to buy brand new cars and save £400 in car tax. I must enlighten them: anyone with that sort of money who wanted to buy a new car could go into any showroom in any part of the country and name his price. Hon. Members will know that my point is valid because many of them will have done just that. One can get any discount now, because the car salesmen are so desperate to unload their cars. The idea that £400 will suddenly provide a massive boost to the British car industry amounts to sleight of hand.

The abolition of the car tax is welcome—anything is welcome when one is lying flat on one's back—but it will not regenerate the British car industry. Why not? Why did I begin by saying that most people greeted the Chancellor's autumn statement as a nonentity? I said that because our problem is one of confidence. The hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) referred to confidence. Yes, there is a crisis of confidence. That is what it is all about. People do not have confidence in the Government or in their policies. They are not going to dash out and spend money——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order.

8.49 pm

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): I congratulate the Chancellor on the autumn statement. Despite what the hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Godsiff) might think, I am from the real world. I will indulge the House, if I may, in the sense that, for the past 10 years, I was in manufacturing, and may be a small microcosm of the British economy. I have always maintained that it is manufacturing that made this country great and put the great into Great Britain.

My own firm—I am indulging myself and I declare an interest—moved to Cornwall. We set up a factory in the constituency of my hon. and athletic Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe). We established the factory there because it is a pleasant area. More importantly, there are a willing and able work force. There were investment grants from the Government and there were economic wage rates in that part of the United Kingdom.

Opposition Members continue to espouse the minimum working wage. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has identified the minimum working wage as the single most important factor which is creating unemployment in France. A minimum working wage in Cornwall for our factory would have driven us out of Cornwall, would have driven us out of business and, more importantly, would have put those Cornish workers out of work. That cannot be to the advantage of anyone who wants manufacturing to get on.

I fully appreciate that it is the Opposition's job to oppose, but there are times when opposition is destructive. There are times when it is a good thing to blow the nation's trumpet. Manufacturing output went up from around 1982 onwards by 3·7 per cent. each year on average in the 1980s. That is something to blow our trumpets about. Export manufacturing went up by 6 per cent. each year on average. That is a triumph of which we can feel proud.

Opposition Members say that there has been a decline since 1990. I can see that thought in their faces. There has been a decline, but there has been a greater decline in Germany. The Opposition must recognise that fact.

I spoke to a group of industrialists from the midlands yesterday. They said that it is the lack of confidence that is creating the economic difficulty in which we find ourselves given that we now have the lowest rates of interest in Europe. It is a fear of losing jobs which is preventing people from spending money in the shops. I was pleased to see in last night's *Evening Standard* that spending has gone up: it is 1 per cent. higher than it was in the summer and 1·5 per cent. better than it was a year ago. At last we are beginning to see some improvement in spending patterns.

Simply talking down the economy does nothing to encourage confidence in this country. We now have everything to be confident about. We are now top, whereas we used to be bottom, of the G7 productivity league. We have one of the lowest interest rates in Europe. We have the lowest taxation in Europe, as other hon. Members have said.

What is the bottom line of all this? The bottom line is that we are seeing huge amounts of inward investment into the United Kingdom. Some 40 per cent. of investment from outside the European Community comes into the United Kingdom, with the remaining 60 per cent. being scattered among the other 11 E.C. countries. In Mid-Staffordshire, that means more jobs for people in places such as Lichfield, who will work in the Toyota plant which is not far down the road.

I will focus on two specific aspects of the autumn statement which I welcome. The Chancellor will know that I have nagged him consistently since I became a Member of Parliament for the introduction of greater capital allowances. As I am in business, I have always felt that unilateralism was nonsense. I believe that, just as it was crazy in the 1980s that, when the Russian SS20 missiles moved across the Urals and across eastern Europe to the borders of the then West Germany, the Opposition said that they wanted us unilaterally to disarm and that the Russians would disarm if they were asked nicely to do so, so it is equally nonsense for us unilaterally not to have capital allowances when our competitor countries have capital allowances.

We have increased capital allowances for plant and machinery from 25 per cent. to 40 per cent., and we have increased the capital allowances for industrial and agricultural buildings to 20 per cent. I welcome that increase, although I believe that it is overdue. France, Germany, Japan and the United States have accelerated capital allowances, and capital allowances work there because they improve investment.

The second aspect that I will focus on is interest rates. Although I have not been known for my great enthusiasm for Maastricht, I have never felt that being a member of the exchange rate mechanism per se was necessarily a bad thing. As a business man, I welcomed our entry into the ERM. After all, although we were manufacturing broadcasting equipment in Cornwall, we imported equipment from countries within the EC. We had to quote for large contracts abroad in foreign currencies. To get our costings right, we either had to buy currency forward or we had to build in a sufficient amount to allow for fluctuations in the exchange rate. I welcomed our entry into the ERM.

Being in the ERM is worth while only if the mechanism works. It is far better not to be in a mechanism than to be in a mechanism that is flawed. I am pleased that the Prime Minister has said that we shall not re-enter the ERM until our currencies converge. I go further and agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, South-West (Mr. Legg) who said that our currencies should all be synchronous. Only in that way will the ERM work. In the unlikely event of such a situation arising, then, and only then, would I welcome our going back into the ERM, because it would then help British businesses. Sadly, I can see no circumstances in the next few years in which any currencies in Europe will be synchronous.

I must say that some of the comments from the Opposition have been quite incredible. We have heard the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) make three impossible statements together. Constantly he said: keep us in the ERM; keep us in the ERM and do not devalue; and keep us in the ERM, do not devalue, but cut interest rates by half the current rate. That is absolutely impossible. It is like saying let us free-wheel on a bicycle uphill: an impossibility; economic innumeracy.

[Mr. Michael Fabricant]

Our interest rates, thank God, have fallen. I would have preferred bolder reductions, but the rate is 7 per cent., the lowest in Europe. In Germany and France the rates are running at 9 per cent., in Spain at 13 per cent. and in Italy at 15 per cent.

I join the chorus of hon. Members on both sides of the House asking my right hon. Friends the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary to keep up the pressure on the banks. It is one thing to reduce interest rates but, if the banks do not follow suit, there is very little point to this. Moreover, overdraft facilities that can be withdrawn at almost no notice are not helpful to small businesses. There must be some permanence.

The Opposition say that the Government should be an engine for growth. Nothing is that simple. If Governments could make engines for growth, all economies would be growing. They are not. It is not that simple, and when they talk—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

8.59 pm

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): I welcome the opportunity to make a short contribution—very much shorter than I had intended—to this debate.

I very much welcome the autumn statement, and I agree that it is a turning point in our economic affairs. Listening to speeches on the economy, and particularly those from the Opposition Benches, I sometimes think that we tend to dwell on the present and forget the lessons of the past.

One of the obvious lessons of the past is that there is no such thing as sustained economic growth, except for a few short years. History tells us that after every upturn there is a downturn, and after every downturn, mercifully, there is an upturn. As surely as the sun will rise tomorrow, our economy will improve.

I believe that successive Governments have deluded the people into thinking that Governments are all-powerful. History ought to tell us that Governments are certainly not all-powerful. There is very little that Governments can do to affect the economic cycle. Let us look very briefly at a few years of our own economic history.

The years 1965 to 1980 were an unmitigated disaster, and it is not unworthy of note that for 11 out of those 15 years the Labour party was governing this country. Those years convinced me that Socialist economics do not work. Inflation averaged 15 per cent.; income tax rose to 83 per cent. and, if one had what the Labour party called "unearned income"—that is, income from one's life savings—one was taxed 98 per cent. There were strikes almost every day, and that more than anything killed the car industry in the west midlands, to which hon. Members have referred. Average earnings rose by a miserable £2 per week, nurses' pay was cut in real terms and so badly did the Opposition mismanage the economy that they could not even pay pensioners their Christmas bonus.

I searched the speeches of Opposition Front-Bench Members in vain to find any new ideas. What I did find was constant carping and criticism, with the benefit of hindsight, but no constructive attempt to explain to the British people how they would get the country out of its problems—except, of course, their traditional three policies: spend, spend, spend.

In 1981-89, before the world economy was blown off course by the present economic hurricane, which is affecting every developed country, our economy grew by more than 3 per cent. per year—faster than that of France or Germany—and average incomes were up 35 per cent. More families in this country today have a car, a television set, a telephone and central heating than at any other time in our history.

We have cut inflation dramatically and, despite the recession, nine out of 10 of our citizens in the work force have jobs. We have 1·8 million more jobs than we had in 1983, and a higher proportion of the population are in work than any other country in the European Community except Denmark. Strikes are now a thing of the past, and this was so even before unemployment began to rise. Even though repossessions are very bad, fewer than 1 per cent. of owner-occupied houses are being repossessed.

What caused the world recession? I have asked economists this question many times, and the consensus seems to be the bubble economy in Japan and the enormous deficit in the United States. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members laugh. Of course they do. It is very inconvenient for them; it would suit their purpose very much better if they could fix the blame for the world recession entirely on the British Government., but I am afraid it will not wash.

We made a serious mistake in trying to shadow the deutschmark and entering the exchange rate mechanism. As a result, we have had interest rates much too high for much too long. Interest rates at a very high level have been the most important factor in the present economic downturn in this country. Joining the ERM was doomed to failure from the beginning, and had I been in the House at the relevant time I should not have voted to do so. The Labour party and the Liberal Democrats must share responsibility for that mistake, because they were as enthusiastic to go into the ERM and stay in it as we were —if not more so.

The venture was doomed to failure from the start, because all the money in all the central banks of the world together is equal to the sum traded on the foreign exchanges almost every working day. Had King Canute been alive today, he could have told us that the ERM was doomed to failure from the beginning. The fact that he was a Dane is not without interest.

The value of a nation's currency is simply an indication of what millions of economic decision makers around the world think of its economy. Trying to fiddle the exchange rate and put it into an artificial straitjacket is like fiddling with the oil pressure gauge on one's motor car instead of attending to the engine. Fortunately, we are now at liberty to attend to our own engine.

I am glad that interest rates have come down, although I would point out to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor that, although low interest rates are good for borrowers, we must also consider the interests of lenders. The retired people in my constituency who invest their money in the economy through the banks and building societies deserve a decent return on it.

The speeches by Labour and Liberal Democrat Members have been wholly negative—not a single constructive idea has been produced. The Opposition have an investment in gloom and doom because no one votes for them when things are going well—indeed, if the last general election is any guide, no one votes for them even when things are not going particularly well. We do not need lectures from them about the problems; we see the distress caused by repossessions and redundancies in our own constituencies. I have set up an employment action group in my constituency to tackle this matter locally.

Opposition Members have had a lot of fun referring to predictions made in the past, and, with the benefit of hindsight, crowing that those predictions were wrong. I felt like reminding all of them that they predicted that they would win the election! They have had a bit of fun with the Chancellor's reference to the green shoots of recovery, but I would rather hear the Chancellor trying to talk our economy up than to listen to the dismal Jimmies and moaning Minnies on the Opposition Benches constantly trying to talk it down.

Labour Members vaguely talk about "industrial strategy", "investment strategy" and "training strategy". Of course such strategies are desirable, but we know that there is no crock of gold at the end of the rainbow from which their schemes can be paid for. They talk about Government intervention. Intervention in De Lorean cars and Meriden motorcycles? Was that not a wonderful success?

The economic problems of today have nothing to do with lack of investment, lack of training or lack of housing, and everything to do with lack of demand. The Government have maintained their capital spending programme, and that is a good thing. In my area, £3 million is being pumped into the economy by the excellent Conservative-controlled West Sussex county council. However, any Government can only do so much, and this Government have done it. Thereafter, it is up to industry and the consumer. At £37 billion, borrowing is much too high. What do the Opposition say? "Put it up still higher."

Let me conclude with a comment about what is generally described as Thatcherism. We think that the best thing to do is to give the British people freedom. Unfortunately, freedom to make good decisions also means freedom to make bad decisions. The British people, like any other people in the world, will not work for medals or for public approval. They will work for money so that they can support themselves and their families. Some may think that that is selfish. I remind the House that, in the 18th century, John Wesley, that famous preacher, said to his congregation:

"Gain as much as you can,
Save as much as you can,
Give as much as you can."

That is equally relevant to the conditions prevailing today.

9.9 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): After seeing the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) being passed a note to tell him to sit down, I understand how the Government overshot their public spending targets.

I sense a certain nervousness on the Government Back Benches. I do not want to appear unsympathetic. I certainly do not want anyone to think that I am not taking a constructive approach. I understand that Conservative Back Benchers are nervous about the ERM fiasco. Indeed, several of them mentioned it. Some of them are nervous about devaluation, although I noticed that some of them welcomed it.

Of course, there is nervousness among Conservative Members about the loss of the previous Heritage Secretary, about the pit closure programme, about the Bank of Credit and Commerce International and about the confidence vote a few weeks ago when only the Liberals kept the Government in office. Now they are bound to be nervous about the sale of armaments to Saddam Hussein.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) was right to point out that, as the Chancellor sat down at the end of his statement last Thursday, Conservative Back-Bench Members cheered with sheer nervous relief that they would not have to defend large-scale state benefit cuts as well as deal with every other problem that currently confronts them.

In order to put these matters into context, and in an effort to keep the whole House cheerful, perhaps I can take a leaf from the lead given by my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and remind Conservative Members of some of the points which they enthusiastically cheered in last year's autumn statement.

On 6 November 1991 the Chancellor boasted that he had

"reduced the ratio of public spending to national income by over 5 percentage points."

A year later, half of that reduction has disappeared. I see that the cheers have disappeared, too. The Chancellor told the House that his careful and responsible approach had enabled the Government to reduce public borrowing. Yet we have moved from a repayment of 2 per cent. of GDP to a borrowing requirement of 7·5 per cent.

At Budget time the Red Book forecast for the PSBR was £28 billion or 4·5 per cent. of GDP for 1992-93. Now we have a PSBR of £37 billion or 6·25 per cent. of GDP. How can there have been such a large move in such a short period? Is not the answer that the first forecast was given before the general election and the actualité has come home to roost substantially after the general election?

As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Godsiff) astutely pointed out, future generations will now have to fund the tax cuts of which the Chancellor was so proud only a few months ago. Back in November 1991 the Chancellor told the House that it remained the Government's policy

"to balance the budget over the economic cycle."

I suspect that that is now completely unsustainable and that we can expect a massive PSBR until the end of this Parliament. Borrowing currently accounts for 14 per cent. of Government spending. However, the greatest difference —several Conservative Members referred to it—is with the Chancellor's comments on inflation last year. He told the House:

"we have followed a prudent and cautious monetary policy whose credibility has been underscored by our firm commitment to the ERM. The success that we have achieved on inflation has allowed us to cut interest rates without jeopardising sterling's position in the ERM."

Conservative Members have rejoiced during this debate that we are no longer in the ERM. Let me remind them that at the general election the Conservative party manifesto pledged that the policy was not merely some peripheral matter but a centrepiece of the Government's economic policy. Conservative Members cheered the Chancellor when he said:

"it has become increasingly clear that we are emerging from recession."—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1991; Vol. 198, c. 449.]

The end of the recession has been announced even more times than the Jubilee line extension.

As for the famous green shoots of economic recovery, there is only one possible remaining explanation. It is that

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

the Chancellor has pulled them up and is smoking them. He sees the recovery. No one else sees the recovery. He believes that others see the recovery, too. He comes to the House of Commons and tells us about the recovery. Truly, the Chancellor is now the Keynesian that my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) made him out to be. The Chancellor is truly a child of the 1960s. Last year, the Chancellor went on to say that he expected personal consumption to rise by 2·5 per cent. in 1992, to provide the impetus for recovery. As we know from the autumn statement, personal consumption is down by 0·25 per cent. for 1992.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms. Anderson) told us that questions of trust and confidence were at the heart of this debate. Can I, my hon. Friend or any hon. Member have confidence in a Chief Secretary whose idea of reading around the debate on the autumn statement is to study thoroughly, "Thomas the Tank Engine"? I see that the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), who chairs the Conservative Back-Bench committee on such matters, thinks that that is a laudable way to prepare for a debate, and that may tell us how Conservative Members prepare for them—[HON. MEMBERS: "It was his copy."]—or, as my hon. Friends suggest, perhaps he lent his copy.

Last year the Chancellor told us that growth would gather pace throughout the year and that output would increase by 2·75 per cent. between the second half of 1991 and that of 1992. The outturn was a fall of 1 per cent. All those predictions look ridiculous with hindsight, but remember that they were the foundation of the Government's general election manifesto. I remind the House that Philip Goldenberg of S. J. Berwen said of that document:

> "If it had been a Companies Act prospectus it would have landed the entire Cabinet in gaol."

Well, who knows what the future holds?

I do not want to appear destructive, carping or all of the other things that Conservative Members like to pretend that they believe of the Opposition Front Bench. Some manifesto pledges were redeemed, or at least addressed, in the statement: enhanced first-year capital allowances; conceding the principle that local authority capital receipts can be released; allowing the involvement of private sector capital in public sector projects; allowing British Rail to lease new rolling stock; and a reassessment of the Treasury contribution to the national insurance fund. Those go some way towards implementing manifesto pledges and it is nicely in keeping with the consistency of the Government's present economic policy, and the way in which the Conservative party deals with such matters, that the pledges that the Chancellor has been so kind as to bring before the House were from the Labour party manifesto.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) said that the need was for immediate measures to get people back to work, and I agree. It is doubtful whether local authorities will ever be able to do much with the release of future capital receipts because people do not anticipate very much——

Mr. Stephen: We have heard much about capital receipts from council house sales. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that if he, his hon. Friends and the Liberal Democrats had had their way, there would have been no receipts because there would have been no sales?

Mr. Brown: I do not accept that. We would not need to release them, in any event, because recessionary forces would not be at work in the economy. They are solely due to the Government's unique approach to worldwide crises.

My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) said in a debate on Monday that the 20,000 house target set for the Housing Corporation was unlikely to be achieved. He felt that one tenth of that figure was optimistic and that may turn out to be the case.

I want to deal with other aspects of the statement: the pay freeze in the public sector; the rise in council house rents, which will be twice the rate of inflation for 1993, at 9 per cent., and 5 per cent. ahead of inflation for the following year; the cut in the Department of Employment's budget; and the legal aid reduction. Free legal aid will now be available only to people who earn the magnificent sum of £2,213 per year or less—the income support level. There has been no discussion of easier or cheaper routes to justice, just a primitive budget cut.

Mr. Brazier *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I shall give way shortly to the hon. Gentleman, who is one of the intellectual dynamos of the Conservative party.

All those changes fall hardest on the least well off, and those changes are paralleled by changes that have been made to the tax burden in the past 10 years. In 1978-79, a family earning 75 per cent. of average earnings paid 30·9 per cent. of those earnings in tax. By 1990-91, that burden had increased to 34·7 per cent. In other words, regressive changes in public spending are paralleled by a regressive tax system. The burden falls hardest on those least able to afford it, which is manifestly unfair, manifestly unjust, and manifestly Government policy.

Mr. Brazier: The hon. Gentleman referred to what he described as straightforward cuts in the legal aid budget, which has doubled in four years and is projected to go on increasing at the rate of 10 per cent. per annum for the next two years. What does the hon. Gentleman mean by cuts?

Mr. Brown: I mean, when I refer to cuts, a reduction in the annual income level at which people are eligible for support. I am talking about real cuts, because less money will be spent on legal aid next year than is being spent on it this year.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): Wrong.

Mr. Brown: The right hon. Gentleman says I am wrong. According to the Law Society, about 7 million people will fall out of eligibility—*[Interruption.]* I speak for the 7 million and the Government can speak for themselves when the Minister replies to the debate.

The pegging of the wages of 3 million people, and the attempt to peg the wages of a further 2 million, was described by the Financial Secretary as an evolution of policy. It is like describing our leaving the ERM as an evolution of the policy of not leaving it; or calling devaluing the currency an evolution of the policy of not devaluing it; or the Conservatives adopting some of the policies of the Labour party and describing that as an evolution of the policy of rejecting and denouncing those policies outright at election time. So much for evolution. I am not sure what Darwin would have made of it. Nor am I sure what the public sector workers will make of it.

The Chancellor began his autumn statement by pointing to the world recession and claiming it as an excuse. Yet it is clear that this country's recession contains some peculiarly British features. For example, from the second quarter of 1990, Britain's GDP shrank by 4·5 per cent; Germany's rose by 5·25 per cent.; France's rose by 3·33 per cent.; Italy's rose by over 3 per cent.; and the Netherlands' rose by 4·8 per cent. Despite the worldwide recession, our European partners' economies have grown while ours has shrunk dramatically.

The Government obviously feel that some response is needed. Prodded by the Prime Minister, the Chancellor has had to go for growth—just a little growth, and he is not too sure about that—and it is clear that the Chancellor is not entirely comfortable about it all. He claims in his autumn statement that the Government have no intention of engineering a short-lived boom, but then he introduces a supplementary package of time-limited fiscal measures which he clearly hopes will engineer a boom and which, by the fact that they are time-limited, are bound to have a short-lived impact.

Indeed, the Chancellor has managed to do a U-turn from the beginning to the end of his autumn statement, and that must be a record. He has announced a package of measures putting about £4 billion into the economy over the next three years. In the context of an economy of over £600 billion, that is not much, about 0·2 per cent. per annum. In other words, the real impact of the measures will be minimal.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) said, there is a difference between spending money as part of a coherent strategy for recovery and drifting into short-term expediencies for want of a better plan. Perhaps the Government are really saying, "Because everything else has been tried, let's give this a go."

The attempt to give the British economy a short-term fix to get it out of recession comes nowhere near dealing with the scale of the problem. The Chancellor is trying to buy his way out of the slump without spending money. The long-term issues remain unaddressed. The largest single factor inhibiting recovery is the fear of unemployment, yet the Government are still content to let unemployment rise steadily. They even admit that they expect recovery next year to be limp, and forecast growth of only 1 per cent. The measures that they are taking will simply not get us far.

Only by 1995 will output have recovered to what its level was when the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) became Prime Minister. Today, as this debate began, we heard a further 10,000 job losses announced. The Government may anticipate a recovery in the construction sector, but it is clear that Blue Circle, which supplies the cement, has carried out its own survey on those matters and, with obvious pain and regret, has followed an earlier 700-person redundancy round by making another 500 workers redundant. So much for industry's optimism about recovery in the industrial sector.

In his Guildhall speech, the Chancellor said that he was dressed like a magician, but was only the Chancellor. As with everything else that he has said on economic matters, the reality is the other way round. He comes before us dressed like a Chancellor, but he is only a magician. The children's conjurer has tricks and illusions that convince those in the audience behind him who desperately want to be convinced. He must appear to hit spending targets of £1·2 billion off next year's EC funds. Have Conservative Members been told about that yet? I wonder how it will turn out. Unallocated reserves of £8 billion become unallocated reserves of £4 billion.

The trick for which we are all waiting—the most anticipated conjuring trick of all—is entitled "the disappearing Chancellor". I expect that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will know how it works. You hear a voice off stage saying, in a south London accent, "Goodbye Norman". There is a flash of light and suddenly the Home Secretary is standing at the Treasury Dispatch Box. It is wholly in keeping with the efficiency and effectiveness of how things are run in the Conservative party that that trick, which would doubtless have been popular in the country, has not come off. We have been treated to smoke screens, illusions, mists and reality obscured, yet behind all the stagecraft, deceits and deceptions, the Chancellor remains. As the hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) so astutely pointed out, he is stil there. It is the only real trick that the Chancellor has pulled off. Some people unkindly suggest that it is the only trick that really mattered to him. If that trick is unworthy of applause, it commands a certain amount of admiration, if only for its breathtaking audacity.

Conservative Members usually ask, "What should we do?" I had five years doing that, so I anticipated it. Before the elections, they stand up and beg Opposition spokesmen to give them advice. Afterwards, they plunder our manifesto and try to take that which they think would be helpful, but during election campaigns they denounce us thoroughly for the programme that we put forward.

The Chancellor shouts, probably with even more relief than Conservative Back Benchers when they cheered him desperately on his autumn statement, "And we win". I am not sure that the country is happy about that, but I am certain that the Chancellor would not want to put the matter to the test tomorrow. I am sure that the Prime Minister would not wish to do so, because for the first time in recent history the Labour party's standing is some 51 per cent. in the opinion polls. If the Chancellor feels that confident, perhaps he would like to test the matter—before Christmas would suit me fine.

May I try to help the Government and be as constructive as Conservative Members urged me to be at the start of my contribution to this debate. What would we do about the problem? We would start by acknowledging that the recession is continuing, that unemployment and bankruptcies will continue to rise, and that investment has fallen substantially and will fall again in 1992. Even in the present slump, we would acknowledge the worsening balance of payments position.

The solution is for the Government to develop a policy for manufacturing industry that contains something other than neglect of the regions, or what the Chancellor chooses to call the territories or not the south.

We could acknowledge that the economic outlook is so bad and the autumn statement such an inadequate response to the slump that we now need an emergency employment programme to reduce unemployment and remove the fear of unemployment—the largest single factor affecting consumer confidence. We need additional investment measures to boost the construction industry

[Mr. Brown]

and business in general. We need a long-term industrial training policy. As all those items are contained in the Opposition amendment. We can make a start tonight by voting for it and giving the Government the guidance that they so clearly need.

9.30 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): During the debate Labour Members have tried to argue that the Government do not have a strategy, but they have ended up by proving that it is Labour Members who do not have a strategy. Even the customary bonhomie of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) failed to obscure the fact that Labour Members are at sixes and sevens with themselves about how policy should evolve. That is in sharp contrast to the autumn statement presented to the House last week by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which set out a clear path for the years ahead and described the mechanisms by which we propose to deliver our objectives.

My right hon. Friend started by making it clear that we intend to safeguard our key achievement of the past two years: delivering a low inflation rate. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) stressed the importance of that in his speech. As he recognised, the success results not from a fetish about numbers, but from a clear analysis of the reasons for the long-term under-performance of the British economy.

A necessary precondition for stable growth—if we do not know now, we never shall—is the establishment of sound control of inflation. There is no trade-off between inflation and growth. We have often sought a trade-off in the past, but failed to find it. Every time we have experienced inflation in this country, we find that, far from creating jobs at the margin, it destroys growth, jobs and hope. That is why we will not jeopardise our achievement of the past two years in reducing the inflation rate to an acceptable level.

Our success in reducing the inflation rate is what creates the opportunity for growth to which my right hon. Friend drew attention in his autumn statement. It is because we recognise that it is success against inflation which creates the opportunity for growth that my right hon. and hon. Friends have been to the fore in celebrating and advertising that achievement.

Producer price inflation is now 2·5 per cent. lower than at any time since 1968. Average earnings rose by 5¾ per cent. in the past 12 months—a lower rate of growth than for a quarter of a century. Those successes have resulted in a retail price inflation figure of 3·6 per cent. We have succeeded in controlling inflation—a goal for which successive British Governments have striven, but only few have achieved. We achieved that control in the 1980s, but regrettably lost it for a short period.

The Labour party has never achieved that objective, and the House would do well to remember that during the last Labour Government the average inflation rate imposed on the British people was 15·5 per cent.—for five years. We shall not return to such statistics while the present Government are in office.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The hon. Gentleman has been lecturing the House about what high inflation costs in high unemployment, but will he explain why unemployment is now at a record level? Given that inflation is now low, why have a further 10,000 jobs gone out the window today? Why are we heading for a real unemployment rate of 4 million next year?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman reminds the House of the cost of losing control of inflation at the end of the 1980s. Inflation is what destroys jobs. That is why we are determined not to make again the mistake that we have too often made in the past.

Having delivered effective control of inflation and sound money, it is now possible for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to plan for the long term. The plans published last week reflect the choices that he can make because of the success that we have had in controlling inflation over the past two years.

This success explains why we can deliver our manifesto commitment to spend £6·3 billion on the roads programme over the next three years. That continues the Government's record of road building and represents a real terms increase in roads expenditure of 95 per cent. since 1979—a sharp contrast with the record of our predecessors, who cut the roads programme by 33 per cent.

We shall continue our record investment programme in British Rail—up 23 per cent. since 1979. We shall continue to invest in London Regional Transport. My hon. Friends should remember that next year we plan an investment programme in London Regional Transport that is up by 350 per cent. on the figure that we inherited in 1979. For the next three years we shall be investing in London Regional Transport more each quarter than Labour did each year. That is what we mean when we say that we are safeguarding the long-term future in the plans that we published last week.

The health programme used to take up more of my time than it does now, but it is still close to my heart. Health investment has risen by 65 per cent. in real terms since 1979, compared with a cut imposed on health investment by Labour of 24 per cent.

We do not believe that investment is measured only in terms of bricks and mortar or physical capital. The most important investment in this as in any other country is in the skills and inventiveness of our people. That is an investment that we continue to safeguard and expand in the autumn statement. More young people go into higher education in Britain today than at any time in our history: 12 per cent. of the relevant age group went into higher education in 1979—now 25 per cent. do. We are committed to increasing that to 33 per cent. before the end of the decade.

It is not just a matter of universities. Within those figures we plan for a 25 per cent. increase in the number of students going into further education. We also plan for a higher proportion of school leavers to join youth training, with a total training spend two-and-a-half times higher in real terms today than in 1979.

These are real investments, through public expenditure programmes in bricks and mortar and in human capital, to set this country on the path of growth again.

My right hon. and hon. Friends will be the first to recognise that the key investment, if we are to create economic success in the years ahead, is in the business sector—in the private sector, which creates the wealth and the jobs and which improves the living standards of all who live in Britain. Once again, the story of the 1980s was a story of success on which we are well placed to build. Between 1974 and 1979, business investment grew by 10 per cent. Since then, it has grown by nearly 40 per cent., measuring it in today's figures, which are below the peak because of the recessionary pressures with which we are only too familiar.

During the 1980s, not only was there more investment, but the returns that British business earned on that investment were significantly better than they had been in earlier years. Throughout the 1980s, returns from British business were nearly half as high again as they had been at the end of the 1970s, and by the end of the 1980s those returns were 62 per cent. higher than they had been during the 1970s. The Government are determined to continue to create, as they did during the 1980s, a favourable climate for business investment here in Britain because we recognise that that is the only means by which we shall succeed in delivering our objectives of growth, jobs and improving living standards.

The Opposition continue to run Britain down, but if we look at what is happening out there in the economy which they affect to describe we find that business is voting with its feet and investing in Britain. During the 1980s more than half of all inward investment into Europe came to Britain. Who should we believe about the atractiveness of Britain as an investment location: the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) or those who make the decisions in Toyota, Honda, Nissan, Ford and Bosch—companies which have brought investment to Britain because they believe that Britain is an attractive place in which to do business?

I agree in this at least with Mr. Delors: the Government have created here in Britain an investment paradise. It would be nice to hear the Opposition welcome that fact. That success was reinforced last week by the autumn statement, which was widely welcomed by British business. Let us hear less from the Opposition about what is alleged to be happening in business. Let us believe instead what British business says is happening in British business.

Dr. Marek: Statistics are all very well, but we all know that we can select a particular time from which to calculate statistics and a particular time at which to finish them. Examples are a lot better. The new bridge being built across the River Severn is basically a French affair. Can the Minister give us a few examples of where British companies are investing in France and Italy and building roads and bridges? I suspect that he will not be able to. There is a difference between foreign investment in Britain and the fact that the Government have done nothing to assist British industry to invest abroad.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman has at least one thing in common with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East—he prefers dealing with words to dealing in numbers. If, rather than measuring the quantum of investment and the return on investment, he wants to move to words and understand clearly the right conditions for British business in the opinions of the people who matter—British business men—let him hear the words of the Institute of Directors, which said after the autumn statement last week:

> "The Chancellor this afternoon has given business the framework needed to begin the recovery."

The British Chambers of Commerce said:

> "Businesses have heard the right messages today."

The CBI said that CBI members would warmly welcome the autumn statement. Mr. Nigel Rudd, chairman of Williams Holdings, said that it

> "provided a practical and positive . . . stimulus to the United Kingdom economy."

Those are real people working in the real economy, not the "experts" sitting on the Opposition Benches.

Several of my hon. Friends have expressed concern today about the scale of the deficit. That is a proper concern. Of course we all want to see the deficit held under proper control because we all recognise that it is essential to the delivery of our objective of sound money. But it is also important to be aware of where we stand in relation to the deficit.

Last week, we published a figure of £37 billion for the current financial year. During the debate, there has been a fair amount of speculation about what will happen in later years—all of it based on getting out a ruler and assuming that there will be no changes in the future. The public sector borrowing requirement for next year is not yet predictable, because we do not yet know the contents of my right hon. Friend's Budget. No Government can rule out tax increases. My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) was right to draw attention to that, but my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) was also right to remind us of one of the features which distinguish the Government from our opponents: our clear objective that tax yields should determine expenditure, rather than the other way round.

It is also important not to lose sight of the significance of the changes in public expenditure planning which my right hon. Friends the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury introduced in the figures published in the autumn statement. The new control total, as defined in the statement, identifies core expenditure. For that, my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary is planning average growth of 1·4 per cent. over the three years of this programme. As everyone will agree, that is less than the long-term growth rate of the British economy. The move will have the effect of controlling the share of the national economy taken by core public expenditure, defined through the new control total.

In the rest of Government expenditure are significant programmes which are directly related to the level of activity in the economy. As activity recovers, we can expect those programmes to absorb a smaller share of the resources available. Another factor which is acting to reduce the deficit is the fact that, as activity increases, revenues will increase as well. Within the plans, a three-pointed pincer movement is being directed at the deficit: all three points are deliberately aimed to ensure that, as activity recovers, public sector borrowing takes a smaller share of national income than it does today.

Let me say a word about the use of private capital. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor made an important statement about that last week. The relevant passage in the autumn statement has been widely welcomed, and I personally welcome the task given to me by my right hon. Friend—the task of finding new ways of introducing the ingenuity and the problem-solving capacity of the private sector into what has traditionally been regarded as the heart of the public sector.

This is not a new theme for the Government. After all, a decade ago investment in the electricity, gas, telephone and water industries was restrained by the rules of public finance. The decision made by the Government, with the

[Mr. Dorrell]

support of the House, to privatise those industries made possible the investment boom that they are currently experiencing—a boom that is under attack from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, who wishes to reward the industries for their investment activity by raising an extra tax on them.

Last week, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced further developments in the use of private capital within the public sector. He announced that projects paid for by charges would no longer be tested against a theoretical public sector alternative which there was no realistic prospect of building. That relates directly to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts). My right hon. Friend the Chancellor's announcement also encouraged joint ventures between the public and private sectors, and a more flexible use of leases.

My hon. Friends the Members for Havant and for Newbury (Mrs. Chaplin) both rightly stressed the fact that questions remain to be answered in relation to the extension of scope for private capital within the public sector. I can assure them that both I and the whole Government are committed to challenging conventional assumptions about how the public and private sectors are defined and what is undertaken in the public and private sector context in order to create new options to improve the public sector services available to the general public.

The purpose of this initiative is to shift emphasis away from an obsession with inputs—with trying to second-guess every element of cost involved in the delivery of a service—to concentrate instead on the services themselves and to insist, in line with the principles of the citizens charter, that what matters in assessing whether a project is right or wrong is the quality of service that we in the public sector provide to the taxpayers who pay our salaries.

My right hon. Friend the Paymaster General said last night that the Labour party finds itself in some difficulty. It has been unable to decide whether to attack everything that the Government have done or to claim credit for the ideas that it believes that it persuaded the Government to adopt. Some Opposition Members have therefore claimed credit for certain ideas and then found themselves targeted by their own colleagues, their arguments being contradicted. It is what in the military context might be described as red on red.

There was a good example yesterday. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) said that the exchange rate needs to fall by a further 10 per cent. to 20 per cent. before we can win back the lost ground. Rather to my surprise, he was joined today by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), who said that he favoured a rate for the pound somewhat below its current level against the deutschmark. Both of them were taken to task last night by the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), who made it clear that he did not agree with those whom he called devaluationists and whom he clearly regarded as dangerous bollweevils within his own party. The hon. Member for Oxford, East needs to watch out. In the morass that is today's Labour party he may find himself being hit by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, who used to agree with the hon. Member for Oxford, East. It is by no means clear, however, that he still does.

On 11 September the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, asked about the prospects for deutschmark realignment within the exchange rate mechanism, said:

> "One of the things the Germans may wish to propose is a realignment of the currencies . . . it is not our policy."

It was surprising, therefore, to hear him say yesterday to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer:

> "We have said to the Chancellor that he had the option of realigning within the exchange rate mechanism."—*[Official Report, 18 November 1992; Vol. 214, c. 309.]*

That is exactly what he did not say at the time when it mattered. At the time when it mattered, he made it clear that that was not a policy that he espoused. What he did say, on the other hand, on the "Today" programme on 14 September was that, although he was in favour of stability within the exchange rate mechanism:

> "The Chancellor should announce now that he is prepared to cut rates."

The effective commentary on that statement was provided by his right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), who said:

> "I do not reveal any new economic law when I say that is simply nonsense."

Shadow Treasury spokesmen experienced further difficulty with technicalities last week when they published their campaign for recovery—a document which allegedly set out the alternative path to recovery that they believe we should be following. They espoused "an emergency employment programme." The document told us little about the programme, but we were told one key fact: it was to be built on the programme that they published in April, but that it would be substantially bigger than originally planned. That was the only detail that they volunteered.

They also spoke last week about a new industry policy. I imagine that some Labour Members were interested in what the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East would say because, unlike the hon. Gentleman, some still believe that therein lies the key to economic success. I carefully read what the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East had to say, and the key sentence reads:

> "We call on the government to bring all sections of industry together to discuss the immediate implementation of an industrial strategy."

Labour has laboured mightily and brought forth an embryo.

For the first time in my life, I found myself in some sympathy with *Labour Briefing*. The October edition said:

> "Brown has already proved a disaster as Shadow Chancellor, despite his willingness to make himself available for twenty second TV sound-bites day or night. His recent attempts to score points . . . by making vacuous demands for economic 'co-ordination, action and competence' have impressed nobody."

I could not have put it better myself.

Shadow Treasury spokesmen will not put a figure on their recovery package, but it does not stop them from advocating a new tax on the utilities. I apologise to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) because I realise that this is a sensitive subject for her. She sought to explain to Radio 4 listeners last week that this was not a tax but only a levy. The argument did not convince her interviewer and I do not believe that it will convince any of the staff or customers of the utilities, whose investment budgets would be slashed if the policy of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East were introduced. It does not seem to have occurred to him that there is inconsistency between using rhetoric about the importance of investment while singling out the utilities—the water industry, for example, with a £30 billion investment programme—for his latest tax increases.

Labour always has trouble with tax; it is its achilles heel. In *The Sunday Times* on 29 September, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) reminded Labour Members of that. Referring to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), he said:

> "It is, as he well knows, the hurdle over which Labour fell at the last two general elections. He, as Shadow Chief Secretary, and I, as Shadow Chancellor, made a botch of it in 1987. John Smith and Margaret Becket did better last April, but nothing like well enough. We all made the same mistake."

It is not surprising that shadow Treasury spokesmen are experiencing difficulty within their own party. The hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) has said that Labour's Front Bench has failed to offer a coherent economic strategy. The hon. Member for Hackney South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) says that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has no understanding of the "elemental laws of arithmetic." The Labour party lives in a fantasy land, where it does not have to make any choices and does not have to disappoint anybody: which is delivering. Harold Wilson dreamed of turning Labour into the natural party of government; it is the achievement of the present Labour Front Bench to turn it into the natural party of opposition—an achievement that my hon. Friends and I warmly applaud.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 267, Noes 322.

Division No. 90] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John

Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rucliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*

Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved.

That this House approves the Autumn Statement presented by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer on 12th November; welcomes the Government's continuing commitment to the firm control of public expenditure; supports the new expenditure plans, which honour the Government's commitments and provide protection of capital spending; applauds the specific measures the Government has taken to encourage confidence and foster recovery; and congratulates the Government on achieving a substantial reduction in underlying inflation, which has laid the foundations for sustainable growth.

Adjournment

Resolved, **That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]***

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes past Ten o'clock.

Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil (Belfast N)
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'f'ld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George (Acton)

Tellers for the Noes:

Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House approves the Autumn Statement presented by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer on 12th November; welcomes the Government's continuing commitment to the firm control of public expenditure, supports the new expenditure plans, which favour the Government's commitments and provide protection of capital spending, applauds the specific measures the Government has taken to encourage confidence and foster recovery and congratulates the Government on achieving a substantial reduction in underlying inflation, which has laid the foundations for sustainable growth.

Adjournment

Resolved, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Kirkhope.*]

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 20 November 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Adjournment Debates

9.35 am

Mr. William Hague (Richmond, Yorks): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Adjournment debates are within your gift, and I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak on the Adjournment later today, but I and many other hon. Members are concerned that the Adjournment debate of last night never took place.

Accordingly, Madam Speaker, I seek your guidance on two matters. First, will you confirm that the schedule of Adjournment debates for today and next week remains the same, even though last night's Adjournment debate never took place? Secondly, if, as is strongly rumoured, last night's problem was due to abject incompetence on the part of the Opposition Whips' Office, will you suggest to the official Opposition that any new debate on the subject that was to be discussed last night should take place in Opposition time?

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I think that the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) has the matter wrong. I know that he is the Parliamentary Private Secretary to a senior Minister, but it is obvious that he does not know the procedures of the House. I understand, Madam Speaker, that Thursday night Adjournment debates are within your gift and that other such debates are determined by ballot. If anyone spiked my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms. Squire) to prevent her from initiating the Adjournment debate last night, it was the Tory Whip, who immediately jumped to his feet to move the Adjournment.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. As a simple man and a PPS, I seek your guidance. Is it the constitutional position that the Labour party, after two days of debate on the autumn statement and several instances of Prime Minister's questions is now in favour of all the contents of the statement?

Madam Speaker: Order. I can resolve the matter. As the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) said, Thursday night Adjournment debates are within the gift of the Speaker. They do not affect Friday motions because those are dealt with by the ballot procedure.

Perhaps we might move on to the first motion.

Workfare

9.37 am

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): I beg to move,

That this House recognises that unemployment is nearly three million and rising; considers that unemployment is wasteful and soul destroying; recalls the original Beveridge proposals; believes that reform of the trade unions and the removal of restrictive practices have a valuable part to play in increasing employment opportunities; believes that the great majority of the unemployed desperately wish to work; considers that all sections of society would benefit from improvement of the environment and the infrastructure of the country; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to give the unemployed a voluntary choice between the current benefit system and participating in paid, environmental, caring and minor infrastructure work at an enhanced level of remuneration, thus in due course establishing the right to work and implementation of the original Beveridge proposals in full.

This is an attempt to discuss a solution to an awful problem that confronts the country. Nearly 3 million people are unemployed, and the numbers are rising. If the old recording criterion were used, we know that unemployment would be set at a higher level than ever before. It is a national and human tragedy.

Unemployment must be shattering for those who experience it. I am sure that the whole House joins me in recognising what an awful experience it must be suddenly to find that one has no job and nothing particular to do. Boredom and family strain go with a person suddenly losing his job and often having nothing to do for a long time.

There are now nearly 1 million people who have been unemployed for more than a year. That is the greatest problem confronting this country, and the world. It is really a non-party issue. Unemployment is rising all over the world, for the simple reason that more and more sophisticated technology is continually putting people out of work. The banks are shedding labour because of their sophisticated machinery, and in shops new cash registers and so on are replacing jobs and putting more people out of work. On top of that, the end of the cold war has meant that the armaments industry throughout the world has declined—a fact for which everyone is grateful.

I believe that the time has come when this House should give serious consideration to finding a way out of this impasse. In the 1930s, we did something about the problem: we set people to work building roads. Most of the ring roads around our cities were built in the 1930s by people who had been unemployed. That was and is helpful to this country. We should learn from that experience, and also from the experience of America in the 1930s.

The Americans had an even worse depression than we did, and when President Roosevelt came to office in 1933, in the depths of the depression, he immediately said that he would get the country back to work. He set up the Civilian Conservation Corps and recruited 250,000 young men. Altogether, some 12,500,000 people were put to work under Government schemes. Although that was not as comprehensive as what I shall propose today, it did represent work for about a third of the unemployed people in America.

We should give this problem more serious thought than we have in the past. The election is not far behind us. Unemployment was not properly debated during that

[Mr. Ralph Howell]

election; it was not a major issue, although it should have been. The time has come when the Government must give serious thought to finding a way out.

Month after month, we hear of increases in unemployment, and on every occasion we are told that there is some reason for hope—the figures are not quite as bad as we had anticipated. We seem to pretend that the problem will go away or will improve. The Government's solution is to train, retrain and provide work experience: never to give work. Of course the Opposition makes as much capital as they can out of the Government's misfortunes, but what are their solutions? To train, retrain and provide work experience: never work. The only difference between the Government and the Opposition in this respect is that the latter say that the Government are not doing enough of these things. I say that we have not applied our minds to the real answers.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): Before my hon. Friend moves on to those answers, can he tell us whether, during his examination of this problem, comparing today's position with that of the 1930s, he has discovered that a greater number of middle-aged and elderly people —in career terms—are unemployed today than then? If so, will the suggestions that he makes for dealing with today's problem incorporate this particularly disadvantaged group of workers?

Mr. Howell: My solution, when I come to it, will be comprehensive—to include anyone who wants to work. The state is the provider of the last resort; it has to make sure that everyone has adequate funds for housing, clothing and food. We spend about £10 billion in support of the unemployed. All I am saying is that we could offer work to everyone who wants to work, for roughly the same money—but I shall develop that point later.

We must examine every possible way of dealing with the problem. I know that the Minister of State has just been to the United States to look at workfare there. I do not believe that workfare, as practised in the United States, is the ideal answer, but I am glad that we are looking into it.

Under workfare in the United States people are obliged to work for benefit. My idea of the right to work is to do away with unemployment benefit and to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to earn a decent wage. The workfare experiment in America has been under way for some time. It was started by Governor Reagan in California and subsequently developed there.

The BBC sent over a "Panorama" team to America some years ago and made a programme that is well worth seeing, but its objective was clearly to discredit workfare. The programme met various people who were doing menial jobs. One of them was a former miner on a dustcart who described how pleased he was to be doing that job and how awful life had been before—his family had almost broken up before he was lucky enough to get onto workfare. It had saved his marriage, and he was a very satisfied person.

The programme also showed a single parent somewhere in the mid-west who had to take her three very young children right across town to the day centre every day and then go all the way back to her work, which was near her home. She then worked all day and repeated the performance each night. She insisted that she would rather be doing that than be locked away indefinitely at home with the children, but without work companions. In short, her life was 100 per cent. better than before.

I believe that it would be good for the country and for everyone in it if we could find a way of offering work to all who want it, but, before I get onto my proposals proper, I want to tell the House about how badly unemployment is rising and will continue to rise, whatever anyone says.

Average unemployment during the 1950s was 370,000. In the 1960s, it was 480,000, and in the 1970s it was more than a million. Average unemployment in the 1980s was more than 2,700,000. An artificial dip was created. Had the rules not been changed, unemployment would never have fallen below 2.25 million. That was static.

The dip has now disappeared, and unemployment has been rising again. Unemployment always rises whenever a Government decide to attack inflation. When inflation is brought down, unemployment goes up. Right at the end of the Thatcher Administration, when we started to become nervous about the level of unemployment and reflated to bring it down, we ran into the difficulties from which we are only now emerging. So there is no escape.

In view of those figures, which are rising in a steep curve, how can any reasonable person believe that unemployment in the 1990s will not average well over 3 million? We must face that, and we need to do something positive about it.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I believe that the House will agree that my hon. Friend's argument works, whether or not unemployment rises above 3 million. Even if unemployment stood at 1 million, it would be a scandal for £8 billion to be paid to people on the sole condition that they did nothing worth while. The House is grateful to my hon. Friend for finding a non-partisan way in which to raise the problem of the non-use of people. It is a sin to abuse people; it is wrong to misuse them; but the greatest problem is not to give people any use at all.

Mr. Howell: That point has been well made, and I believe that the figure is higher than £8 billion or £10 billion. We have now reached the stage at which the official figure for the coming year is more than £10 billion of total waste; £10 billion of our money will be paid to people who in the main desperately want to work, and it will be paid on the condition that they do nothing whatever to help society. That must be a crazy idea.

Three arguments are put against my idea. The first is that it would be too costly. The second is that it would be compulsory, and the third is that there would not be enough work to be done. I think that I shall be able to argue against those in due course.

In my opinion, there is plenty of work for everybody to do, in any society, anywhere, at any time. It is crazy to believe that there is an economic argument which makes it necessary for people to be idle.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Does my hon. Friend not agree that, when we try to match people to all the work available, we must ensure that the work is appropriate to their skills and backgrounds? There is no point in trying to make a dustman take over the job of the managing director of a charity—or vice versa.

Mr. Howell: Yes; I will deal with that question in due course. People must have a choice. My scheme does not involve the direction of labour. What I shall suggest will be in no way compulsory. I say only that the state should offer work of various kinds—for example, environmental work, such as President Roosevelt offered in the 1930s. That category could cover all sorts of activities—improving derelict land, making the streets clean and planting millions of trees, as we ought to. It would cover infrastructure work and caring work. I shall deal with all that in due course.

My principal proposals are clearly set out in the pamphlet "Why Not Work?", which was published with the help of the Adam Smith Institute a year ago, and received considerable support right across the political spectrum. The best press report, which appeared in the *New Statesman and Society*, slated the Opposition for not coming up with the idea years ago. There was a time when we always used to hear from the Opposition about the right to work—so the article said that it was rather strange to hear that idea coming from this side of the House.

However, I am not interested in party political banter. I want to try to galvanise everybody into recognising that we could solve the problem quickly and for all time. I shall describe what the scheme would be like when fully operational—but, as I shall explain, it would come into operation over a period.

When fully operational, the scheme would establish the right to work. Every adult would be offered work for 40 hours per week at £2·50 an hour, or one third of the national average wage, whichever was the greater. That would be free of income tax, so it is a better deal than most of the unemployed get today.

Every person aged 16 or 17 would be offered the right to remain in full-time education, supported through child benefit and educational grants, or the right to paid training, or the right to employment in the right-to-work scheme, or up to 40 hours a week at £1·25 per hour for 16-year-olds and £1·75 per hour for 17-year-olds. That would be free of income tax.

Unemployment benefit would cease. The status of being unemployed would also cease. Every person would have the right to work or, for the under-18s, the right to education or paid training. The fear of unemployment, the fear of being discarded, would be removed, and everybody would have the right to make a contribution to society in general. Thus, every adult would have access to £100 per week, tax-free, if he or she cared to work for 40 hours. That is considerably higher than the present rate of unemployment benefit.

Adult couples, married or otherwise, with or without children, would be entitled to earn up to £5,200 each per year, tax-free, and would receive no other benefits. Couples with children and single parents would be entitled to the same overall support from the state as at present, but the first £100 would come from the right-to-work scheme. For example, a family unit now receiving £150 per week in various benefits would receive £50 automatically, and the other £100 would be paid if 40 hours' work were done. For every adult, it would be deemed that the full £100 had been earned, and any entitlement to further family or housing benefit would be paid accordingly. If someone did not avail himself of the opportunity, that would be entirely up to him.

Sickness, disability and similar benefits would continue as at present. People who were 50 per cent., or less than 50 per cent., disabled would be entitled to participate in the scheme, but they would receive disability benefit automatically as of right. In other words, someone who was 50 per cent. disabled would receive whatever he is now entitled to for his 50 per cent. disability but, as he is also 50 per cent. able, he would be able to participate either at a reduced rate of pay for 40 hours, or at the full rate for 20 hours. It is important that the scheme should enable partially disabled people to participate.

Now I shall explain how the scheme would be phased in. Initially, it would be for the under-21s. Little change in legislation would be required. We already have on the statute book a system whereby no benefit is paid to 16 and 17-year-olds. They should be—I say "should be" because I am not sure whether the system has worked as it should—entitled to training or to be able to continue with their education.

I suggest that we should extend that system to include all those between 16 and 21. As soon as possible, we should set up facilities for turning jobcentres into work centres. We should operate a scheme to find work and, as I said, there would be a variety of work available. There would be environmental work, coast protection work, minor infrastructural work and caring work.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman. As he will hear from my later remarks, I do not approach what he is trying to do with any sense of absolute hostility. However, I point out to him that a guarantee was given to young people when benefits were taken from them. Unfortunately, one of the results of the Government's failure to honour that guarantee is that about 75,000 young people are waiting to take up youth training courses.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Lloyd: The Minister shakes his head, but he does not know what he is talking about. Of those 75,000 people, there are certainly quite a few who, because of cessation of benefit, find themselves with no income. I am simply not prepared to listen to anyone who says that we can establish schemes the effect of which would be to deny many of our young people any access to income. Such a scheme would be a cruel illusion.

Mr. Howell: In principle, I agree with the hon. Gentleman. However, I do not believe that his figures are correct. I do believe that we have not honoured in every case what we should have honoured for 16 and 17-year-olds. I very much regret that, because it discredits such schemes. However, let that not put anyone off the idea. The guarantee has proved a little difficult; I know that we intend to correct it as soon as possible. That difficulty does not detract from my proposal.

We should introduce my proposed scheme as soon as we can. We should extend the withdrawal of benefit, but should offer a generous and real work possibility at a higher rate of pay than at present. By the time the 21-year-olds reach 22, we should advance the scheme by one or two years a year. In other words, we should make it impossible for any more young people to move forward into the something-for-nothing society which has destroyed our whole social system.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): There speaks the party of freeloaders.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I believe that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) may want to make a contribution later.

Mr. Howell *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am dealing with a seated intervention. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West cannot make his point from a seated position now.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the great advantages of his scheme is the reduction it would be likely to bring, on the basis of experience in other countries, including the United States, in the high rate of juvenile and youth crime? It would take us away from the dependency culture into which so many people in their late teenage years fall. Boredom encourages juvenile and youth crime, which is one of the most serious factors in the rise of crime, especially in crimes of dishonesty such as car crime and dwelling house burglaries, which are such a scourge on society.

Mr. Howell: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend who makes a valuable point. When we talk about the social damage being done and about the overall cost, we should realise that a huge cost goes along with unemployment, especially for young people in the inner cities, in terms of policing and the extra cost of insurance for homes that are being burgled week in and week out. A tremendous benefit would accrue from the scheme in that important area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We shall gain more interest in examining the details of my hon. Friend's scheme if we do not rely too much on the crime reduction element, although that has a part. We should remember that 10 per cent. of males aged 15—well below school leaving age—have already been convicted of an offence for which they could have been sent to gaol for six months or more. We should recognise that the scheme would have some advantage in reducing crime, but the main purpose would be to avoid people being paid money on the sole condition that they do nothing worth while.

Mr. Howell: I was talking about the stepping up of the age limit at which benefit would be withdrawn and at which there would be no entitlement to benefit. By the time the 21-year-olds reached the age of 22, the limit would be stepped up to 23. No more young people would ever get into the dependency culture.

Lady Olga Maitland: Would my hon. Friend seriously consider suggesting his scheme to people in their 30s and 40s? The new age travellers, for example, were clearly fit and able to work, but showed no intention of looking for work.

Mr. Howell: Of course we should tighten up the work test. When the scheme was fully operative, it would be a work test. There would be no payments to new age travellers when the scheme was fully operative. There would be no classification of "unemployed". Work would be offered to everybody, and people could take that work the day after they left their previous employment. There would be no break. Whenever a person wanted to take up a job, there would be a basic income which would be a basic right for everybody.

A few months ago, I discussed my scheme with people in a job centre in Sheringham. I nearly got to the point of taking a vote; I am sure that, if a vote had been taken, it would have been carried almost unanimously. At least 75 per cent. were in favour. Just as I was about to get to the vote, somebody intervened and made sure that no vote was taken.

As well as starting with the young, I suggest that, in Sheringham or some such place, we should also run an experiment with older people. We should say that we have an obligation to ensure that all the young under 21, for starters, have work available to them. We should also put aside 20 or 30 places for other people on a first come, first served basis. There would soon be a queue. I know of many constituents who would love to take up such work. The pressure would then come from the unemployed themselves for more places in any particular locality.

That would not be something imposed by the Government; it would be demanded of the Government by the unemployed. That is a sensible and practical way in which to proceed.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Does my hon. Friend agree that the real problem is that of the long-term unemployed? In any six-month period, some 4 million people move in and out of work. Would not my hon. Friend's scheme be easier to implement if he allowed unemployment benefit to remain for the first six months of unemployment and operated it thereafter?

Mr. Howell: I am grateful for that suggestion. I do not take a rigid view; I am suggesting the scheme as a cockshy. Refinements may be needed and what my hon. Friend suggests may be one of them.

The scheme would simplify everything. There would be no tribunals or refunds and no complicated calculations involving thousands of civil servants mulling over silly sums and claiming back £2 here or as little as 10p there. The whole thing would be quite simple. There would be a work centre. A person who worked for one hour would get £2·50, and a person who worked for the full 40 hours would get £100 at the end of the week, which could be paid straight into his bank account. There need be no cash exchange.

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): My hon. Friend has already made it clear that he envisages a scheme whereby unemployed people would receive £100 a week, but he has added that entitlement to other benefits such as housing benefit would remain and that, if a family was entitled to benefits worth more than £100, the benefits system would be used to top up the income from the scheme.

Does that not mean that my hon. Friend would not succeed in removing all the complications? In practice, the benefit system would continue and it would be necessary to calculate the benefit entitlement of people with families to housing benefit and so on. Can my hon. Friend assure the House that his proposed scheme would yield the administrative savings that he claims?

Mr. Howell: I agree with my hon. Friend. I should like us to go for the full scheme immediately, but it is not practicable to do so. Once the principle was in place, however, we could adjust benefits accordingly and, in due course, phase them out and so wean the whole country off the dependency culture. That could not be done immediately. That is why I suggest that, initially, while we are trying to find a way to start the scheme——

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): By the sound of it, the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that an unemployed man with a family—perhaps several children—would be paid £100 if he worked a full week. Does the hon. Gentleman expect anyone to take seriously the suggestion a family man would be able to pay his rent and feed, clothe and look after his family on that sort of income?

Mr. Howell: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was in his place when I explained my scheme in full. I said—I was challenged on this by my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts)—that a family receiving a total of £150 in various benefits today would automatically receive £50 in benefit, while the parent or parents would be offered 40 hours work at £2·50. Both parents could earn £100 per week if they wished to, and if they did, they would probably be able to afford to pay someone to look after their children. Thus, no hardship would result from the scheme if it were introduced in the way that I have suggested—although, as my hon. Friend the Member for Havant pointed out, it would not clear away all the deadening bureaucracy in the system immediately.

Lady Olga Maitland: Has my hon. Friend taken into account, in considering how his scheme would work, the fact that, although it is laudable to encourage the unemployed to take up an occupation, they need time to look for long-term employment that is sustainable and viable? We do not want to take that from them.

Mr. Howell: Perhaps it would be necessary to introduce a refinement there, although I personally believe that, if someone seriously wants work, he will find the time to look for it after he has put in his 40 hours. We do not want too much of a nanny state, and if we go in for such provisions, we may find that the scheme is wrecked.

Over the years, I have received a great deal of support for my scheme. It is not something that I have thought up in the past day or two, but something of whose benefits I have tried to persuade many Governments over a long period. Lord Carr, who was Secretary of State when I entered the House in 1970, heard all about it—indeed, they have all heard all about it. Sooner or later, I shall win.

I have had something of a victory. I remember going to see Lord Tebbit in the early 1980s when he was Secretary of State. Norman Tebbit did not want to know anything about it. He had the answer to unemployment: it was coming down. In fact, it went up, but that is par for the course for all Secretaries of State. It is interesting to note, therefore, that, in his recent book "Unfinished Business", Lord Tebbit has given my version of workfare the top spot in his suggestions for putting the country back on course for prosperity. We have all heard about St. Paul, but it is cause for rejoicing when one of our number sees the light at the end of the Corridor.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will do his best to draw the attention of the present Secretary of State—who used to be one of my constituents and who has known all about my scheme for a long time—to our debate today. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will show—rather more than she did in the House the other day—that she is just as enlightened as Lord Tebbit.

The Employment Research Trust, which a number of my friends and I set up 12 years ago, has done much work in conjunction with Buckingham university to try to get the idea across. I am also grateful to the Adam Smith Institute, which supports the scheme and which helped me with the publication of the pamphlet "Why Not Work?" At the other end of the spectrum, the Low Pay Unit has been especially helpful. I have worked closely with Chris Pond for many years, and he fully supports what I am trying to do. Moreover, the *New Statesman and Society* gave the exercise a year ago a better write-up than any other periodical.

I have received support from unemployment groups throughout the country—including, in particular, a group in Finchley. I do not believe that any of those involved support my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) or that they supported his predecessor. Nevertheless, they have devoted most of their recent publication to saying that the scheme should be carefully considered and that it must be given top priority.

Every time I speak on this matter, I receive support from unemployed people throughout the country, almost all of whom want to work. I stress the fact that the majority of the unemployed want to work. They want comradeship, they want something to do, they want a purpose and they want an escape from the boredom of unemployment.

Mr. Hawkins: Can my hon. Friend confirm that one of the most interesting developments in workfare has been in the USA, in particular in California and West Virginia? Earlier this year, I was fortunate enough to observe the West Virginia experience, which has been particularly positive. It certainly reinforces what my hon. Friend has been saying.

Mr. Howell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments.

A constituent of mine—a Mr. Haines—has suddenly found himself unemployed at the age of 58. He started work when he was 15 and spent 41 years in employment and two years in self-employment. He is not entitled to any unemployment benefit—partly, I think, because his wife works for more than 16 hours a week, and perhaps partly because of his self-employment. I doubt whether he is even included in the unemployment statistics. There is something wrong with that.

Mr. Haines went to his local jobcentre, but he was told that it was impossible to find him work. He was told to come back in six months, by which time he would have lost the will to work and the jobcentre would reinstil it in him through some scheme or another. What could be more ridiculous than that? I am glad to say that he is one of those who are working hard and successfully to promote my scheme.

Mr. Gerst: My hon. Friend should persevere with his scheme beyond today's debate and beyond his conversations with eminent Secretaries of State. There is one important principle in politics—not that one does something that is right, but that one puts it across at the right moment. This is the right moment for my hon. Friend's scheme. In the past, Governments have wanted to

[Mr. Gorst]

spend money; more recently, they have wanted to save it. Today, they want to get value for their money. That is why my hon. Friend's scheme is worthy of support.

Mr. Howell: I am grateful for those comments. We must curb wasteful Government expenditure. We waste at least £10 billion in this area, and that is one of the most important aspects of the problem. We can push and push to no avail when the time is not right, but I believe that the right moment has arrived. All sides of the political spectrum realise that this is not a party political issue—it is a national and international issue. We should make it the cornerstone of our plans for reviving the economy.

Instead of telling our partners in Europe that we want nothing to do with the social chapter, we should say, "This is our social chapter. It is the answer to our problems and your problems." My scheme could be the answer to problems in Poland and Russia. I am sure that everyone realises that we cannot just worry about our problems, because the worldwide problems in, for example, the eastern European countries will soon become our problems if we do not find an answer to them.

I was pleased to receive a letter from my hon. Friend the Minister of State on that very point only a few days ago. He suggested that there might be a scheme of some sort, although I do not think that it would be the right sort to satisfy me. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will outline a pilot scheme to investigate whether my ideas could be used to find a way to solve such terrible problems.

We must deal with this matter with the utmost urgency. If it is left much longer, we will be in a deeper and deeper hole, pouring more and more money down the drain. We are ruining our economy because we have not faced such an important problem. There is only one way out. As I said earlier, when President Roosevelt took office in 1933 in the depths of the depression, he said that there was only one way out of the problems: "We must work our way out." That is the way to proceed.

10.26 am

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell), who spoke without party animus, for the opportunity to debate, in the words of his motion, the "wasteful and soul destroying" effects of the ever-growing job losses in Britain today.

The debate comes on a day of rapidly mounting public concern about the huge costs of mass unemployment, in economic and human terms alike. These costs have increased, are increasing and will go on increasing, in spite of the measures announced by the Chancellor in his autumn statement on 12 November. Indeed, many people think that the statement will make the dole queue even longer by reducing the purchasing power of millions of people who are already among the lowest paid and who, in many cases, have living standards that are little better than those of people on state benefits.

As of now, the increase in the jobless total compared with only two years ago is almost 1·25 million—71 per cent. The number of jobless people chasing every vacancy has shot up from 11 to 30. The number of young people out of work has risen by 323,000—an all-time high—and 541,000 jobs in manufacturing industry have disappeared.

It is against this background that I want to discuss the extremely daunting difficulties of disabled people—for whom the hon. Gentleman said that he wanted positive discrimination—as they seek to show that they have abilities as well as disabilities. I hope that, by common consent in the House today, it will be agreed that they are among the least fortunate and the most distressed of all the victims of the jobs famine. For them, unemployment is a double handicap that leads to double despair. They seek not sympathy but social fairness; not the dependence of state benefits but the independence of reasonably paid employment; not expressions of compassion but practical concern in a society about which one highly skilled disabled person, who lives in Surrey, commented to me recently:

> "It would be an exaggeration to describe my status as that even of a second-class citizen."

Another very able, but physically disabled, correspondent wrote to me last week from north London to say:

> "I was made redundant as a Senior Research Officer into special needs education when the ILEA was disbanded. Since then I have attended 32 interviews for virtually the same kind of employment. Obviously my written applications were acceptable but the interviewing panels were either unable, or unwilling, to look beyond the nature of my physical disability, thus ignoring my proven ability to do the job."

In the queue for jobs, these and other disabled people are the tail-enders in the longest and most soul-destroying queue in Britain today. The Spastics Society, in a justifiably bitter comment about the unmerited but widespread discrimination against disabled job-seekers, has been displaying a poster which pictures two job applicants, one disabled and the other able-bodied, with the caption:

> "One has the degree in engineering the other has the job."

As the society points out, employers can blatantly discriminate against disabled people, with no real fear of being called to account.

Colin Barnes, in his book "Disabled People and Discrimination", amply exposes and documents the extent of discrimination in comtemporary Britain. The 3 per cent. quota scheme which the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 provided is now a dismal failure. More than three quarters of the employers who are subject to its requirements do not meet the quota. There have been no prosecutions of defaulting employers since the present Government came to power.

Employers are now six times more likely to turn a disabled person down for an interview, even if his or her qualifications and experience are identical to those of a non-disabled applicant. People with disabilities are at least two-and-a-half times more likely to be out of work than the general population. Nor does that figure take into account the large numbers of employable disabled people aged 16 to 64—perhaps as many as 1·2 million—who are excluded from official unemployment statistics. Although they are very much "out of work", they are hidden by the Government's figures.

At present, only 1 per cent. of the work force are registered as disabled; yet according to the Government's own surveys, well over 3 per cent. are registrable. For their part, Ministers say that education and persuasion are preferable to the legal requirements of the 1944 Act. But the more repetitively they state their view, the more tragically unemployment grows among employable disabled people. However, that is not the clinching argument against the Government's view of the way forward.

If education and persuasion alone can achieve equal opportunities for disabled people, why is the Government's own record as an employer so poor? They are a huge employer and, if education and persuasion are better than statutory requirements, why have they not yet either educated or persuaded themselves to employ more disabled people? How persuasive is the advocate who has still to persuade himself of the worth of his own advocacy?

I want to set out briefly some of the most recent information available about the Government's approach as an employer to the quota of 3 per cent. In a parliamentary reply on 14 July 1992, the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry, said in column 659 of *Hansard* that in June 1989 the number of registered disabled staff in his Department was 156—1·2 per cent. —and that in June 1990 the number was 153—again 1·2 per cent.

Also on 14 July, the Home Secretary told the House:

> "In 1989, 143 members of staff in the Home Office were registered disabled, representing 0·3 per cent. of all staff."—[*Official Report*, 14 July 1992; Vol. 211, c. 540–41.]

The percentage in June 1991 was approximately the same.

On 15 July, the Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), reported:

> "In June 1989 there were 30 registered disabled people employed in the Department which represented 0·7 per cent. of the total work force. In 1990, the comparable figures were 29 and 0·6 per cent."—[*Official Report*, 15 July 1992; Vol. 211, c. 748–49.]

With such figures to explain, Ministers are being told not only by disabled people, but by employers, that it is not what they say that impresses those they lecture about education and persuasion, but what they do.

Lady Olga Maitland: Could you possibly explain——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Lady not to use the word "you" in that way.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will the right hon. Gentleman kindly explain that, when disabled people are employed in any sector, it is expensive to meet their needs? It is all very well to say that not enough disabled people are employed, but the reality is that not all disabled people are suitable for certain types of work. It is necessary to provide facilities to help them to work. For example, they may need computers tailored to their needs. It is expensive, and it is a great problem.

Mr. Morris: I speak with some experience of administering help for disabled people. The hon. Lady is right to say that we must never simplify the problems. For example, there are often difficulties of physical access for disabled people to places of employment. Under the last Labour Government, capital grants were made available for the first time, in recognition of that difficulty, among other special measures. However, the inescapable fact is that the abilities of disabled people are massively under-used. For their part, the Government say that 3 per cent. of the work force are registrable, but nothing like 3 per cent. of the work force are registered disabled people. That is why disabled people feel that the way in which they are treated is a major scandal. They passionately want to work and, as I said, to demonstrate that they have abilities as well as disabilities.

Official statistics also show that, even when disabled people are in work, they are more likely to be lower paid and, despite their qualifications, in lower-skilled occupations than the general population.

Mr. Hawkins: The right hon. Member's work for the disabled and in championing their opportunities for work is widely respected on both sides of the House and throughout the country. Does he accept that great strides have been made in recent years, especially by voluntary organisations—I know that he is connected with many of them? While he is on the subject, I pay tribute to Blackpool and Fylde Access for the Disabled, in which, as the right hon. Gentleman may know, the work is organised by Clarissa Clarke, who is well known throughout the country.

The work of voluntary organisations, which have made the same case that the right hon. Gentleman has been advancing, is enormously important, and I hope that he will join me to pay tribute to their work.

Mr. Morris: I am grateful to the hon. Member for his intervention. I most warmly endorse what he said about the superb work that is done in the voluntary sector. Many years ago in the House, it was argued that, as state provision expanded, the voluntary sector would wither away. That was total nonsense. As state provision increased, so did voluntary effort. If we are to make disabled people fully a part of society, instead of being apart from society, there is enormous work to be done in both the statutory and voluntary sectors. The voluntary organisation to which the hon. Member referred is one of high reputation in the north-west. I am delighted to know of his connection with its work.

To resume, I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House would agree that, when disabled people are in work, they are more likely to be in lower-paid and—despite their qualifications—in lower-skilled occupations compared with the general population. The rights of disabled people in and seeking employment are further undermined by an education and training system that frequently operates in an openly segregationist and discriminatory way.

As I have shown in many representations to Ministers on behalf of the Rathbone Society, in whose admirable work my good and hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) also takes a close interest, most training and enterprise councils fail to meet the concerns of disabled people in their areas. A report about that, soon to be published by the Spastics Society, will further document the failure of TECs in their dealings with disabled people.

The right to work is dismissed as a slogan by disabled people who are denied basic civil rights which the non-disabled can take for granted. Their response to the Government's talk of "citizens charters" is to insist on becoming full and equal members of society. They want this House to provide a proper framework of legal rights to end discrimination against them. They point to the German levy system as a simple but very effective method of making employers meet their responsibilities. Employers in Germany have to meet a financial levy if less than 6 per cent. of their work force are disabled people. Large numbers of German employers meet the quota, but the levy produces an annual income of about £100 million, which is channelled directly to employment programmes for people with disabilities.

[Mr. Morris]

Nor are Britain's disabled people alone in insisting on a proper framework of legal rights to end the unjustified discrimination that they now have to endure. In a highly distinguished speech in another place on 4 November, Lord Renton, formerly Sir David Renton and the Member of Parliament for Huntingdon, appealed to the Government to find time in this House for the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, which all organisations of and for disabled people want to see speedily enacted. He said:

> "It is extraordinary and not very creditable that there has been such opposition, or nonfeasance"

in the past. He went on to say that when the Bill returned to this House the Government should

> "at least provide time for its discussion . . . Better still",

Ministers

> "could take on the Bill themselves and make it a Government Bill."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 4 November 1992, c. 1526.]

Much to their honour, other Conservative peers supported the Bill, just as many Conservative Members have also given it strong backing and continue to do so.

Civil rights legislation for disabled people is not just an idea whose time has come. It is an idea whose time came 10 years ago, when the committee which, as the then Minister, I appointed to look into restrictions against disabled people in 1979, reported in 1982 in favour of legislative action. Since then, legislation has been enacted in the United States, Australia and Canada, among other countries. We could have led the world, but instead we trail far behind.

It was left to President Bush, when signing the Americans With Disabilities Act 1990, to say from the White House lawn:

> "I want to appeal today to our friends in the business community. You have in your hands the key to the success of this Act, for you can unlock a splendid resource of untapped human potential that, when free, will enrich us all. Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down."

I referred earlier to the Spastics Society's poster about two job applicants, one disabled and the other able-bodied. Another of its posters is even more eloquent in its message to parliamentarians in all parts of this House. The poster shows two infants and the caption says:

> "One has cerebral palsy, the other has full human rights."

The picture of the two infants symbolises the rank injustices that millions of our disabled fellow citizens have to live with day in and day out. I ask not only the Government but the House not to forget them in this debate.

10.47 am

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on raising this issue today and on his contribution to the debate on the problem known as, "Why work?" Whatever his frustrations in getting his message on workfare across, several measures that have been introduced to try to deal with the "Why work?" problem in the past decade can be traced back to the battles that my hon. Friend has fought. I shall mention three.

First, the benefits system now, more than ever before, ensures that, whatever their family circumstances, people can be better off in work than out of it. Family credit, which was introduced five years ago, is aligned with the structure of family premiums for income support, and ensures that one will always be better off in work, however low paid the job.

The only remaining wrinkle in what would otherwise be a complete benefit system, ensuring that people are always better off in work, is the provision for mortgage payments. There has been a welcome extention of home ownership, but, unfortunately, we are at the bottom of a recession. People have told me at my surgery in Havant that they will be worse off taking a job because, although they will receive family credit and housing benefit, while they are on income support their mortgage is paid. With that one exception, which is admittedly increasingly important, the benefits system ensures that people are better off in work.

Secondly, the Government have tightened up on what used to be called the "available for work" provision. In the past one was entitled to receive unemployment benefit if one was genuinely available for work, but that requirement has now been changed to one of "actively seeking work". I am sure that all my hon. Friends welcome that crucial improvement in the benefit system.

The third change was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security during his uprating statement last week. Those people who are not actively seeking work will no longer be penalised with a 40 per cent. reduction in their benefit; they will now be in danger of losing all of their benefit. That is another welcome measure designed to deal with the absurd and anti-social behaviour of new age travellers and other groups.

Mr. Michael Trend (Windsor and Maidenhead): Does my hon. Friend share my welcome for the new training for work programme, which was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment following the autumn statement?

Mr. Willetts: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has added a fourth item to my list. That list adds up to a series of significant initiatives aimed at encouraging people into work to ensure that we do not reward people who remain unemployed for a long time.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman has referred to those who are denied benefit because they are deemed not to be actively seeking work. Does he understand that in many areas there is no work for people to seek actively? The idea of penalising people because they cannot find work is morally dubious.

The hon. Gentleman also spoke about rewarding people for long-term unemployment. Surely he appreciates that, even under this munificent Conservative Government, under whom income support and other benefit rates are poor, the reward for not working is poverty.

Mr. Willetts: The test of actively seeking work does not depend on the availability of numerous jobs in an immediate area. If someone sends off many job applications and, when offered, accepts a place on a training scheme, even if they live in an area which, sadly, is suffering from a high rate of unemployment, any sensible adjudication officer will accept that that person is seeking work and will not penalise him.

The hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) also referred to the current rates of benefit. One of the reasons that the benefit for low-income working families—family credit—was improved was precisely so that the Government could create a gap between income received in work and that received out of work. They have not done that by reducing the available benefits to those out of work, but by boosting the incomes of those who are in low-paid jobs. I stress the importance of improving the assistance available for people in such low-paid jobs, which creates an incentive for them to work. It is not true that benefits for the long-term unemployed have been cut in real terms.

I must express some doubts, perhaps the fashionable term is scepticism, about the new proposals on workfare from my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North, which go beyond the specific initiatives launched by the Government in the past few years. I am afraid that my doubts are wide ranging. The first relates to a matter of principle. As my hon. Friend made clear, his scheme essentially means that the state acts as the employer of last resort. In effect, a large part of the labour market would be nationalised, which represents a significant extension of the Government's role in that market. As a believer in free markets, I could not support such an extension.

I know that we are always told that if there are idle hands on the one side and unmet needs on the other, surely it is right for the state to step in to bring the two together.

Mr. Ralph Howell: I am sorry that my hon. Friend does not agree with the idea of the state being the employer of last resort, but I am grateful to him for his pleasant references to what I have tried to achieve in the past.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend has not taken on board the fact that the state is the provider of last resort and, therefore, it is the waster of last resort because it insists on providing billions of pounds while getting nothing in return. I know that my hon. Friend is a free marketeer, who really believes in the free economy, so surely he sees the good sense of getting some value for the £8 billion that we spend. Why should we not get something done in return to improve society? People could work to clean up our cities and our countryside; they could plant more trees to help the environment. It seems to me that my hon. Friend insists on being the waster of last resort.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I must point out that interventions seem to be getting a trace longer each time and that they are now too long.

Mr. Willetts: I was, of course, shocked to be described as a waster of last resort by my hon. Friend. I have not previously attempted to adopt such a role and I am not pleased to have it attributed to me today.

The problem is rather more complicated than my hon. Friend imagines. Of course, in the short term, my hon. Friend may be tempted by the idea of putting someone to work straightaway on planting trees, because that is better than having him unemployed. However, let us imagine that a software programmer is made redundant when his firm folds. If he lost that job on a Friday and, on the Monday, he is set planting trees, that would not be an efficient use of his time or his skills.

My hon. Friend should recall that one of the ideas of Beveridge—the early Beveridge of great insight, who advocated and introduced labour exchanges—was that it was inefficient if an unemployed person accepted the first job that he could find. It might be better for that person to spend several weeks, indeed up to several months, on labour search to find the job that matches his skills.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Willetts: I will, but I hope that my hon. Friend will bear in mind the stricture that we received from Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Dicks: My hon. Friend has highlighted the difference between his view and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell). The workfare programme would offer a temporary post to someone while he was seeking a permanent job. My hon. Friend is confusing the two types of employment.

Mr. Willetts: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point, which I shall address later.

I have attempted to set out the reasons for my concern about the ambitious workfare scheme that my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North has advocated. My first objection is one of principle. Of course it is frustrating when one sees idle hands when there is unmet need, but it is not the job of the state to make those idle hands meet those unmet needs; it is the job of a properly operating labour market. It is not an enormous command economy directing people into jobs that politicians decide are useful. That is not how a free economy works.

My second objection is a practical one of cost. It is difficult to see how any such scheme would be less expensive than our current system. I do not believe that there would be any savings on the administration burden of the benefit system. It is already clear from the debate that people who received £100 a week contribution for work that they might do under the workfare scheme would still remain entitled to income support and housing benefit to top up their family income. All the intricacies of the current benefit system would still be with us.

My next anxiety, which ties in with the point made about short-term versus long-term, arises from the unhappy experience that we have had with what is, in effect, a version of workfare for 16 to 18-year-olds. I supported that measure in principle because it seemed to make sense and, after all, it matched a proposal in the Beveridge report of 1942. But in practice it has not been possible for the training agency and TECs to deliver training schemes rapidly and effectively——

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for me to request that the Secretary of State for Transport be instructed to come to the House this morning to answer questions about the 5,000 redundancies announced by British Rail and the extremely serious difficulties that rail investment faces as a consequence of the autumn statement? It is appalling that such a state of affairs should exist in an industry for which there is ministerial responsibility, yet a responsible Minister is not present to answer for it.

As British Rail has directly linked its announcement of 5,000 redundancies with the inadequacy of last week's settlement, it is essential that the Secretary of State comes to the House before those shocking redundancies have time to take effect.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Whether Ministers come to the House is not a matter for the Chair, but I can inform hon. Members that Madam Speaker has not received any application from the Government for a statement to be made on that or any other matter.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I appreciate, of course, that it is not a matter for you directly to get involved in the movement of Ministers. The difficulty is that the 5,000 job losses have safety implications for many people using British Rail, and the redundancies are being implemented very quickly. The House should receive a statement from the responsible Minister because the Government's plan to privatise British Rail is the cause of the 5 ,000 job losses.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I can only repeat what I said, which is that it is not a matter for the Chair. Representatives of the Government are present, and I can say no more than that.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You will know that in recent years, attempts have been made to get Ministers to come to the House to explain various matters. Sometimes the Chair has been able to convey a message to the Government to the effect that while a Minister might not be available immediately, arrangements should be made for a statement to be made before the end of the day's sitting.

You rightly point out, Madam Deputy Speaker, that representatives of the Government are on the Front Bench. Unfortunately, there is not among them a Minister who is directly involved in the issue. Would it be possible for you to convey to Madam Speaker the fact that we are raising these points of order in which we are urging that a Minister should make a statement, so that a Minister is here before 2.30 pm to make a statement before the Adjournment debate comes on?

The weekend lies before us. It is not as though we can press for a Minister to appear for questioning tomorrow, although that might not be a bad idea. I urge on you to take that step, Madam Deputy Speaker, because in the present climate of mass unemployment, with a Government who are causing more wreckage than Hitler caused in the 1939-45 war, at some point, Madam Speaker, Front Benchers or Back Benchers, must say, "Enough is enough". Accordingly, I appeal to you to inform Madam Speaker that we would like her to convey to the Ministers concerned our demand that one of them should be here before 2.30.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Further to the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I understood you to say that Madam Speaker had received no intimation from the Secretary of State for Transport that he intended to make a statement today about the job losses. Has Madam Speaker received a message about a statement being made next week by the Secretary of State for Scotland concerning the announced 3,500 job losses by the Royal Bank of Scotland?

Are you aware, Madam Deputy Speaker, that that scale of job losses in Scotland is equal to job losses caused by, for example, the closure of a large shipyard or a steel mill? It is a matter of the gravest importance to us in Scotland. I am wondering whether Madam Speaker has been told that we may expect a statement on Monday or Tuesday of next week.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I understand that the answer is no.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I, through you, ask for a message to be sent to Ministers to let them know how seriously the announced job losses are taken in my constituency, which could be absolutely devastated by job cuts of that magnitude? Yesterday when I told Roger Freeman—*[Interruption.]*—who was in York, that there could be hundreds of job losses——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. In his concern, the hon. Member has forgotten the custom that we do not refer to a Member of the House by name.

Mr. Bayley: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I am concerned because while the Government yesterday morning described rail job losses on that scale as bunkum, the announcement of those redundancies was made in the evening. It is surprising that a Minister has not explained why such a change occurred in the course of just six hours.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said, there should be time today to get a message to the relevant Minister so that he may have an opportunity to answer to the House for the appalling job losses that have been announced and the consequences for the travelling public.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I rise, rather extraordinarily, on a genuine point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, to seek your guidance. Under the rules of the House, a Standing Order No. 20 motion cannot be moved on a Friday. So we are in a predicament in that my hon. Friends and I would like to have had the opportunity, had this been a normal day, to raise not just the fact of the loss, or possible loss, of 5,000 jobs on the railways, but another report to the effect that Ministers have been thrown into panic by the requirement that people working in the public sector who move into privatised jobs will carry with them the rights, privileges and conditions that they had while in the public sector. That suggests that the two situations are interrelated and that an attempt is being made to get rid of 5,000 workers——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman is now beginning to debate merits, whereas I can deal only with points of order.

Mr. Williams: I come directly to my point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, having given you some background on the two aspects, which appear to be interrelated. We are in the predicament that we cannot raise a Standing Order No. 20 motion until Monday. May I ask you at least to facilitate our attempts to get a statement from the Minister by saying that, should a Minister not come forward at some stage today with a statement, on Monday you, or the then occupant of the Chair, would be inclined to give sympathetic consideration to a Standing Order No. 20 motion moved from the Opposition Benches?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I cannot anticipate what Madam Speaker's views might be on Monday.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Would it be possible for the Secretary of State for Transport to come to the House now and speak in this debate and, in the process of doing that, explain the bunkum of his policies that have led to the redundancies?

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a slightly different point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is clearly important that we should debate transport at the earliest possible date. The person to facilitate that is not the Secretary of State for Transport but the Leader of the House, who almost certainly is now in his office in the Palace of Westminster.

In my constituency we are now going ahead with the Leeds-Bradford electrification scheme, and the announced job losses might throw that whole venture into jeopardy. Accordingly, you may have been informed, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the Leader of the House would be prepared to announce changes in the business for next week so that we may incorporate a debate on the catastrophe that is facing British Rail.

Mr. Tredd *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Member raising a point of order?

Mr. Tredd: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, it refers to points of order made earlier about the events of last night. As a new Member, I have been sitting here brooding on the matter since those points were raised and I seek your further guidance. Was it a matter of parliamentary privilege, in the sense that one hon. Member wished to present a petition and another wished to move the Adjournment debate, and both were prevented from doing so through no fault of their own? Is it right, under parliamentary procedure, that they should have been prevented from proceeding as they wished?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I understand that Madam Speaker dealt with that matter last night and I have nothing to add to what she said on that occasion.

Mr. Keith Hill (Streatham): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We should be grateful if you would convey our urgent request to Madam Speaker for a statement by the Minister on the railway redundancies on three grounds. First, those redundancies—5,000 over a period of four months—are on a scale comparable, although by no means similar, to the coal fields redundancies on which statements were rightly made to the House. Secondly, British Rail has directly ascribed the redundancies to the tight settlement in the Chancellor's autumn statement. There is therefore a direct ministerial responsibility for those redundancies. Thirdly, as we have already heard, the crisis now facing British Rail has safety implications. It has been the traditional and historic right of the House to ask Ministers to explain the detail of British Rail policy on signalling and other matters. On all those grounds, there is an urgent and pressing case for a statement by the Minister.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Mr. Dicks.

Mr. Dicks: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Would it not be possible, even at this late stage, for the Opposition, who have their own supply day on Monday to change the nature of their business to discuss that point? I do not sit in the Whips' Office but if there are behind-the-scenes discussions, I should not be surprised if my hon. Friends said that they would be prepared to listen. It is no good the Opposition ranting and raving about safety today when they have their own supply day on Monday.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have now heard quite sufficient to offer a comment to the House. Of course, I shall see that Madam Speaker is acquainted with the strength of feelings that has been evinced in the various points of order. Although she cannot command Ministers, I have no doubt that Ministers sitting on the Front Bench will make it their business to convey those feelings to those concerned.

We must now continue our debate.

Mr. Willetts: Moreover, when one looks at the practical difficulties in implementing a workfare scheme it is clear that lessons can be learned from the experience of youth training schemes for 16 to 18-year-olds. I entirely supported that attempt and had no difficulties in principle in expecting that 16 to 18-year-olds should be in education, training or paid employment. However, in the past few years we have encountered serious practical difficulties in delivering a job guarantee. That is not surprising because, if a 17-year-old loses his or her job on a Friday evening, it is difficult for them to turn up on a Monday morning and suddenly be put straight onto a training scheme.

Training schemes operate on the basis of planning ahead. Employers who take on trainees want to know in advance who they will get and in what circumstances. They need to be confident that the trainee will stay for a year or two. Such long-term training is different from a social security system, which rightly tries to pick up short-term needs of people who suddenly find themselves without a weekly income.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North was a trifle casual when he said that if someone loses their job on Friday, on Monday they can immediately turn up and be put to planting trees. That is not how any employer can operate in the real world.

Mr. Ralph Howell: May I clarify that point? There is a great difference between fitting somebody into a training scheme and adding him to a work force—tree planting or whatever it might be. It is a pity that so many difficulties are being put in the way.

Mr. Willetts: I am sorry if my hon. Friend thinks that I am simply putting difficulties in his way. I am not trying to do so. I am trying to deal with practical issues, which would have to be dealt with before a scheme along those lines could become a viable proposition.

The American experience has already been described in an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins). Many of us are wary of American experiences, as they can be misleading. Many states operate schemes which they call workfare because federal grants are available for such schemes. If they called their programmes "training schemes" or "assistance for single parents on aid for families with dependent children benefit", they would not receive federal support. So if the federal Government become keen on workfare, there is an enormous incentive on the state to dress up any old training scheme as workfare.

In practice, many of the schemes that now operate in America under the name workfare would, in this country, be classic operations carried out in the past by the Manpower Services Commission and now carried out by the Employment Service and training and enterprise councils. It is wrong to regard America as a country that has implemented workfare along the lines now advocated by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North.

Mr. Hawkins: My hon. Friend takes up a point that I made in an earlier intervention. Although I accept his point about federal grants, which is an inevitable concomitant of grants being made available in any country, I strongly urge him to bear in mind the fact that many distinguished congressmen in the United States have called for genuine workfare. Those include a good friend of mine, Republican Congressman Bill Emerson from Missouri, whom I have had the opportunity to visit. I endorse those in the United States who call for genuine workfare and I believe that the states to which I referred earlier have implemented successfully precisely the kind of genuine workfare that my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North believes in, and in which I also believe.

Mr. Willetts: I defer to my hon. Friend's wide experience of the American debate.

May I conclude with some constructive suggestions? I do not wish to leave any hint of a suspicion in the mind of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North, that I am here to carp or be negative. One possible way forward is for TECs to review how they are currently dealing with their work for the unemployed. I am worried about how TECs are now operating.

Although it is imaginative to bring together public funding, people from the private sector and people with business experience who know about training and the business of creating jobs, many of them seem to be tempted by the prospect of elaborate and ambitious training schemes that will produce computer experts and people for the high-tech industries. They are tempted in particular to cream off from the unemployed those people who may already have considerable skills and who, with a modest amount of extra training, will be able to contribute most obviously to the local economy. I do not blame them for that. I can see the commercial incentives for a group of local employers to operate in that way.

The trouble is that if TECs operate like that they are mimicking what a commercial training agency would do —taking on the best risks, best prospects and the people with the greatest chance of commanding a job in the future.

Surely public sector training schemes and publicly financed training organisations should aim to help the most difficult cases—people who may have been let down by the educational system or who may have modest skills. They should not help only those people who will immediately go into high-paid jobs at the sharp end of local industry but people who, if they can establish a track record of turning up for work at 9 am, can be given the confidence to seek work actively. They may then be able to hold down a job—admittedly a less well-paid job, but nevertheless a well-paid and useful job in the community.

My concern is that TECs are not paying attention to the hard cases. Instead, they are creaming off the exotica, the exciting cases. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to offer an assurance that TECs will not ignore their responsibilities for the long-term unemployed, especially those who, sadly, left the education system with modest qualifications.

I hope that we can establish even more clearly than in the past that if someone employed within the Employment service or in a benefit office doubts that someone who is signing on for benefit is actively seeking work, he or she should be able to offer such a person a place in a training scheme. Obviously, employment training is very relevant here. A refusal to take up such a scheme would be clear and unambigious evidence that the unemployed person was not actively seeking work.

We have made considerable progress over the past few years. I remember the time when the old Manpower Services Commission did not want its schemes to be used as a means of testing whether someone was actively seeking work. In those days the test was availability for work. The commission said that it did not want reluctant recruits. It did not want people participating in its training schemes only because the alternative was loss of benefit. That is another classic example of the creaming-off problem. The MSC, for example, wanted those who were already well on their way to finding jobs.

A positive way in which we can help to deal with the problem that is posed by those who lose the will actively to seek work is to use Government training schemes on a selective basis to test whether individuals are actively seeking work and to ensure that if they are not, their bluff can be called through the offer of a place on a training scheme.

As I have a constituency engagement early this afternoon, I shall not be able to remain in the Chamber until the end of the debate. It is——

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Willetts: Of course.

Mr. Banks: I asked the hon. Gentleman to give way —I have listened carefully to his thoughtful speech— because if I manage to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall refer to him. He said that it is not the role of government to stimulate the labour market or to create employment. I think that he said that. He suggested that it is the role of an efficient labour market to provide jobs. Perhaps he will take the opportunity to explain why the Japanese have recently announced a $87 billion programme of public sector work to try to stimulate both their economy, which is in a much better state than ours, and the labour market generally.

Mr. Willetts: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention because it gives me the opportunity to clarify what I said earlier. Obviously I did not make the point sufficiently clear.

The Government have enormous responsibilities in terms of employment and the labour market. The Government's responsibility is, first, to ensure that there is the right economic framework. That means ensuring that the growth of total spending in the economy is neither unsustainably rapid nor negative. We now have growth of nominal GDP running at about 3 per cent.

Another responsibility of government is to ensure that the labour market works properly. That is why we need trade union law reform. We must ensure that people are better off in work than out of it. It is a responsibility which calls for supply-side reforms, which the Government pursued in the 1980s. I hope that they will continue pursuing them in the 1990s.

It is the question of Government intervention that causes me to part company with my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North. I do not think that the Government have a direct role to intervene in and run the labour market, and themselves to link idle hands and unmet needs by employing millions of people who would otherwise be unemployed. If the Government intervene in that way they will be nationalising the problem. It is, however, the Government's responsibility to make the labour market operate freely.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) referred in his intervention to the Japanese. It is true that the Japanese Government have produced a reflation package that is aimed at dealing with the problems of their economy. The hon. Gentleman says that the problems facing the Japanese economy are not as severe as those that face us. Actually, the collapse of property prices, asset prices and financial confidence in Japan is a more serious problem for the Japanese economy than that which faces our economy. In any event, in the autumn statement there is a set of measures which, I am confident, will bring economic growth next year.

If the Japanese are to succeed in their enormous programme of extra Government spending, they will do so only because of years of prudent control of both spending and borrowing. It is impossible for the Japanese Government to borrow for more than 10 years ahead. That is ruled out by the Japanese constitution. As a result, any Japanese Government who are faced with the problem of recession have the enormous advantage of having much less public sector debt than that of most other Governments. A lesson to be learnt from their reflation package is that when years are good we should run surpluses and pay off debts so that when years are bad there is some scope for the issuing of gilts. I am pleased to say that in these terms the British Government are in a much better position than that in which the American Government find themselves.

Mr. Tony Banks: I relish the opportunity of entering into a debate with the hon. Gentleman on some future date on the comparative states of the Japanese and British economies. Unfortunately, it is not possible to do that today, but I hope that the opportunity will present itself.

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, although Japanese property prices have fallen alarmingly, Japanese manufacturing capacity is so strong that the impact on the Japanese economy has been nothing like the impact of the fall of property prices in the United Kingdom? It is the underlying strength of manufacturing industry in Japan that places it in a much better position economically than that of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Willetts: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the strength of Japanese manufacturing industry. Sadly, we cannot say that Britain's industrial performance in the post-war period matches that of Japan. If, however, we wish to learn lessons from the Japanese industrial performance, we must recognise the importance of having a large and vital small-business sector, and of the Government staying clear of detailed intervention in the labour market and rewarding innovation and entrepreneurship.

Many of the stories that we hear about the role of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry—MITI—and Japanese Governments in their country's economic growth are not borne out by the facts. The Japanese had a great plan for their car industry; there was to be one Japanese Government-sponsored car firm that would lead the Japanese industrial revival after the war. The entrepreneurial spirit of Japanese industrialists was such that they did not fall in with the grand MITI plan. Instead, several individuals built up their own car firms. They established a much more dynamic industry than would ever have been created had there been adherence to the original strategy. I do not believe the claim that Japanese manufacturing and industrial success has been derived from so-called industrial strategies. Many of the claims are put about by MITI. They are not, however, borne out by the real evidence of what actually happens in Japan.

Before the hon. Member for Newham, North-West intervened I was bringing my remarks to a conclusion. Many of my hon. Friends—there is a galaxy of talent on these Benches—have important contributions to make to the debate, which was initiated so wisely by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North. I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak in the debate.

11.28 am

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I congratulate the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on securing this debate on the work force—a debate which could last five hours. Had it not been for a mistake discovered in the Table Office, I would have introduced a motion today that would have lasted five hours as well. When the ballot names were called out, I, like most hon. Members, understood that my name had been called. I know that we are not supposed to name names, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I am sure that you will forgive me if I do so today. My name, Ray Powell, was called by the Speaker. I am not often successful in this place at catching the Chair's eye, perhaps because I am short and need to stand on a seat to be seen.

Be that as it may, it seems that the name Ralph Howell was called that day. I have listened to the tapes, and bad as my hearing is, the tape is clearly audible—I could not hear the name Ralph Howell being called. Six days later, and after I had been invited to introduce a motion this morning, the Clerks told me, five minutes before midnight, that they had made a mistake. Unfortunately, millions of pensioners had already been told in the intervening six days that I was going to initiate a debate on their plight and their fears—probably to last for five hours on a Friday. So they were all very disappointed, as were my staff, who had worked like the clappers to organise the debate.

I am given to understand that this is the only time the Table Office has ever made a mistake of this magnitude. Knowing how ultra-helpful and efficient its staff are, I accepted their explanation and went on to raise a point of order with Madam Speaker the following day. She kindly informed me that there had been a mistake; she apologised, and told me that I might be lucky in the raffle taking place a matter of seconds later.

I could have told the Clerks how to ensure that I won that raffle, but I could not get to them so to advise them. So once again, after 14 years, I have failed in my attempts to secure a debate. I congratulate the hon. Member for Norfolk, North on being much luckier than I am. I listened to 49 minutes of his introductory speech——

Mr. Ralph Howell: I was in the House when the draw was announced, and I heard Madam Speaker call the ticket that I had just signed. I was in no doubt that my name had been called, and it is rather strange that there was any misunderstanding. I am extremely sorry that the hon. Gentleman lost so much time preparing his debate. I

[Mr. Ralph Howell]

wondered why the Whips had still not told me how to proceed some days after my name was called. Perhaps that explains the delay.

Mr. Powell: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has explained his position. I feared that there had been some sort of ploy in the Table Office, prompted by the Government Whips. Just a week before, they had used strong-arm tactics, and I thought that they might be transferring their attentions from the dissidents to the Table Office—but I accept the hon. Gentleman's explanation.

Unfortunately, pensioners will not have a five-hour debate on their problems, their fears and their poverty——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The pensioners have done quite well so far, but I must remind the hon. Gentleman to address the subject of today's debate.

Mr. Powell: I was just coming to that.

I should like to tell the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) that, in the days when a Labour Government set up the Manpower Services Commission, the then Conservative Opposition strongly objected to it. Since 1979, when the Conservatives took office, there have been many changes in the schemes and organisations designed to find jobs for the unemployed. One hon. Member who is in his place today will well remember the Select Committee on Employment, on which I served some years ago. Like me, he will recall the many changes introduced by this Government. Many of those who have tried to run schemes to help the unemployed have run into difficulties.

The system of training and enterprise councils gives many people a licence to milk the unemployed and to profit from their difficulties. These vultures set up private schemes in my constituency to do just that. It is high time the Government took action to remove that licence from them. If we have money to spend on this grave problem, it should be spent on people who are out of work, not on those who profit from them.

In the past few weeks, the construction industry has issued a great deal of literature. Only yesterday, we heard that thousands are being made redundant in the cement-making and brick-making industries—yet we know for a fact that people in almost every constituency in the land are homeless. Some of them are homeless because they are out of work and cannot pay their mortgages, others because they can only afford to rent, but no local authority can build houses for tenants because of Government-imposed cuts in local government finance. As a result, construction workers are out of work and the homeless are not being housed.

I admire the hon. Member for Norfolk, North for studying the subject of workfare. I can well understand, too, why some of the people to whom he has spoken over the years have rejected his proposals. They probably found them rather bizarre. I would applaud any scheme that helps people who are out of work back into work——

Mr. Hawkins: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the main reason why people are homeless, especially in areas where his party is in control of local government, is that many Labour authorities have failed to refurbish their housing stock? If all the council housing stock that is not available for occupation were made so, the homelessness problem would be fairly well wiped out in most Labour authority areas.

Mr. Powell: I doubt that the hon. Gentleman's contribution or his analysis of the problem of the homeless is one to which I want to waste time responding. I invite the hon. Gentleman to my consitituency where, prior to the 1973-74 local government reorganisation, we had the largest rural authority housing association in the Pen-y-bont rural district, which built more houses in that area than were built anywhere else in the country. If the licence to sell people their council houses at a knockdown price had not been introduced and promoted by a Conservative Government, many more people on the housing waiting list today could be accommodated. That housing stock no longer belongs to the council but is privately owned.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to intervene?

Mr. Powell: Allow me to reply to the last intervention.

Lady Olga Maitland: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Would it not be correct to point out that the hon. Gentleman is talking about homelessness, not workfare?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Lady anticipated a point that was going through my mind.

Mr. Powell: Perhaps it would have been more proper, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the hon. Gentleman who intervened in my speech to be told that—rather than for me to be called to order for answering him.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman noticed that I did not do so, but I said that I was considering that point.

Mr. Powell: With all due respect, Madam Deputy Speaker, I was not taking the matter up with you, but was responding to the second intervention while replying to the first.

Perhaps we may move on from the problems of the homeless, although I could speak at some length, and remain in order, about the number of people in the construction industry who have been put out of work by Government policies—engineers, architects, and other technicians who have no jobs as a consequence of Government policy.

In 1979, I was elected to represent Ogmore, which at that time had an unemployment rate of 3·7 per cent. The population was 105,000, and the electorate was 83,000. Two and a half per cent. of those out of work were unemployable because they suffered from silicosis and pneumoconiosis and were genuinely unable to work. In addition, we accept that 1 per cent. of the population might not want to work even if it were made available —and I think that most of them voted Tory at the last election. Nevertheless, everyone, including the Government in the past, accept that 1 per cent. element.

Although that situation changed, some people in Maesteg in my constituency, the unemployed male population—consistent with what the hon. Member for Norfolk, North said about people being unemployed for 12 months—have been unemployed since 1983.

Lady Olga Maitland: Can the hon. Gentleman say whether they are actively seeking work?

Mr. Powell: I am given to understand that they are obliged actively to seek work if they are to receive unemployment benefit. They are told by the DSS officer that if they do not actively seek work, they will not receive unemployment benefits. They are often invited to consider jobs that do not relate at all to their qualifications, but they are compelled to do so. Therefore, they are continually looking for work.

In 1981-82, the Government decided to close several collieries in my constituency, which meant putting 7,000 miners and many supporting workers out of work. The Government also declared redundancy for 12,000 workers when they started shedding workers at the Margam steelworks. In the course of 12 months, 7,000 miners, 12,000 steel workers, and 1,000 others were made redundant in my constituency.

In 1983, the last remaining colliery—St. John's—which employed 7,800 miners, was involved in the miners' strike and threatened with closure. Within a matter of months after that strike, it was closed.

It is no use the Government funding factories to produce dolls' eyes or teddy bears, when the unemployed are industrial workers used to a colliery. We want more than money and that kind of investment—we want community programmes of the kind introduced by a Conservative Government in 1982-83. Because of the extent of unemployment in my constituency when that scheme was devised, jointly with a trade union and others we formed an organisation named CATO—Community Activities and Training in Ogmore—to help produce jobs for the unemployed under the community programme.

That scheme lasted 10 years, until the introduction of Mid Glamorgan TEC, when it was refused further funding because it was not a private organisation run for profit, but instead allowed industrialists to contribute in the way that they wanted.

Lady Olga Maitland: Can the hon. Gentleman explain what happened to the 20,000 who were made redundant? Of course that was a great tragedy, but the Government introduced many training schemes. Did those people take up those schemes, and what occupations do they have today?

Mr. Powell: I was on that very point. I was talking about the CATO training scheme, which, under the community programme, had 650 trainees. We took the lease of a redundant hospital at Blackmill and created a day centre for the elderly, where caterers were trained to produce the midday meals not only of the elderly at that centre but of those who were brought to it just to have a day meal.

We created also a building programme for bricklayers, carpenters, plasterers, plumbers and other tradesmen. We trained not only carers for the elderly but caterers and building trade workers. A multifarious training programme was undertaken to help the elderly in particular to care for themselves in their own homes.

The current proposals for employing people in workfare is bizarre. In the CATO programme, the section for the young was organised at training workshops in Llynfi in Maesteg. In that workshop we had trained 280 of the young people when a Minister visited us. I forget the Minister's constituency, and his name, but I remember that he was involved in a fracas with a taxi driver at the Tory party conference. His successor as the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, who is in the Chamber, will know to whom I am referring.

That Minister visited the Llynfi training workshop to open a new section. He was told by the management and the staff—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) is reminding me that the Minister concerned was the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls)—so now we all know who I am talking about.

The management and those involved with training the 280 young people on the 12-month course had changed it to a two-year course; there was a 12-month extension. The Minister was told that 95 per cent. of the previous group of trained young people aged 18 had places in employment before they left their training at Llynfi. The Minister said that he thought that the youth training in his constituency was good, but that it could not find jobs for more than 60 per cent. of the trained young people.

CATO's objective was not only to train young people but to contact local industrialists who were prepared to offer them jobs when they had completed their courses. It is important that people in training do not find that they have served a period of apprenticeship only to find themselves without a job at the end.

I can speak with the benefit of some experience, having chaired CATO, and spent 10 years organising training for unemployed people. That training was essential in Ogmore, because of the massive unemployment created over a three-year period. I doubt whether we shall ever return to the position that we enjoyed in 1979, with a mere 3·7 per cent of people unemployed, most of whom were unemployable.

The time has come for a new method of audit for the present system of Government training schemes. I know that the Comptroller and Auditor General told the chairman of all the TECs last November that they were personally responsible for ensuring that the money was spent properly. But there is also a need for further careful examination—especially of the Mid Glamorgan TEC, which I believe has some explaining to do about where its money is spent. Who gets the profit from the Government grant aid?

If the Government continually cut the funds available for training schemes, they will continue to make life even more difficult for those who genuinely want to train people. Organisations such as Mid Glamorgan county council are doing a worthwhile job——

Lady Olga Maitland *rose*——

Mr. Powell: Let me finish my sentence.

Organisations such as Mid Glamorgan county council are doing a worthwhile job training the work force, so they should be afforded the funding, or local government funding should be extended to help them to assist the unemployed.

Lady Olga Maitland: I am sorry to intervene yet again, but while the hon. Gentleman is talking about the sum which the Government are providing for training schemes, does he not agree that it was made clear in the autumn statement that the Government were altering the arrangements for such schemes, rather than making reductions? That is an important distinction.

Mr. Powell: With all due respect, I am beginning to wonder who is making this speech—the hon. Lady or myself. Nevertheless, I accept her intervention. She talks about the Chancellor's suggestion about how to tackle the problem of funding training, but we have had so many changes over so many years that the people involved in training the work force in this country have become more and more disillusioned. People who have devoted their whole careers to training now find themselves not only out of work but with little chance of finding themselves another job in training.

Funding should be made genuinely available—not, I repeat, for those who have invested money to make public limited companies out of the training schemes, but for people who are training with funding from Government and other public sources. If that happened, and the Government did not allow people to make any profit out of it, the money might be well spent. But if the money is given to those who have set up plcs to run TECs, it will go back to the profiteers rather than helping unemployed people.

We talk about trying to get jobs for the unemployed, but very few Conservative Members would talk about the poverty and degradation of families of people who are made unemployed. But those who represent constituencies such as mine travel around the valleys seeing miners, who have worked for 30 and 40 years in the collieries, out of work at 50. They are pushed on to the dole, with no chance of another job in another colliery, because there are no collieries in Wales left to which they could travel to work.

After 40 years in the coal mines, they find themselves without a job. At 50, they have no chance of getting a job, of getting out of the house and out of their wives' way. That causes misery. At 55, having worked all their lives to provide for their families, to buy their homes and the contents of their homes, they find that they are pushed out of work, with no chance of another job. Moreover, their sons and daughters are in a similar predicament; having gained degrees, they come back home to look for work and find that they cannot get jobs either.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Powell: I was in full flight then, but I will give way.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that. Is it not precisely out of care for families with unemployed members that my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) wishes to introduce a scheme of workfare—to provide people with work if they want it?

Mr. Powell: I wish the hon. Member for Norfolk, North well in any sort of scheme that will provide jobs for people who are out of work, because I see the misery that unemployment creates. People may be trained as consultants, and they may have spent 10, 15 or 20 years becoming consultants. People can even become brain specialists, and they still find themselves without jobs in the national health service. Some people have devoted their lives to the national health service, and now they find themselves redundant. If the Government go ahead with their plans, we may find that many more trained and qualified people in the London area are unemployed. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) could say a lot more about the people whom the Government intend to make unemployed in the foreseeable future.

Lady Olga Maitland: The hon. Gentleman spoke about people moving out of their jobs. It is interesting to see that the culture has now changed. People recognise that, although they have been in one career for 20 years, it does not mean that they have to stay in that career for the rest of their lives.

Does the hon. Gentleman see any comparison between the position in his constituency and the coal mines that closed in Scotland? The middle-aged generation in Scotland have now been successfully retrained for the computer industry to such an extent that there is now an area known as Silicon Glen between Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Mr. Powell: I am pleased that people in Scotland are getting jobs. I was talking about 7,000 miners and 12,000 steel workers being put out of work in one constituency within 18 months. If those 20,000 people were retrained in the computer industry, they would supply the whole industrial force for that industry. I very much doubt whether such retraining would be a solution in my constituency although it has happened in Scotland.

The Government should set their sights on trying to solve the problem of the unemployed. The points of order at 11 am today dealt with further mass redundancies. The Government do not solve the problem. I rarely read the *Financial Times*. I do not read it to find out whether my stocks and shares are going up or down because I do not have any. The headline today in the *Financial Times* is "Industry sheds 10,000 jobs." I read my local paper, the *Western Mail*, to see whether I have been quoted. I rarely have been. Its headline reads: "Black day as 9,000 lose jobs in Wales". Unemployment in Wales has increased by 150 per cent. since the Government came to office.

It is no good the Government saying that they have run down the steelworks because there was over-employment. I accept that there may have been some over-employment in the steel industry, but the seven pits in my constituency were closed when there was still a demand for coal.

We recently debated the Government's bizarre proposal to close 31 pits. As I have been involved in the mining industry and as I represent a mining constituency, I attended the debate throughout. My father was a miner, and I well understand the heartache of miners who may lose their jobs if the 31 collieries are closed. Some 30,000 more jobs may be lost.

The energy in those mines would be sealed in, and it would be difficult for future generations to tap it. Mining engineers have told me that, when collieries are capped, gas and water make it practically impossible and economically unwise for future generations to recover the energy resources underground. Twenty-one pits are under review and will be the subject of the inquiry, and 10 are to be closed—so much for the Government's promises in that debate. I feel for the miners and their communities because, over the past 30 years, my people have suffered. There is no chance of their finding work in my area.

I am a senior sponsored member of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers. The proposals on shopping could lead to an increase in part-time workers. I wonder whether the hon. Member for Norfolk, North can enlighten me on the following point. At present, some people work only on Sundays. They are employed part-time to work in shops that are open illegally. Can such people be considered legally employed when the shop in which they work is breaking the law by being open? Such an employer may be small or large. Such an employer may be Tesco or Sainsbury.

If the Minister for Industry, the right hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury), had been here today, he might have told us, because of his family connections, whether Sainsbury provides the proper rate of pay for workers on Sundays. Such companies are not legally obliged to pay the recognised rate because it is illegal to trade on Sunday. Companies could be paying wages below those legally required in the present system.

This week, the Government have proposed to do away with the wages councils which protect the underpaid and the under-privileged, including the low-paid shop workers. There will be no protection for them. Is the hon. Member for Norfolk, North prepared to ensure that, under his proposals, workers would be protected by councils similar to the wages councils?

Lady Olga Maitland: The hon. Gentleman referred to wages councils. I get the impression that, in trying to support a minimum wage for Sunday workers, the hon. Gentleman is trying to deny other people the chance of getting work. Surely that is not consistent with his desire to get as much work as possible for as many people as possible.

Mr. Powell: I take the hon. Lady's point. A person may be obliged to work on a Sunday and may be getting a Sunday rate at a store that is legally open under the Shops Act 1950. Shops in seaside resorts are among such shops. I am not talking about shops that may open if the Government's proposals are accepted. Some people may be able to work only on a Sunday and only in a shop that is open illegally. They have no legal protection when they go to work, because the shop should not be open.

Mr. McLoughlin: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that wages councils do not set rates of pay for Sunday work?

Mr. Powell: That may be so. I know the history of this Government since 1979. Some workers were protected under previous wages councils which were taken out of the system in 1979, in 1982 and in 1985. The Government have reduced the number of wages councils three times. Most of the councils protected poorly paid people, including those in the shopworkers' union, which I represent as its senior sponsored Member. During the past 13 years, the extent of the protection afforded by the wages councils system has diminished. I cannot understand why there is a need to dispense entirely with that protection.

I have referred to shopworkers, although not at great length or in great detail. I had intended, Madam Deputy Speaker, to raise a point of order with you at 11 o'clock, but I could see that you were inundated, and I felt that, if I did so, I might not catch your eye immediately after the debate resumed. I wonder whether you will take the point on board now. I was going to ask whether a Minister was to make a statement about the Government's intentions and proposals on Sunday trading.

We read about the proposals in the *Evening Standard* and elsewhere in the press, and for six weeks we have been promised a statement. It is suggested that the Government will show us three different Bills and ask hon. Members to toss a coin to decide which one should be introduced. The details have not yet been disclosed to us, however. In the run-up to Christmas, the Minister has a responsibility to let shopworkers know whether the shops in which they work will be allowed to open on the Sunday before Christmas with the blessing of the Home Secretary, or whether they will be made to close under the Shops Act 1950. Like 4 million others, those people are seeking work. They are prepared to undertake menial tasks and will even go so far as to work on Sunday at very low wages, because they need the additional income.

I have described the problems in my constituency. I am eager to welcome to my constituency hon. Members who think that they have problems, and to show them the dereliction that has been wrought there by 13 years of Tory Government. I will take such hon. Members to the homes of people who have been made unemployed and show them the meanness of monetarism and the aggravating effect that it has had on a good work force. In short, I will show them the result of 13 years of Tory policy, and why the Government are in such an economic and industrial mess.

12.13 pm

Mr. Michael Trend (Windsor and Maidenhead): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on securing the debate. He spoke of his work, which has extended over many years, as a cockshy. I beg to disagree with him. His Adam Smith Institute text of 1991, entitled "Why Not Work?" is no cockshy; it is the locus classicus of all those interested in the work force, and for many years to come it will provide the starting point for serious consideration of the subject.

Workfare is a difficult word, prone to many different interpretations. I shall use it in the broadest sense. In that broadest sense, workfare has interested many Conservative Members in recent years. That is, in part, a tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North. Two former Members of the House who have now been translated to the other place have recently written about it. In his "Unfinished Business", Lord Tebbit adopts almost precisely the scheme that my hon. Friend proposes, and according to the press, workfare is also mentioned in Lord Lawson's memoirs—although I must say that, in that substantial book of more than 1,000 pages, I have not yet been able to find the section in which he is said to recommend workfare. The President of the Board of Trade has also written fluently on the subject, from a slightly different point of view. It is a subject of great interest, but one involving problems of definition. We must accept that, for the moment, the broad definition will suffice.

There are many different types of workfare in existence throughout the world. The example of America has again been cited today. The American system is very piecemeal: in some areas it is highly developed and in others it is fairly crude. I am sure that we will hear about Sweden which has a highly involved and expensive system. In considering Sweden, we must bear in mind the difficulties into which the Swedish economy has run in recent years and weigh up workfare as part of the Swedish Government's policy as a whole.

In the past my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North has referred to Switzerland, which is an interesting case. Switzerland has a programme that runs along similar lines, although I am sure that my hon. Friend would agree

[Mr. Michael Trend]

that Switzerland is a very particular country which goes its own way and cannot afford us a useful example. Moreover, as my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) said, we should concentrate on our own case.

The central matter that we are discussing is unemployment. It is to the credit of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North that he has managed to change the question from "Why work?" to "Why not work?". He has placed greater emphasis on work than on unemployment. He gives us no hand-wringing, only progressive ideas for the future.

Unemployment is a blight on lives—on individuals, families, the community and on the whole national spirit. There was a time when unemployment was a very severe blight. One has only to think back to the last century and the novels of Charles Dickens. At that time, there were two sorts of unemployment—the unemployment of young men who lounged about on sofas wondering how best to spend their patrimony, and the shocking unemployment of the almost utterly dispossessed at the edge of the community who had little opportunity to better their conditions.

In more modern times—and this is relevant to workforce—the state has taken a much more active role in providing work for people and benefits for those who cannot work. The starting point has been Beveridge's famous report "Social Insurance and Allied Services", which appeared in 1942. Lord Tebbit, that distinguished former Secretary of State for Employment, writes:

> "those who uphold the doctrines of Beveridge are remarkably selective in their reading of his work."

It seems to me that there were two great principles in Beveridge's work. He spoke of an attack on want, but went on to say:

> "Want is only one of the five giants on the road of reconstruction and in some ways the easiest to attack. The others are Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness."

The second central theme of the report is this:

> "Social security must be achieved by co-operation between the state and the individual. The state should offer security for service and contribution, not stifle incentive, opportunity, responsibility."

It is clear from those passages that Beveridge understood the possibility of what we now call the dependency trap coming into existence. I think that Beveridge thought that his fellow country men were much sturdier individuals than we think our country men to be today. He was offering people the opportunity to make a start for themselves, but he was not denying them the all-important self-respect and responsibility that all individuals need.

That report contained the beginnings of the relationship between the individual and the state, which has been called the reasonable bargain. There are obligations—of the state towards the unemployed, but also of the unemployed towards the state. Human society has obligations towards the individual and the individual has obligations towards human society. That is one of the key features of the workfare scheme. It is also part of the great traditions that inform western society—for example, the Judaeo-Christian tradition, but also the traditions of other religions.

I want to quote from St. Paul—from Norman Tebbit to St. Paul is a great distance—who wrote to the people of Thessalonia that,

> "if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies."

I like the idea of busy-bodies meddling—it reminds me of the Liberal and Labour local government politicians in my constituency.

From the roots of that letter from St. Paul derive not only the idea that people have a responsibility towards the society of which they are a member, and vice versa, but the whole idea of the dignity of work. In the last century, at the time of the pre-Raphaelites, work was dignified in art and in literature. Indeed, the Church of England used to have almost a theology of work. People would regard work as an essential part of human dignity. Now I fear, the more negative aspects of the modern world are being emphasised by leading figures in our society.

It is important to realise that my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North is, in important part, trying to re-establish the important concept that is deeply rooted in our traditions—that people should work and that they should be given the opportunity to work. They will respond to that opportunity because work, in itself, has moral value. Essentially, it is better and kinder for people to be doing something than to become used to doing nothing. Workfare, in its broad sense, offers the prospect of work and the dignity that goes with it.

We should not say that, for example, tree planting, the cleaning of canals, environmental work reclaiming wastelands or helping the handicapped and the elderly is not fit work—it is fit and important work which should be done be people throughout the country. As my hon. Friend said, his proposal is not a job-creating scheme because there is plenty of work that needs to be done.

If my hon. Friend's scheme were to be implemented it would help to ease the great fear of unemployment. People in my constituency are experiencing unemployment for the first time. When they first went into work they never thought that they would find themselves in that position. Even those who are not unemployed generally know of people in their families or living in their streets who are in that position. We must recognise that the fear of unemployment has spread throughout the country and throughout all social classes. That fear could be alleviated if people knew that if they lost their jobs there would still be something useful for them to do and they would not simply be facing acres of empty space.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman says that people in his constituency are in fear of unemployment. Knowing his constituency as I do, and knowing that it includes Windsor castle, can he say whether anybody at Windsor castle shares that fear?

Mr. Trend: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not expect me to deal with that point.

Workfare offers the state a shift to, as they say in Sweden, the employment principle. I warmly welcome that. It offers a shift away from financing unemployment to finding employment. For the individual, it offers the dignity that goes with having useful work to do and it offers the opportunity to get something for something, rather than something for nothing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Havant spoke about the new age travellers who were a prominent part of our summer. I have no objection to people travelling around the countryside. Before the war Vaughan Williams used to do that. No doubt he walked in fields, sat down on a farmer's land and ate a sandwich. Perhaps he listened to a lark ascending and thought, "That's a good idea." But I object to people who despoil the countryside, perhaps ruining archaeological remains, breaking the law, outrageously camping on private property—and then expecting me to pay for it.

There is a great deal of support outside the House for the concept that I shall call reciprocal obligations. Full Employment UK published a report resulting from two consultations in my constituency at St. George's house, which is part of the castle. It is called "A New Policy Framework for Unemployed Adults" and it was published last year. It includes many points and it is another way of viewing the general concept of what we are discussing today. One point that it makes is that there should be automatic referral to a new community benefit programme. I understand that "community benefit" is the phrase used by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade when he writes about the matter.

The report suggests that there should be a last resort sector for those who have either been failed by the system or have themselves failed the system. The report contains an open-ended obligation. Some do not think that that is the right approach. We must accept that there are different approaches, and one of the key elements that distinguishes them is when or whether unemployment benefit should be stopped. That is a hard subject to discuss, but it must be faced. It is probably an essential part of the classic workfare theory—if I may call it that—that we must take seriously the prospect of stopping benefits at a certain point. If that were to be the case, in return—as part of the reciprocal obligations—the state would have to take seriously the level at which it funded the workfare programme.

It is very much to the credit of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North that he is exceedingly realistic in his excellent pamphlet on that point. All schemes that come before the House have to be tested for the costs that they would incur. I have some anxieties that even my hon. Friend's staged approach to introducing a full workfare system would incur considerable costs.

I have some other minor anxieties about my hon. Friend's scheme. One is that if a minimum income of £100 a week is established, it may in time become seen as a minimum wage—the floor below which people would believe that they should not fall. There is a minimum income in the present structure of benefits, below which people cannot fall, but there is a danger that, as people are used to the present system, they will regard the new system as a doubling of the minimum wage.

Mr. Ralph Howell: As my hon. Friend acknowledged, a minimum income operates for every individual in the country. Every individual can have support. That counters my hon. Friend's concern about the £100 being regarded as a minimum wage.

Mr. Trend: I am grateful for that clarification.

Another of my anxieties is that in some circumstances the workfare scheme could become part of what one might call the Mussolini approach to politics—the building of autostrada and the digging of holes and filling them in. It is a feature of totalitarian Governments throughout the world this century—one thinks of Mao's China or Stalin's Soviet Union—that they send work gangs out simply to keep them out of what the Government of those countries regard as mischief.

I do not sugest that my hon. Friend's programme of workfare has any features that could develop into the Mussolini approach. However, in a general sense, caution is needed in a free society not to place too many obligations on people or restrict their freedom of choice. From reading my hon. Friend's pamphlet closely, I know that his scheme is not a cheap labour scheme. In the pamphlet he made an important point that he did not mention today. His scheme would be voluntary. We should emphasise that.

I hope that I have expressed great support for the idea of workfare. It is valuable and should be examined further. I wish to deal with the employment and social security aspects of the present position. I welcomed the announcement made by the Department of Employment after the autumn statement this year that all people who have been unemployed for a year and do not take up other offers of help will be required to attend a job plan workshop. That is a step in the right direction. After people have been unemployed for a certain length of time, stock will be taken of their position and they will be given advice. It will be a moment to take tough decisions on difficult cases.

The announcement contained another important element. The training for work programme will replace the existing employment training and employment action programmes. It will be delivered through the training and enterprise councils. It is expected that 320,000 adults next year will be offered an opportunity to improve and update skills and learn new skills.

> "or do work of benefit to the local community."

The programme is still in its early stages. It refers back to schemes that the Government have run in past years. It is important that in the context of the training for work programme, we should consider in greater depth useful work that might be done by people who are unemployed.

The present social security position is interesting. On 12 November my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security made a statement following the autumn statement. It contained another welcome announcement. Regulations are to be laid to withdraw income support from those who are not even actively seeking work. My right hon. Friend made those remarks in the context of fraud. He hoped that savings of about £1 billion each year would be made when his proposals had been put into action.

I see the Secretary of State's announcement in the context of a new package that enshrines many of the concepts of workfare. The future might hold an arrangement whereby the unemployed are at least offered training or socially useful work. They should not be paid to do nothing. They should be given a basic-plus for their work. However, payment should be cut off for some people in certain circumstances. We should approach the problem from two ends, and if we did so our approach would have many of the characteristics of workfare.

The concept of workfare has a strong appeal. If I have achieved anything, I hope that I have stressed that the ideas of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North have an important moral purpose. I appreciate the practical difficulties in such a scheme, and he has been realistic about them. The appeal of the idea is that it offers people the dignity of work and self-respect and gives the

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state a chance to finance employment and not unemployment. The difficulties are such that, even if we were to move transitionally towards workfare, we probably would not start from the motion. We must find a way to include the advantages of the workfare scheme in Government policy.

Cost is the second difficulty, and it would be almost irresponsible of the Government to move to what one might call the harder aspects of workfare, unless they were prepared to make the money available to ensure that the system worked properly.

The Government's proposals will bring greater discipline and precision to what we mean by the reasonable bargain between the individual and the state. I urge them to keep the essentials of the proposals of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North in the front of their minds, because there is so much to be recommended in them.

12.36 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I remember Sir Alan Glyn, the predecessor of the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Mr. Trend). As Dr. Glyn, he was regarded with great affection in the House; we all have a fund of Dr. Glyn stories. I used to get on well with him, but I had one abiding fear—I had collapsed in the House, and was coming round to consciousness to be greeted by the vision of Dr. Glyn, about to descend on me to give me the kiss of life—not a pretty thought; but he was a man for whom the House had great regard.

The hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead spoke for some time about Beveridge, but he did not describe some of the things that Beveridge meant to us and to the country. Beveridge was an interventionist, and I find it almost inconceivable, given his interventionist stance, to hear him quoted approvingly by Conservative Members of Parliament, especially those from the remaining Thatcherite wing of the party.

I made notes as the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead spoke. Beveridge saw the state as enabler. He anticipated and looked forward to full employment and that is the biggest difference between Beveridge and Conservative Members—and some Opposition Members. In recent years, some people have accepted that full employment is not achievable in economic or political terms, whereas it used to be one of the areas of consensus between the two major parties; that objective was set out in our respective election manifestos.

There also used to be competition on housing between the two parties—both in government and in opposition. They used to say, "We built more houses than you did." I liked that argument—it was like an auction—and I would like both parties, whether in government or in opposition, to list the achievement of full employment and the building of homes as programmes in their manifestos. The two are inextricably linked.

Mr. Ralph Howell: It seems that we are now having a bit of an auction as to who has the greater regard for Beveridge.

Surely the hon. Gentleman must appreciate that one of the cornerstones of Beveridge's proposals for the unemployed was that unemployment benefit could not be paid indefinitely and that, after either three months or six months, that benefit should cease and work be offered. If a young person did not have a job, he was offered training, but he was never encouraged to take benefit alone.

Mr. Banks: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says, but he should remember what I said earlier—that theory works much better when full employment is the objective. Given the present economic situation, the hon. Gentleman has put forward not an alternative to full employment but a camouflage for unemployment.

If real jobs were on offer, the situation might be different. I am not talking about the £2·50-an-hour jobs of which the hon. Gentleman spoke. It is totally unacceptable for people to receive such an hourly rate, but many people currently exist on such pay. If there were genuine full employment and genuine jobs available, I would have great sympathy for the hon. Gentleman's proposals for those people who refused a proper job and did not take advantage of the training they had received at the expense of the state. We are not in such a situation today.

Mr. Ralph Howell: The hon. Gentleman is totally out of touch. When this matter is discussed in the media, I get many letters from unemployed people who are desperate to take up the £2·50-an-hour jobs that I have suggested. Whenever this matter has been discussed at election time in my constituency, my constituents have criticised me and said, "You have been talking about this for years. Why on earth can we not have those jobs that you have suggested?"

If the Beveridge proposals were in operation today, we would not be worried about the 2·9 million people who are unemployed, because fewer than 900,000 people would be unemployed for more than three months. In fact, there would not be as many unemployed people as that had we put the Beveridge report into practice in full in 1948.

Mr. Banks: A combination of Keynes and Beveridge would be ideal, but that does not take into account current circumstances. The hon. Gentleman is seeking to rewrite the Beveridge report to suit the 1990s, when that report was written in the 1940s and dealt with a completely different situation. The world has moved on, but not to the benefit of working-class people in terms of job availability and the way in which they are treated by the state.

The hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) is trying to cover up the economic failings of the Government with a scheme that might be okay if we had a genuine, interventionist, Keynesian Government and the prospect of full employment, but that is not the case.

I listened very carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said. I respect his views, because he has been proven right in this House on more than one occasion. He likes to give the impression of being a simple farmer from Norfolk, but he is anything but that. Quite a long time ago, the hon. Gentleman suggested replacing, or paying for, poll tax with VAT. Later, the Government were looking for a way out of an appalling mess into which they had got themselves, and produced a variant of the hon. Gentleman's suggestion.

I feel sure that what the hon. Gentleman is now talking about is on the cards, especially with the present Government in power. I say that because they have nowhere else to go. Unemployment is so high in Britain that it is pushing up the public sector borrowing requirement to the point at which they will have deal with it directly in terms of benefits.

Conservative Members may say that that has not happened yet, even though it had been anticipated. That is true, and I agree that many Opposition Members anticipated that something would be said in the autumn statement about not increasing the range of benefits in line with inflation. The Chancellor led us to believe that he might say something along those lines, but then adroitly drew back so that his supporters could cheer. But they are cheering temporarily, because there is almost an imperative in Government economic policy to go down that road.

I was pulled up by your predecessor in the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for having one of my apoplectic fits in a sedentary position. Knowing what a hard man you are, I am glad you were not in the Chair at the time; had you been, I doubt whether I would have been called to take part in the debate. I confess that I got angry as I heard from Conservative Members the sort of terminology one gets used to hearing from them—about the dependency culture and a "something for nothing" society. I recall the Secretary of State for Social Security saying much the same at the Conservative party conference and receiving cheap cheers from the blue-rinsed and red-necked hordes.

I am referring to the sort of terminology that really annoys my hon. Friends and me. When Tories talk about a "something for nothing" society, they are really talking about people on income support, unemployment and housing benefit and so on. They never seem to talk about the real parasites who live in our society and operate in the economy. I refer to the currency and commodity speculators and those who did so much damage to the Government's economic policy on black Wednesday, when we were forced to take the pound out of the exchange rate mechanism. Those are the real "something for nothing" merchants: the people who make money out of money and who cause or exacerbate economic crises.

They could not have succeeded as they did on black Wednesday if the British economy had not been so structurally and fundamentally weak. Speculators will always try a run against currencies—they did it in France a little later—but so long as the underlying economy is strong, they cannot succeed. The knew how weak the British economy was. I have no time for them. They are the "something for nothing" merchants with whom I would deal, and it is time for the Government to recognise the damage that they inflict on economic policy. The Government should produce a Europewide method of dealing with those parasites.

Mr. Gorst: May I help the hon. Gentleman to return to the bipartisan benevolence which I know exists as a strain in his political personality? Will he give us the benefit not so much of his distaste for the present Government's actions as an indication of where he believes the scheme has any merit, if he believes it has? If he finds flaws in it, perhaps he will constructively offer advice about how it might be made more palatable to him.

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman asks the question in a gentle way, and I assure him that I have a fund of good advice for Conservative Members, although I doubt they would heed any of it. I shall make some suggestions later. This is probably not the sort of debate in which to go into the intricacies of a proposal that at present I consider to be inappropriate.

The proposal of the hon. Member for Norfolk, North is, as the motion says,

> "That this House recognises that unemployment is nearly three million and rising; considers that unemployment is wasteful and soul destroying".

The real issue is about unemployment, so I shall deal with why this country has such high unemployment and what we should do about it. I might find the hon. Gentleman's scheme attractive if people looking for work could contemplate full employment, or as near as one can get to full employment. There is no such thing as full employment, because there will always be people in the process of changing jobs or being retrained.

Insufficient retraining is done in this country. If we look at other European countries we see how many times people are retrained during the course of a productive economic life. It does not happen like that in this country.

Yesterday I was giving out prizes at Sarah Bornell's school—an excellent girls' school in Newham—and discussing the situation that used to exist when I was at school and when the hon. Member for Norfolk, North and other Conservative Members were at school. We had options and could choose what job we wanted to go for. At university, too, different careers were open to us, and the world was full of far greater promise than it is now.

Now, all we can offer people is, if not a lifetime on the dole, certainly the prospect of going immediately from school, college or university on to the dole and then drawing benefit. People do not have the opportunity to decide which area of economic activity they want to enter and how they want to be trained.

Mr. Ralph Howell: It is difficult to follow the hon. Gentleman's argument. This country and the whole world have a problem, but he simply describes what it was like so many years ago. It must be right to address the problem and to find a way to solve it. If my proposals are not acceptable, where are his proposals?

Mr. Banks: I hope to get on to the many proposals I have in the next hour or so. I am not just reminiscing for the sake of it, although old men tend to do so these days.

I often hear Conservative Members talking about how bad things were when the Labour Government had to call in the International Monetary Fund because of economic problems, so I took the precaution of going to the Library for a set of statistics comparing today with 1976-77. They are very interesting. It is not that long ago—certainly well within the memory of the hon. Member for Norfolk, North. When the IMF was called in, the unemployment rate was 4·3 per cent.; it is now 10 per cent. and rising. In June 1976, 7 million people were employed in manufacturing industry; in June 1992, there were 4·4 million.

Unemployment has been caused by the fact that manufacturing industry has been decimated by the Conservative Government's policies. The hon. Member for Norfolk, North may say, "Hang on, this recession is all over Europe." That may be so now, but we have been in a recession for far longer than any other European country, and unemployment is still rising faster here than in any other of our Community partners. They are just entering a recession, whereas we have been in one and shall now go from recession into slump. One has only to look at this morning's newspapers. The *Times* headlines say: "British Rail axes 5,000 on black day for jobs". *The Guardian* says: "10,000 hit in swathe of job cuts". That is

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what is going on in this country and the hon. Gentleman should deal with the failure of his Government's economic policies, rather than looking around at ways of sticking plaster and a few bits of gum over the real problem of unemployment.

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): The hon. Gentleman correctly talked about the IMF having to be called in, but does he agree that it had to be called in because the then Labour Government had totally mismanaged the economy?

Mr. Banks: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman something else. The statistics show that things were immeasurably better in 1976-77 than they are in the 1992-93 tax year. Between—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) jumps up and down like a demented jack-in-the-box. I shall give way to her in a moment.

Since 1979-80, the Government have had the benefit of no less than £110 billion-worth of receipts from North sea oil and gas. That is the patrimony that has been squandered by the Government. We have experienced economic failure when we were the only country in Europe, other than Norway, that was entirely energy-independent. To have received £110 billion and to have wasted those moneys is criminal.

Mr. McLoughlin: Was it by virtue of the hon. Gentleman's support for the autumn statement of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the Opposition did not vote against it yesterday? My right hon. Friend has done an incredible job in protecting public investment, whereas the Labour Government slashed capital spending.

Mr. Banks: I do not think that the Minister can draw any great comfort from cock-up theory of history. Had there been a reliable and experienced Whip such as myself on duty last night, the cock-up would not have occurred. In the end, a Division would not have swayed the Government from their position. It was a slightly unfortunate accident, but, in comparison with the Government's breathtaking economic incompetence, it was a fairly minor matter.

Lady Olga Maitland: The hon. Gentleman has referred to the economy in the 1970s. The Labour party lost the 1979 general election because of the disastrous state of the economy at that time, and a Labour Government will never be re-elected.

Mr. Banks: The hon. Lady has made an extremely cerebral point in a characteristic fashion. In politics, the word "never" is not one which she or anyone else should use. In the interests of greater accuracy, as we say in the House, I shall send the hon. Lady a copy of the letter that I received from the Library. I would not want her arguments spoilt by having the facts in front of her, but if she reads the letter she will learn how better things were in 1976 than they are now.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: As for accuracy, it is nonsense to say that £110 billion has been squandered by the Government. How many new road schemes, new schools and hospitals and other forms of public investment have there been over the past 12 years?

Mr. Banks: It is indeed inaccurate to say £110 million. It is £110 billion.

So much more could have been done. If any of us had received a comparable sum—I am not talking about billions of pounds—we would have invested it with care. Instead, North sea oil revenues and capital receipts from the privatisation of nationalised industries have been used to keep people on the dole. Every person who is unemployed costs the country about £9,000 in terms of benefit and lost taxation. That is our money, not the Government's. It belongs to us all, and I want my money to be spent wisely, not squandered.

There is a practical solution to the problem we face. A good investment is to get people back to work. When they are at work, there is an immediate gain, because it is not necessary to pay them benefits. If they have real jobs and earn a decent wage, they can go out and spend some of their money. That should be fairly simple, even for the hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Clifton-Brown: The hon. Gentleman misrepresents me—I said £110 billion, not million. If he does not believe that investment in schools, roads and hospitals is investment in our nation, I do not know what is. Will he tell us one policy of his that would enable us to achieve the full employment that he is talking about?

Mr. Banks: I can think of many. It is all a question of investment. Some economists recently wrote in an article in the *Financial Times* that, when it comes to worthwhile investment, it does not matter where the money comes from. A good investment is as good for public as for private money. It is the ideological fixation of the Conservatives that prevents them from realising that.

I want my money spent wisely and invested properly. The Chancellor failed in the autumn statement to say anything constructive about the £5·1 billion-worth of accumulated capital receipts that local authorities hold from the sale of council houses. He did say that they can use 100 per cent. of those receipts from now on. This is a bad time to be selling property; why not use the accumulated receipts to create work? Linking our earlier arguments, that would also do something about homelessness.

Large numbers of people living in sub-standard accommodation, private and public, and many others are homeless. There are also unemployed construction workers. One does not need a PhD in economics to realise that these factors should be brought together to solve a number of problems——

Lady Olga Maitland *rose*——

Mr. Banks: One problem that cannot be solved is the agitation of the hon. Lady, to whom I give way yet again.

Lady Olga Maitland: The hon. Gentleman has spoken of homelessness in his constituency. We all know that thousands of people are living in sub-standard accommodation or are homeless in his constituency because its left-wing-controlled Labour authority is so hopelessly inefficient that it squanders money and refuses to go in for joint venture schemes which would provide homes and stimulate the economy——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. We are getting beyond the scope of the motion now.

Mr. Banks: I will relate my remarks to the motion, which is about unemployment. My point is that, by dealing with the homeless, we can create jobs in the construction industry. When a local authority starts to build, it puts money into the private sector.

The ignorance of the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam is so profound that it beggars belief. The only way to deal with the problem is to make her come and see my borough—possibly a visit to which neither of us will look forward, but in the interests of my future sanity, it has to be done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House rises at 3 pm. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Lady can then go elsewhere; meanwhile, can we get back to the motion?

Mr. Banks: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is just that, by 3 o'clock, I may have been turned into a homicidal maniac by the hon. Lady.

It is nonsense to suggest that my borough does not go in for joint ventures. We enter into them all the time with the private sector, particularly in construction. I shall send the hon. Lady details afterwards. Newham has close relations with the private sector. We are not ideological, and we have no objections to it. The trouble is that Conservative Members are ideologically fixated. All we hear is, "Labour councils bad, Tory councils good." So let us move on.

People with such a simplistic view of life should not be in politics. There must be work with the private sector. It is the people who work in the private sector who live in my constituency and want the jobs. The hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) asked me how we can create more jobs. In Newham, it would help if the Government made a definitive announcement about the Jubilee line, instead of waiting for £400 million from the bank. As I said, investment is just as good for public money as it is for private money if it is sound in the first place.

Secondly, the construction of a railway station at Stratford for the channel tunnel link would bring jobs to an area in which the railway can play a traditional role. It may be constructed by the private sector, but it would provide jobs for my constituents. I am not ideologically fixated—unlike the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman ought to acknowledge the amount of Government money that has gone into his borough, including the successful application not long ago for city challenge. The hon. Gentleman suggests that we take a simplistic view of Labour councils versus Tory councils, but the hon. Gentleman takes a simplistic view of Tory Governments.

Mr. Banks: The Minister does me less than justice. The Minister for Housing and Planning, who visited my constituency for city challenge is a man for whom I have some regard. I have known him for many years—since the days when he was on Lambeth council, together with the Prime Minister. That council provides a distinguished training ground for Tory politicians. I say thank you to the Under-Secretary of State—I will always thank a Government who provide jobs and initiative in my borough. I am not sure that city challenge is the way to do that. The trouble with competitions—*[Interruption.]* I notice that the Minister for Housing and Planning has just entered the Chamber—he will be pleased to hear that I have just referred to him in the most affectionate terms. He will be able to confirm my sentiment, and confirm that when he visited Newham, I thanked him—and he spoke approvingly of some of our initiatives.

We do not have a hang-up, and we will thank the Government for action that they take, but we also have a right to criticise if we believe that the Government are doing something wrong. The Under-Secretary of State and Conservative Members know that I am fair—harsh in my criticism, but warm in my praise, and I praised the Minister when he visited my borough.

The hon. Member for Norfolk, North is anticipating. I said before that he is a man ahead of his time. As he commented, there is nothing new about what we are seeing now—there is nothing new under the sun. We are simply seeing a variant of the workhouse, and something like the bankers' ramp of the 1930s. That always happens when expenditure seems out of control. The Government operate in the area in which they have the most influence —the payments of benefits. I fully expect to see more people like Lord Tebbit espousing the views that the hon. Gentleman holds, for all the wrong reasons.

The hon. Member for Norfolk, North is right to say that unemployment is a curse, but it has always been created by Government policies, though undoubtedly exacerbated by problems throughout the whole of Europe. However, we have been longer in recession than any other European country—and we are likely to remain longer in recession and to go into slump unless something more dramatic is done than the Chancellor's tinkering in his autumn statement.

Britain has some of the lowest unemployment benefit rates in the whole Community. In other Community states, unemployment benefit is related to previous pay. In this country, only a flat rate is paid. That is a pretty dismal view if one's income falls from average earnings of £300 plus to the £43 a week unemployment benefit paid to a single person. That is only 14 per cent. of the skilled rate, which is a dramatic fall. That is not true of every case, but that is the scale of the drama that can be experienced by people being in work and then out of work.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Earlier, I asked the hon. Gentleman to suggest one measure that would return this country to full employment. I hope that he will respond before he resumes his seat.

Mr. Banks: I am chucking them in as I go along. I have already mentioned the £5·1 billion of accumulated capital receipts, construction industry, Jubilee line, and channel tunnel link. This morning, I listened on the radio to the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), who is an acknowledged railway buff. He made a good point on the "Today" programme. My wife and I were listening to the radio, and I said to her, "You would not believe that he was a Tory MP." The hon. Gentleman said that we should imagine ourselves going along on Victorian railway lines, yet travelling alongside roads which have only just been built—or at least, roads which were built in the 20th century.

In many respects we are still living off the Victorian infrastructure. So much investment in the infrastructure needs to be made. Spending money in that way is investment. I know that Conservative Members will say that such investment increases the public sector borrowing requirement and the percentage of debt in relation to the

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gross domestic product. But we have one of the lowest public debt percentages in Europe. We have the capacity to invest. We spend money when we give it out in transfer payments—benefits. But we invest money when we use it for the infrastructure and for retraining. The hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewksbury doubtless has many schemes of his own, but we should say to ourselves, "Our society has inherited infrastructure from wise decisions made in the past, and we should add to that stock." That is what we do in our private homes, if we are lucky enough to have them. If we can do that as individuals why can we not do it as a country? There are many ways of dealing with the matter.

The hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) made a characteristically thoughtful speech, saying that it was not the Government's job to bring together the idle hand and the unmet need. He said that that was the job of the labour market. If it were happening I might have some sympathy with the hon. Gentleman—but it is not happening. The free market does not work. It is "voodoo economics" as George Bush once memorably described Reagan's policy —and he might just as well have been describing Baroness Thatcher's policy. Voodoo economics has not worked. If it had worked I would say that there must be something in it.

Unemployment is so high in this country. The official figure is 3 million, and we must take into account the fact that there have been 19 or 20 changes in the method of calculating the unemployment statistics. If we returned to the original 1982 base for the calculation there would be 4 million people unemployed in this country. Unarguably, on statistical grounds, 1 million of those people would be long-term unemployed. If someone tells me that that is a sign of economic success I shall ask that person what failure would be. If he replied that failure was 1976-77, the International Monetary Fund and the Labour Government, I should refer him to the Library, and the letter in my possession.

What worries me so much about present Government policies is the fact that we are looking at abysmal failure. Conservative Members do not seem to grasp the depth of the recession, nor how fatal it could be for this country. We could reach a point at which recovery would be impossible. Even if the long-awaited green shoots appear and flower into something, the underlying strength of the economy is poor, and manufacturing industry has been decimated over the past 13 years. What would happen if there were any growth in the economy, and any increase in demand? We all know the answer. We would suck in imports. This country's propensity to import is enormous —far greater than that of the United States, for example.

If we suck in imports that will further exacerbate the balance of payments, and cause the pound to fall even further, which will cause the Chancellor of the Exchequer to come back and say, "I must stick up interest rates to protect the pound."

Those are futile economies; they are the economics of the madhouse, as they say. This is the madhouse, and I am beginning to feel like an inmate—and perhaps to sound like one.

I must say to the hon. Member for Havant, although he is no longer here, that the Japanese have seen through those theories. They have announced an investment programme costing $87 billion. The Japanese are not known to throw their money around wilfully. I suggest that if the Japanese have decided that such an investment programme is a good thing, it is at least worth considering for this country.

I do not believe that Conservative Members have grasped the scale of our economic problems. At the end of the Chancellor's autumn statement they were waving their Order Papers. Why on earth they should do that, when every one of the Chancellor's previous predictions has been wrong, I do not know. I have not the faintest idea why they should think that he will get this one right. Even if he were to get it right it would not make any difference.

Watching Conservative Members last Thursday was like watching serried ranks of lemmings waving their Order Papers before plunging over the side of a cliff. If it were only the inhabitants of the Conservative Benches who were plunging over the cliff I should not mind; I should quite welcome large numbers of them going over—I mean no ill intent. But it will not be Conservative Members who lose their jobs—or at least, not immediately. They may not lose their jobs until the next election.

As we go further into recession it will be people in my constituency who lose their jobs. Some 18·6 per cent. of my constituents are unemployed. That is the problem in the London borough of Newham. The worse the recession gets, the worse it gets for Newham. Anyone who thinks that I draw any satisfaction or comfort from the failure of Government economic policies does not understand how seriously I view the problems of my constituency.

I see signs of extreme anxiety among Ministers as they do their calculations about timing. I hope that they are better at their calculations on the timing of the debate than they are at their calculations on the economy. They probably stand a better chance on the former. I realise that other Conservative Members also wish to speak.

Until the Government really grasp the depth of the horror facing the British economy, and until they get off their ideological hobby horse and start realising that, if investment is good, it is as good for the public sector to invest as it is for the private sector, they have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing.

The days ahead for this country look exceedingly bleak. The only chink of light is the election of a Labour Government. Unlike the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam, I never say never, because I believe that a Labour Government will be elected as a result of the economic problems forced on the country by the inept policies of the Government whom she supports.

1.15 pm

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): I have a sneaking feeling that the speech by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was yesterday's speech. I am not suggesting that it was out of order, although it clearly bordered on that, but I believe that it would have been more appropriate in the debate on the autumn statement than it was today. I imagine that the hon. Gentleman was giving way to frustration. However, it is always enjoyable to listen to his vehemence, vigour and invective, laced as it always is with a great deal of humour.

The House and those of us who have sat through the debate today will be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell). He has tried to produce a positive and constructive approach to the problem of unemployment. Whether the specific changes he suggests are right is less important than that his general approach should be accepted by the Government, examined and then, in the light of that examination, acted on. I hope that in that spirit—the spirit in which speeches have been made by Conservative and Opposition Members—we shall realise that we are reviewing the possibilities for the future rather than engaging in an analysis of the present.

In that spirit, I turn to one suggestion that is worthy of consideration, not in place of, or as an alternative to, present policy, but as an extension to it. The hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) will recall that we were members of the Select Committee on Employment which visited Japan in 1986. The hon. Gentleman may be able to remind me of details or to correct me on specifics of the suggestion to which I want my hon. Friend the Minister to give serious consideration.

In 1986, we visited the Kawasaki heavy industries company which was a large manufacturer involved not only in making motor cycles, but in building ships. Shipbuilding then was suffering from world surpluses and seemed to be in terminal decline. Fortunately for Kawasaki, the Japanese Government operated a scheme to protect lifetime work forces from being broken up and thrown on to the unemployment heap, which would have been negative and barren.

The idea of the scheme was that the company should retain its workers so that they should not become an unproductive burden on society. The scheme involved the Government declaring a particular industry—in this case, shipbuilding—to be obsolescent, and subsidising firms for the extent of their wage bill for up to two years. During that time, approved projects that were already in the pipeline—though perhaps many years from fruition—could be pursued, and the firm would retrain its work force to build, say, helicopters rather than ships.

The great advantage of the scheme was that, instead of the work force being broken up and people being made redundant and turned into an unproductive non-wealth creating burden on the state, they were being positively retrained—perhaps at the same expense as if they had been drawing unemployment benefit and perhaps at slightly greater or slightly less expense.

I urge the Government to examine such schemes. I readily concede that they might not help us to deal with the obsolescence of the mining industry because, by their very nature, such undertakings do not have research schemes that can be brought forward. Perhaps I should add that that shows the desirability of privatising wherever possible and encouraging privatised industries to develop such research projects, the risk being taken in the private as opposed to the public sector.

I hope that, in the context of the debate, my hon. Friend the Minister will bear in mind the fact that there is no dignity in people being in receipt of public support. As has already been said, there is great distress. Anything that can be done to retain people in active work is highly desirable, whether it is necessary as a consequence of recession, of obsolescence or of the cumulative mistakes made by this party or another party or by no one in particular in the handling of the economy.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will believe that not only the scheme that I have outlined but the more detailed proposals advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North are worthy of further consideration, and that something will be done about them not tomorrow but, if possible, this evening.

1.22 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): It is always a genuine pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst), who at least reflects on what he says in the House. I shall return to his remarks, but, before doing so, it is only right that I should congratulate the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell), first, on winning the ballot and, secondly, on choosing a subject that goes to the very heart of our biggest single problem. The hon. Gentleman was absolutely right that the single most important issue facing Britain and western Europe is unemployment. We may differ over how we should tackle that problem, but we should not differ over the scale of the human misery that has been caused by the politics of unemployment for so many years.

I am not prepared to be charged with making partisan points when I say that I hold the Government and many of the policies that they have pursued for the past 13 years directly to blame for high unemployment and the human misery that it causes. To do otherwise would be to absolve those who have made some tragic decisions of their responsibility for that misery.

For all the time that I have been in the House and previously, my constituency has suffered from a high rate of unemployment. Many people think of unemployment as an inner-city problem. My constituents—like those of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who have similar backgrounds—are sometimes dismissed as having less value and fewer rights than others in our society. I deeply resent that, not just on behalf of my constituents but for myself, because I grew up in my constituency. Of course, I accept that the hon. Gentleman's motion shows that he does not support that view.

It is important that we recognise precisely what unemployment does within our communities and why the hon. Gentleman is right to seek solutions. Unemployment is brutally crippling our society. In my area—although this is not typical to Manchester—drugs are being sold on the streets on such a wide and open scale that it is leading both directly and indirectly to the most mean and callous of human behaviour. People are literally killing each other —not through the use of drugs, but through territorial wars. That comes down to the politics of unemployment being played out on the streets.

Many years ago, someone in my constituency said that the people serving as role models for the youngsters were those who rode around in big cars wearing good suits— things that they had earned from the drugs trade. Therefore, no one in society should be surprised if those youngsters themselves came to believe that the only way that they could make progress was to follow that lesson. That point is fundamental to the way that we deal with the problem. As I have said, the Government historically share a great deal of responsibility for unemployment. Because of their general macro-economic incompetence and their specific incompetence in dealing with micro-economic solutions, they bear the responsibility for allowing the unemployment problem to continue.

During the past few years the rise in unemployment in Britain has been far in excess of that in other European

[Mr. Tony Lloyd]

countries. The days are long gone when I sat on the Front Bench and listened to the former Chancellor, Lord Lawson, mocking the Opposition. He said that the future of manufacturing industry was no longer of any interest because it was yesterday's industry and we were looking to the brave new world of the service industries. He said that it did not matter that there was a balance of payments deficit on manufactures, although we consistently cried that that was the politics of stupidity. One or two Conservative Members echoed our cry, but not enough to change Lord Lawson's mind.

The current Chancellor told the Treasury Select Committee

"I do not believe in kick starting the economy by some artificial stimulus or device."

In the autumn statement, the right hon. Gentleman slightly changed his mind. However, if he believes his words to the Select Committee, not only is he wrong but he is wrong at the expense of just those people that the hon. Member for Norfolk, North is trying to help. The problems caused by the Government's ridiculous economic policies have led this country to its current financial state and the heavy social price that our people are paying.

It is important to recognise that it will be many, many years before the social malaise caused by mass unemployment works itself out of the system—even if, in the short term, we can return to full employment. I can do no better than agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West, who emphatically made the point that if we want to return to Beveridge's debate about the future of Britain—going back not just decades but, technologically, generations—we must accept that Beveridge envisaged a society of full employment. The measures that Beveridge suggested were to be set in the context of a society which could offer effectively full employment.

Mr. Ralph Howell: I believe that Beveridge envisaged about 7·5 per cent. unemployment. He called that full employment.

Mr. Lloyd: Beveridge drew up the plans—on which both Labour and Conservative post-war Governments acted for some time—during the war years when people had returned to active work, whether war work or active service in the armed forces. Beveridge was among those who argued that post-war Governments should pursue the politics of full employment.

The Opposition believe that Britain must have a Government determined to pursue the politics of full employment and run the economy in a way that is consistent with that set of political decisions. Our fundamental problem in recent years has been that while the Government paid lip service to full employment, on every occasion they have made the needs of the unemployed and the requirement for full employment subsidiary to the other variables on which they chose to concentrate.

The hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) asked my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West which single measure he would implement. That simple question showed the fixation with a magic solution which has bedevilled economic planning in Britain for 13 years. It was simple-minded monetarism for a long time. The Government pursued simple-minded solutions on every occasion, such as sticking with the ERM at the rate at which we entered or sticking with a policy to keep inflation down. Those so-called solutions failed to deliver the goods and did not maintain a balance between the different aspects of economic management which are all necessary.

Mr. Deva: In previous speeches much was said about investing billions of pounds in infrastructure. But not one word was said about inflation. Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that it is a fact of our economy that the control of inflation is an important requisite for competitiveness because we shall continue to compete against low inflation countries, especially in Europe? Will the hon. Gentleman say a few words about how he would control inflation and make the public expenditure programmes work?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman will understand that we are not willing to take lessons from a Government who claimed that they had cured inflation in the mid-1980s, yet saw inflation rise again dramatically when Nigel Lawson was Chancellor of the Exchequer. That happened with the full connivance of the then Prime Minister, Baroness Thatcher. Yet the same crass remedies were put into effect at a later stage and squeezed the lifeblood out of the economy. Even the Chancellor now uses a form of words which express his concern that he overdid monetary policy to such an extent that it squeezed the life out of the economy and caused the present recession and slump. That was the cause of at least a considerable part of the unemployment in our economy.

I remind the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury that it is necessary to achieve some balance of economic management. We must accept that, if we are to pursue policies that are consistent with full employment, we cannot have a simple fixation with squeezing inflation down on each and every occasion, even when the measures used are no longer appropriate to either inflation or employment. That is the central issue. That is why the Government will never shake off the blame for the misery that they have caused to millions of our fellow citizens by putting them out of work.

It is ironic that we are having this debate at a time when in the past few days Blue Circle—one of the giant firms in the construction industry—has had to lay people off because there is no longer sufficient demand. British Rail has announced 5,000 job losses. A huge number of jobs will be lost because of Government policies and their failure to invest in modern infrastructure, as British Rail's senior management made clear. As a modern trading nation we should have been investing in the railways, whether or not that was good for jobs. The failure to do so has caused job losses. My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) mentioned 3,500 job losses at the Royal Bank of Scotland. Every job lost is a personal human tragedy and it is part of the daily litany of job haemorrhaging in our society.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I understand that the Labour party gave pledges in its election manifesto that it would not increase public sector borrowing above that planned by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, and the hon. Gentleman would also have had only limited tax increases. All his schemes involve spending public money, so where would he get it from?

Mr. Lloyd: I cannot take lectures from an hon. Gentleman who has supported the Chancellor's pinball economic management, even for the short time that he has been in the House. If I were him, I would be ashamed to mention what the parties said at the election, given that the Chancellor has stood on his head during the six or eight months since then and it is doubtful whether he remembers what his party was committed to. Surely the hon. Gentleman does not want me to apologise for my party's pledges when the Government's management of the economy has been in total chaos. Even by the hon. Gentleman's standards, I think that that would be a little disingenuous.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Who won the election?

Mr. Tony Banks: *The Sun* won it.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is very accurate. *The Sun* won it, but since that time, it has turned. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West is better at quick one liners—I am sure that he could think one up for me. I remember a headline in *The Sun*, which made clear what it thought of the Chancellor. Whatever value it saw in the Government in April has long since dissipated, as the Chancellor has proved his unfitness to manage the economy.

The debate is about unemployment and solutions to it, and it is instructive to set it within the context of present Government policy. Hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber will be interested to hear what the Minister has to say. I am sure that he will tell his hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North—as the Secretary of State did—that we cannot afford his proposed schemes, but he will also tell his hon. Friend not to worry because the Government are already doing a lot to deal with such problems.

I know that the hon. Member for Norfolk, North cares about the issue, and he must question the information that comes from the Treasury Benches. The Minister is not in a good position to rubbish the figures, because the Government are not prepared to publish any.

The hon. Member for Norfolk, North will understand that, if I am to trust the Government, who, he says, will set up schemes to provide training or work for young people, I require an absolute guarantee—not a guarantee to be perjured when it suits Ministers at the Dispatch Box—that no one will suffer financially if such training fails. They must guarantee to get people into work after training. We must not merely provide Mickey Mouse training—it must raise skill levels for the trainee and add value for the nation or we may as well not pretend that it has any merit.

Let us examine what has happened to youth training. The money spent on it has been cut by about 7 per cent. in this financial year, which is not great evidence of any commitment to youth training schemes.

Mr. Deva: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lloyd: Yes, but first I must ask some important questions to which I want the Minister to respond. Much as I respect the hon. Gentleman's views, I am sure that he will accept that we need to have the Minister's reasons on the record.

One of the problems with youth training is that the guarantee of that training has not been met. My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) has conducted the only survey of the training and enterprise councils that has sought to find out the extent to which that guarantee is being met. The Minister will not answer questions on this matter because he says that the information is not available. Let me tell the House what my hon. Friend was told. Of the TECs that he surveyed, 55,000 young people were awaiting either training or a job, as guaranteed. That is an awful lot of young people.

That survey was not comprehensive, because some of the TECs did not respond, but if we use it as a reliable estimate, it means that 75,000 young people are being betrayed by the youth training programme. Some of those young people have been waiting for as long as nine months for either a job or training. That delay is not merely equivalent to a bureaucratic aberration—it represents the system's total failure to deliver its promises. Perhaps Conservative Members will now understand why we are so dubious about the Government's commitment to the scheme.

One of the consequences for 16 and 17-year-olds whose promise of training or employment has been broken is that they are denied any form of economic support. Conservative Members—I exempt those who were elected in April—voted to take away income support for that group. At the time we were told that no one would suffer, because of that guarantee, but thousands of young people now have no form of economic support because that guarantee has not been met. They cannot claim any kind of benefit.

The failure to uphold that guarantee means that the promises given to the House have been cheated upon; what is more, it is immoral because it has made paupers of our young people. I relate unemployment to anti-social behaviour and criminality and I lay some of the responsibility for that at the door of those who have failed [illegible] uphold that guarantee.

Mr. Deva: Youth training is an important programme. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, currently, more than 250,000 people are given a guaranteed youth training place? We are the only country in Europe to offer such a guarantee. We are now spending more than £851 million a year on youth training. In 1979, however, when Labour was last in government, there were just 7,000 youth training places on offer.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman might care to cast his mind back to the rate of unemployment in 1979—the level of youth unemployment was far smaller then.

I am not against the idea of guaranteed training or employment, but that guarantee is absolutely meaningless for 75,000 people. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can thus understand why I do not understand the point he is trying to make. It is true that in a different era that guarantee did not exist. However, the hon. Gentleman must note that when his party took away the right to income support from those young people, they gave a solid, copper-bottomed guarantee that no one would suffer, because training or employment would be available to all. Yet between 55,000 and 75,000 young people have been betrayed. The hon. Gentleman should stand up and say to Ministers, "I cannot stand up in public and justify this. You must start doing something about it." Unless Ministers act, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will understand our diffidence towards schemes that contain any element of benefit reduction.

[Mr. Lloyd]

The Government have launched other training schemes that are meant to underpin training and improve the skills of the nation. The budget for employment training, however, has been cut by 15 per cent. this year. That has not happened because the number of the long-term unemployed has gone down; far from it, sadly that number has shot up. The hon. Member for Norfolk, North admitted that there are now more than 900,000 long-term unemployed people.

The long-term unemployed alone are costing the nation £8·5 billion a year. The hon. Member for Norfolk, North was right to refer to wasters of last resort because that is the most atrocious kind of waste. It is dreadful that the nation should throw billions of pounds into propping up unemployment. We see little for that money, considering, for example, what employment training achieves.

Indeed, I fear that employment training has become something of a joke—*[Interruption.]* I think that I heard the Government Whip, the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) say "Rubbish." I appreciate that he cannot take part in the debate. I trust that he will now insist that the Minister gives a good response to the points that I am making on employment training, or the Whip will have been betrayed in his vow of silence, since he expects his Minister to speak for him.

Employment training is now in such a poor state that the probability of someone finding work after being on an employment training course is almost no better than the probability of someone who has been unemployed for six months finding work. Only 19 per cent. of those who have been on employment training schemes get jobs—*[Interruption.]* I am not surprised that the Minister should have a puzzled look on his face. He is puzzled because when I table questions to him on the subject, he cannot give me answers. The Department of Employment has no statistics. I challenge him to produce better figures, if he contradicts what I say.

My statistics come from reputable sources. If the Minister wants me to believe that employment training is better than I say it is, more work on the subject had better be done in his Department. On the other hand, rather than look for statistics that might prove helpful to the Government's propaganda case, they should put real effort into developing training schemes that genuinely help the unemployed.

Fewer than a quarter of those on employment training schemes are gaining qualifications. The number has fallen in the past 12 months. The idea of employment training being badly organised, badly structured and offering low-quality training does not concern only those who are forced into the scheme. It concerns all who hold views on whether the nation is wasting its effort in terms of providing training for the unemployed and giving training that adds value for the nation as a whole. So the charge against the Government is that, from the point of view of employment training and youth training, they have failed the nation.

The Government have moved away from high-cost schemes such as employment training and are placing greater emphasis on low-cost schemes such as job search and the job interview guarantee. But fewer than 17 per cent. of people going in for job search find work. That is pathetic. The rate for the job interview guarantee is 29 per cent. When I asked the Minister recently about employment action, he said that the Department had no information about the job outturn. If the Minister is to have any credibility when defending Government programmes of that type, he must do better. At present, when he gives information it is awful, and when he cannot give information we are left to speculate that the situation is probably even worse.

The hon. Member for Norfolk, North will appreciate that however well-meaning his ideas may be, we cannot trust the Government to deliver, their having failed in everything else they have done. Not only have they failed the unemployed, they have failed the nation. We cannot trust them even to delve into the type of scheme that the hon. Gentleman is suggesting, because we know that they would not be willing to make the resources available to fund it properly.

To be fair to the hon. Gentleman, I should, from the Opposition Benches, comment on his scheme. While we do not accept every aspect of what he proposes—I shall explain our position—we appreciate that he is making a sincere attempt to examine the problem of mass unemployment and long-term unemployment and suggest something that might be done.

Some aspects of the hon. Gentleman's scheme have a role to play in the future of this country. However, I disagree fundamentally with his statement that unemployment is a permanent feature of this nation. The Labour party rejects the notion that we are a high unemployment society. Our society must recognise that the world of work is so important as a mechanism for distributing the country's economic wealth that a two-tier society—a first tier with those in permanent jobs and a second tier with those in devalued jobs—is socially unacceptable. Moreover, it is not politically necessary because we can begin to develop an economy that moves us back towards full employment.

Mr. Ralph Howell: May I try to correct the impression that I gave? I believe that unless the present system is fundamentally changed, the problem will continue to worsen. No political party and no system, other than a completely different one from the present system, could stop the problem increasing. If we tackle it in the fundamental way that I have described—I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's support—we would take the weight of bureaucracy off the productive forces and could reach full employment.

Mr. Lloyd: The reason for the bureaucracy is that, if we have at any time nearly 3 million registered unemployed —in fact, 4 million unemployed—we are spending, simply in terms of the equation of benefits and lost taxation, some £25 billion a year, which is a phenomenal amount to throw down the black hole of unemployment. We must break out of that cycle, a point on which I am at one with the hon. Gentleman. We disagree not about ends or even about why those ends would be so liberating for taxpayers and those of us in work, but about whether the specific means will directly achieve what he suggests.

Some aspects of the hon. Gentleman's scheme cause me difficulty. I do not mean to be unkind when I say that the hon. Gentleman slightly glossed over the aspect of compulsion. He may have been diverted by his hon. Friends. Although he talks about choice between his scheme and existing schemes, it is inevitable that any

Government introducing such a scheme would be faced with either directing people into that form of work or stopping benefit. He said that there would be no unemployment benefit but simply benefits topping up the notional rate of pay for work. When challenged, the hon. Gentleman partly conceded that there are technical reasons why that is not desirable. For those coming out of work, looking for work and returning to work, it is not sufficient to force them into the wrong type of work immediately when their talents could be better used elsewhere. They need a period of reflection and the time to look around. That point is not meant to be trivial; it is an important point on which I insist.

I want to know more about how the scheme would work in practice. The hon. Gentleman said that people would either be in work or training. Apart from the long-term disabled and sick, other groups would find it difficult simply to be marshalled into the first job that became available. Those include people with responsibility for family members who need assistance. We would have to be careful to ensure that we did not drive people into poverty through the bureaucrats' misguided actions.

Until we move back towards a world in which people are in work, and until we have properly structured schemes, I see no purpose in trying to dragoon people. If we dragoon one person it will be at the expense of moving someone. It would therefore be a considerable time before the idea of compulsion became relevant. Until our economy can offer people real choice—real work, training or even participation in socially productive schemes—the idea of compulsion will be difficult for us to accept as being helpful to the individual or society.

Mr. Ralph Howell: We are trying to solve the problem of unemployment. There is only one answer to it, and that is working. If the state were to be the employer of last resort, everyone would have the right to work and there would be no question of unemployment. If that work were available for anyone who did not have a normal job, there would be no more compulsion in accepting it than there is in holding down a normal job. After all, 90 per cent. of the working population have a normal job. Those people are compelled to get up in the morning, to travel to where they work and to do whatever they do. If they do not, they do not have a job. The position would be the same for those whom the state employed.

Mr. Lloyd: I understand what the hon. Gentleman says, but I could not accept a situation in which people who were presented with what they regarded as unacceptable choices would have no means of income maintenance were they to refuse to take up the opportunities presented to them. There must be proper choices, especially for young people, between adequate training and adequate employment. It is not enough to produce make-work Mickey Mouse schemes on the basis of "Take it; leave it and you will have no income." It is that element of compulsion which the Opposition could not support.

Nor would we be prepared to support the creation of work that led to competition with other forms of work, where those engaged in some forms of work were paid at the market rate and others were regarded as devalued, compulsorily directed employees and paid much lower rates. There must be the notion of the rate for the job, whether the work be planting trees or anything else. The Opposition are not prepared to have staff at hospitals—for example, cleaners and porters—come from an area of compulsion. We know that that would drive down wages. Indeed, the Government seek to do that already.

The hon. Member for Norfolk, North must understand our concerns. I shall bring my remarks to a conclusion because I know that the Minister needs time to respond on behalf of the Government. I shall do so also because there may be the chance for one or two other hon. Members to say a few words. I accept the sincerity with which the hon. Member for Norfolk, North has raised the matter. He is right to say that unemployment is the most important issue that the nation faces. A Government who refuse to listen to his words and to the same pleas from Opposition Members are a Government who are morally bankrupt.

Our charge against the Government is that they have been proved to be incompetent in planning the economy nationally and in making training schemes and work available at the micro level. They are technically incompetent. Even worse, they are not prepared to accept the social damage that unemployment is causing. They are not prepared even to examine what is on offer, whether they be the schemes advocated by the hon. Member for Norfolk, North or the suggestions that are made by the Opposition. The Government are trivialising the problem at the expense of us all. For these reasons we need a very different Government.

1.58 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I join all those who have congratulated my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on the way in which he has approached the issue of unemployment and on the way in which he has brought it to the attention of the House. There have been many interesting speeches from all quarters. I would not want to refer specifically to individual Members. My colleagues have made some extremely important points and some of the contributions of Opposition Members have been worthy of consideration.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) told us about the problems that disabled people face finding work and about the implications that the workfare scheme might have for them. My hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) gave us a thoughtful speech on the wider implications of workfare. He mentioned some of what he thought would be the difficulties of implementing such a scheme.

The hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) discussed the issue of Sunday trading. I am not in a position to respond to that, but I will draw his remarks to the attention of the Home Secretary.

My hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Mr. Trend) also discussed the implementation of a workfare scheme and pointed out why he thought more work needed to be done on it. My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) described what has happened in Japan. I shall certainly bear his point in mind.

I should like to reply to a couple of the points raised by the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), but I do not want to focus too narrowly on the youth training guarantee, because I want to deal with the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North. When the Secretary of State for Employment met the TEC chairmen

[Mr. Patrick McLoughlin]

in July she made it clear to them that she attached great importance to the youth training guarantee. She told them that she believed that it should be their top priority.

This is a time of year when a great many young people flow off and on to the programme. It inevitably takes some time to sort out their needs; when exam results come through, people sometimes change their minds about going to university, and so on.

The hon. Member for Stretford was wrong to talk about a cut in the youth training budget. The point is that more people are staying on at school, a fact which I would expect him to welcome. We all want more young people to stay on and get qualifications—academic or vocational. That should not be a cause for division between the parties.

There are certainly enough places in the youth training programme and we place tremendous importance on its availability to young people. It is estimated that 216,000 people are available for YT, but that there are 244,000 places.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North has been a consistent advocate of workfare. When he has advocated other causes in the past, he has sometimes caught the Government's ear successfully. I well remember his saying that the community charge should be reduced by switching the burden to VAT, and he successfully persuaded the Government that that was the right way forward.

I am sure that my hon. Friend recalls other discussions and arguments of the past. One thinks of his conversations with Lords Carr and Tebbit, for instance. It is a pity that the three of them cannot meet now to see whether there is a meeting of minds. There would certainly be an interesting exchange of views.

My hon. Friend spoke today about his vision of a workfare scheme for this country. For many years he has been urging the Government to consider his proposal. I am sure that he is familiar with our response. The Government have often told him that we do not believe that unemployed people should have to work in return for their benefits. We have no plans to introduce a compulsory workfare scheme. I realise that my hon. Friend was not advocating such a scheme today, but it still might be helpful if I explained why I consider that a compulsory workfare scheme would be wrong——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister must address the House, not his hon. Friend—smart though his suit is today.

Mr. McLoughlin: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I was explaining why I believe that we should not go down the road of the compulsory workfare scheme. The Government believe that there are already certain obligations on unemployed people, and that it is important for young people who are not working or in full-time education to be involved in training for work. That is why we guarantee an offer of training to young people if they need it.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) for pointing out the difference in the type and availability of schemes now available, compared with 1979. We will not take any lessons from Labour about the importance of training young people. We attach priority to it, and regard it as important.

In the same way, we believe that it is reasonable that adults who are unemployed and who wish to claim benefit should be obliged to be available for work and actively to seek it. Our system places clear responsibilities on unemployed people to seek work. That is a condition of benefit. Unemployment benefit claimants have a duty under the benefit rules to be available for work and actively to seek it, and the Government have a duty to ensure that claimants satisfy those conditions and to give them every possible help in returning to work.

In recent years, we have done much to develop understanding of the rights and responsibilities of those who claim benefit while seeking work. We aim to do more, but the Government should not force people to work if they cannot find their own work.

Then there is the detrimental effect of compulsory work schemes on the labour market and the economy. The Government's aim is to improve the efficiency and flexibility of the labour market. That encourages labour to move towards areas where it can be productive, helping the economy as a whole. A compulsory scheme which forces people to work in jobs that they do not want and does little to improve their skills or motivation does not enhance either the efficiency or the adaptability of the labour market.

One of the most worrying features of such schemes is, in my view, their impact on wage determination. Many proponents of such schemes have suggested that scheme participants should be paid an allowance well in excess of the benefit payments they receive. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North suggested that workfare participants might receive a wage of £100 per week.

The fact that workfare was available for the unemployed at some guaranteed rate of pay would mean that level would effectively become a minimum wage. That point was well made by my hon. Friends the Members for Windsor and Maidenhead and for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland). Individuals, whether unemployed or employed would consider jobs, whether full time or part time, only if they paid more than that level.

What is more, there would be knock-on effects. Employed individuals would seek to increase their wages to a level which restored differentials over those in workfare placements. That would be likely to lead to upward pressure on pay levels, lower levels of employment, and higher levels of unemployment. Meanwhile, as I described earlier, the signals and incentives for unemployed people to find productive and profitable employment would be diminished, so the net effect would be a levelling down to a low-wage, low-productivity economy.

The Government believe that a statutory minimum wage has no role to play in an efficient labour market, and can actively hold back the creation of jobs. That is one reason why we recently announced the abolition of the wages councils, to help increase the number of jobs available for the unemployed at wages that they choose to accept.

Furthermore, if rates of pay were fixed substantially above benefit levels—for example, the £100 per week that my hon. Friend has proposed—some individuals would have very strong incentives to join the scheme. They would include young people in school—though I accept my hon.

Friend's argument for a differential rate for young people—further education, or training who would substantially increase their disposable income.

The introduction of a workfare scheme would increase the levels of benefit dependency, which the Government have fought hard to reduce. In addition to social security benefits, we have provided assistance to the lower paid by the reduction in the level of taxation from 33 to 25 per cent. and the introduction of a new band of 20 per cent.—which the Opposition opposed when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced it in this year's Budget. That is a further measure to encourage people on low incomes to be less dependent on benefit payments.

The "unemployment trap" can arise at the point at which a person would be as well off receiving benefit as working. The effects have been significantly alleviated in recent years, and now only a very small proportion of the working population receive as much or more in income support as they might receive in wages from full-time work. That point was dealt with well by my hon. Friend the Member for Havant, who pointed out the difficulties which would arise.

The willingness of unemployed individuals to leave unemployment and look for work would be reduced if a workfare scheme were introduced. That was a problem which worried my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam. Would somebody on a full workfare programme have sufficient time and availability to go and look for other jobs? Nobody would wish to see that problem arise.

I recognise the importance that my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North attaches to the scheme, and the persistence with which he has promoted his ideas. I know that he attended a meeting at the Department this week to discuss a limited pilot for localised voluntary workfare schemes. We are further considering the feasibility of such a scheme, in the context of increasing the range of local flexibility within the Department's programme. All of that would fit in with my Department's policy of providing more localised services for the unemployed. We have now accepted that there is an area of development, and the training and enterprise councils have been introduced throughout the country. That is welcome.

We already have several programmes for unemployed people which enable them to carry out useful work on a voluntary basis for the benefit of the community. Employment action was introduced in 1991 specifically to enable unemployed people to maintain their skills by undertaking work of benefit to the local community—and nearly 60,000 people have already participated in it.

At this point I shall describe in more detail what is available. I should especially like to draw attention to the package outlined by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment last week. We shall also discuss in more detail with my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North the way in which a pilot scheme could be introduced on a local basis, and consider the scheme in the context of his constituency.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way to me, and I shall not intervene again because I appreciate that he is trying to cover a lot of ground.

When the Minister talks about employment action, and the 60,000 people who have been through it, is he aware that recently, in answer to a question from me, he was unable to say anything about the outcome of the scheme? We have a scheme which, the Minister boasts, puts bums on seats—but we do not know what happens as a result of it. That is ridiculous. Every time the Government realise that one of their pet schemes has failed, the Secretary of State, like her predecessors, stands up and announces a whole plethora of new schemes to replace the failures of the past. The Government then ask us to take on trust that the next lot of failures will at last succeed.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, but employment action has made a valuable contribution. I have talked to people on the scheme, and seen it in operation, and I am convinced that it has made a worthwhile contribution.

I shall now deal with the important package of new measures announced last week by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in the light of the public expenditure survey settlement. I hope that some of what I say will go some way towards reassuring the hon. Gentleman that we have listened to what many people have said about the availability of training. We are determined to ensure that unemployed people continue to have the effective help that they need in order to find jobs.

The Secretary of State has conducted a full-scale review of employment and training programmes delivered through the TECs in England and Wales, through the local enterprise companies in Scotland, and through the Employment Service. The purpose of that review was to ensure that the right kind of assistance is available to unemployed people, and to ensure that the programmes delivering that assistance provide the best value for money.

The new package of employment and training measures arising from the review builds on the successful programmes that we are already offering to unemployed people. The package represents the widest range of help and the highest number of opportunities ever made available. There will be almost 500,000 more opportunities available in 1993-94 than there are in the current financial year. Furthermore, the new package of measures includes many of the recommendations put to the Secretary of State by the training and enterprise councils' working groups on adult training.

We firmly believe that the network of training and enterprise councils and the local enterprise companies, together with the Employment Service, is equipped to give positive and appropriate help to unemployed people in their own parts of the country. The new programme for adult unemployed people, to be delivered by the TECs and the LECs, is called "training for work". It will begin in April 1993. Training for work is a flexible and wide-ranging programme which will offer either skills training or temporary work opportunities. It will also offer shorter work preparation courses for those who need to brush up their existing skills to secure a job.

Training for work brings together two existing programmes: employment training and employment action. Those programmes have been effective in helping people become better able to move into permanent employment. The new unified programme will enable help to be provided which is aimed at meeting each person's individual needs. The focus of the programme is firmly on helping long-term unemployed people to get back to work. The precise mix of opportunities in each area will be for the TECs to decide on the basis of the needs and features of their local job market. I hope that training for work

[Mr. McLoughlin]

goes some way towards what my hon. Friends have urged us to do and will provide flexibility for the training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Trend: Under the new scheme, will the community work aspects be a continuation of the old programmes or will they be a development from them?

Mr. McLoughlin: The whole idea of training for work is to introduce flexibility so that TECs can best decide what is needed in their local areas. I hope that the scheme will go some way towards doing what my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North has asked us to [illegible] in line with a number of other issues that I will not have time to outline. I know that some of my hon. Friends still wish to speak in the debate and I realise that they have remained in the Chamber for most of this morning.

There is much that I could say in this debate, but I am conscious that others wish to make a contribution. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North for the constructive way in which he has approached the subject and for his having taken a rare opportunity as a Back-Bench Member to have a full morning's debate on an idea which is not new to him. He has consistently followed his idea for many years as a Member of the House. I have outlined some of the things that we have managed to do and some of the new schemes that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced last week. I hope that I have shown that we have gone some way towards the proposals of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North. We shall consider the points that he made about his own area.

I thank all my hon. Friends who have taken part in the debate, which has shown the importance that they attach to the subject, and the importance that my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North attaches to workfare and to the problems faced by the unemployed. Nobody underestimates those problems. The Government certainly do not.

2.18 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I echo the Minister's words. I have worked for many years with my former Member of Parliament, my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell), on his scheme so I know the details of it very well. I pay tribute to the way in which my hon. Friend has managed to move from his original paper in the early 1970s, "Why Not Work?", which centred on the disincentive to move from benefits, to today's changed circumstances of trying genuinely to find a solution to the tragic problem of unemployment.

My second reason for being here is that I care desperately for all those who are unemployed in Cirencester and Tewkesbury. Any new look at the problem must be worth considering. Many hon. Members have spoken in that vein.

The *Financial Times* of 2 March 1988 contained an article by Philip Bassett about the unemployment queue in America. Lest anyone should think that, by and large, the unemployed do not want to work, let me draw to the attention of the House the fact that one of those mentioned said—it is a particularly poignant quote:

"I don't much mind what I do; I just want to work."

The vast majority of unemployed people who are unemployed through no fault of their own just want to work. I therefore pay tribute to the scheme on which my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North has been working for so many years.

What can we do about the unemployment problem? Contrary to what several Opposition Members seem to think, the only real long-term solution is for the economy to perform and grow. That is the only way in which sustainable long-term employment will be provided. I therefore pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor who, in his autumn statement, provided mechanisms for investment to continue. That will ultimately provide jobs.

I also pay credit to my right hon. Friend for a measure in his Budget that will help the unemployed considerably. I referred earlier to the paper "Why Not Work?" produced by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North, and to the need to dispense with the dependency culture. The new 20 per cent. tax band will ease people out of benefit into work by enabling them to keep more of their hard-earned income.

Not only the present Chancellor but his predecessor, Lord Lawson, have also effectively taken people out of the tax net altogether. People who are starting work for the first time and those returning to work having been unemployed, who generally take low-paid jobs, can keep all the money that they earn. That is especially important.

What benefits would accrue to the country if we introduced the scheme that my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North proposes? To my mind, the scheme would have to pass three tests. First, would the unemployed themselves want it? I hope that, by quoting the *Financial Times* article, I have shown that they would. The author of that article carried out a survey among unemployed people using that benefit office in America, where a workfare scheme was available, and found that 89 per cent. wanted a job to do. There is no question but that the scheme would pass the first of my tests.

Lady Olga Maitland: I am sorry to intervene when time is so precious, but does my hon. Friend agree that the American-style workfare programme has in many cases not been a great success because it has been coercive and compulsory, whereas my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North proposes that his scheme should be voluntary?

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I wholly agree with my hon. Friend, but she will know that many different kinds of workfare scheme are available in the different states of America, as well as those in Switzerland and Sweden about which we have heard today, and that not all of them are compulsory.

The second of the tests is cost—a subject to which the Minister has referred. There is little doubt that a workfare scheme would cost more than what is now paid in unemployment benefit, but surely that cost to the nation would be, to quote a famous phrase,

"a price well worth paying"

because the scheme would have many spin-off benefits.

My third test concerns what the country would get from the extra cost involved. There are a number of benefits to be had from the introduction of such a scheme, the most important of which is that it would encourage the work ethic about which we have heard so much this morning. It would encourage people to go out to do a job, even if only for part of the day or for so many days a week. I have come across unemployed people in my constituency who are so demoralised that they live from Thursday to Thursday because that is the day on which they draw their benefit. That cannot be good for people. It would surely be far better to find them something to do. Hon. Members have listed many jobs that could be done under such a scheme. Existing jobs would not be taken away because so many new jobs would be created under the scheme.

Mr. Deva: Is my hon. Friend aware that recent research by Buckingham university's education research centre shows that to put a workfare scheme into place in Britain would cost about £850 million? I have enormous sympathy with the objectives of workfare, but, given that sort of expenditure and the controls required to put it in place, does my hon. Friend think that the money could be better used to increase training provision? Should not people be trained to meet the challenges of tomorrow, especially from the Pacific rim and Europe, in high technology jobs?

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I do not entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Although training is one part of the problem, it is no use training people for jobs that may never exist. With the best will in the world, there will never be enough training places for everybody—we have heard of some of the problems today. Indeed, I envisage that training would be part of a workfare system and obviously those on training schemes would not be expected to do a workfare job. I agree that training is vital, especially in today's dynamic and highly technical world. We need not only state training schemes but an extension of the many private schemes that have increasingly been set up during the past 13 years.

Lady Olga Maitland: The impression has been given that the costs of the workfare scheme would be borne by the Government or a Government agency. Perhaps an unemployed person's benefits should go to the employer. That would take that person off the Government agency list and make him a more attractive proposition for an employer. It would get that person into work.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Indeed, such schemes were introduced under the youth training scheme and employment training. However, we must be careful, because that sort of approach could lead to a cheap labour scheme. That is why I favour a separate workfare scheme such as that proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North.

It is surprising that the benefits of people working rather than being unemployed have not been fully explained this morning. A large number of benefits would come from workfare. They may not always be directly tangible, but I am sure that the number of intangible benefits will be enormous. For example, family life would be preserved. I have already referred to the demoralising aspects of not having a job. If people could be found even part-time work under the scheme, that would enhance their quality of life and their expectations and would help families to stick together through what otherwise might be an even more difficult time. I hope that it would only be a short time in most cases.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most important aspects of the scheme is the enormous number of community projects that could be undertaken? My hon. Friend rightly said that so many people want to work, and there is so much work that needs to be done. Unemployment in the inner-town wards of Blackpool, South is unfortunately high, but I know that many people are desperate to work and that there are many jobs that desperately need doing.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: My hon. Friend makes an important point. Many jobs that should be done are not being done—for example, visiting old people, tidying up at libraries and so on. Workfare would not take away existing jobs; it would be supplemental.

Mr. Deva: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way yet again. There is one aspect of the workfare scheme on which I should like some direction, and I know that my hon. Friend is well versed on the matter so I look to him for guidance. One would hope that as the economy picked up and we moved out of the recession people who were on the workfare scheme would go back into proper and more skilled jobs. If people had been doing jobs such as cleaning and library work the gap between the level of skill required in the marketplace and their skills would have increased while they were doing workfare. How would the transfer be made?

Mr. Clifton-Brown: My hon. Friend makes an important point. One would have to ensure that training played a continuous part in workfare——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Points of Order

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I draw your attention to page 614 of "Erskine May". The second paragraph says:

> "As a general rule a motion for the nomination of a select committee is tabled and moved by a member of the Government".

A Select Committee on Procedure has not been nominated. Following today's debate, I should have thought that there was a good case for allowing, say, an hour for the second motion on the Order Paper, such as my motion today on Derek Bentley. That would invalidate the argument which people outside might make that the Government Whips had deliberately procrastinated in the first debate to exclude the second debate.

In the ordinary course of events, complaints of this nature can be channelled properly to the Select Committee on Procedure. But that Committee is not yet established so that channel of potential reform is not available to Members. The Government ought to be encouraged to set up the Select Committees. It would be helpful if you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, could bring your influence to bear on them to that end.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It comes ill from the hon. Gentleman to complain because Opposition Members spoke this morning for 153 minutes in a 300-minute debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I listened carefully to the point of order of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer)—*[Interruption.]* Order.

Mr. Cryer: I am listening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I listened attentively to his point of order. I imagine that when a Select Committee on Procedure is established, he will raise the matter with it in the normal way.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that it is a new point of order.

Mr. Banks: It is necessary to make it, Sir. You must be the judge——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is it a new point of order or not?

Mr. Banks: Yes. The new point of order is that not everyone necessarily understands the way in which the usual channels operate. Unfortunately, I am one of those who does not. Would it be fair to say that if agreement is reached between the two Front Benches about the timing of any debate, of course that can be implemented. If the two Front Benches failed to make an agreement so that we could reach the second motion, it is hardly the fault of anyone that we do not arrive at the second motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair knows nothing about the usual channels.

Private Members' Bills

SECRET SOCIETIES (DECLARATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

SPORTING EVENTS (CONTROL OF ALCOHOL ETC.) (AMENDMENT) BILL *[LORDS]*

Bill read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Cox.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I have to remind the House that this is an unusual procedure which the occupants of the Chair have frequently deprecated.

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 75 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

EUROPEAN UNION (PUBLIC INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 27 November.

MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Ordered,

That Mr. Jimmy Boyce, Mr. Bob Cryer, Mr. Bob Dunn, Ms. Angela Eagle, Dame Peggy Fenner, Mr. Dudley Fishburn, Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes, Mr. Peter Griffiths, Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, Mr. Terry Lewis, Mr. Bill Michie and Mr. Peter Viggers be members of the Select Committee on Members' Interests.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

EUROPEAN STANDING COMMITTEES

Ordered,

That European Community Documents Nos. 4829/92, relating to Community spending and revenue to 1997, 5201/92, relating to Community finances to 1997, 5202/92, relating to the system of Community own resources, 5203/92, relating to renewal of the inter-institutional agreement on budgetary discipline, 8567/92, relating to the Cohesion Fund, 6569/92 relating to the European Court of Auditors' Opinion No. 2/92, COM (92)140, relating to the Preliminary Draft Budget for 1993, 7933/92, relating to the letter of amendment No. 1 to the Preliminary Draft Budget for 1993, 8209/92, relating to the Draft Budget for 1993, SEC(92) 1412, relating to the UK abatement, the European Court of Auditors' Annual Report for 1990 with the Institutions' Replies and SEC(92) 1990, relating to the principle of subsidiarity, shall not stand referred to European Standing Committee B.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 25th November, the Speaker shall put the Question or Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Tony Newton relating to Members' salaries, unless they have previously been disposed of, at seven o'clock or three hours after they have been entered upon, whichever is the later.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

CAR TAX (ABOLITION)BILL

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding the practice of the House as to the intervals between stages of Bills brought in upon Ways and Means Resolutions, more than one stage of the Car Tax (Abolition) Bill may be taken at any sitting of the House.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

CAR TAX (ABOLITION) BILL

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Car Tax (Abolition) Bill, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

2.36 pm

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It will not have escaped your notice that the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight)—on behalf of the Government who committed us to open government—just vetoed my harmless Secret Societies (Declaration) Bill, which was designed to extend the frontiers of open government. I hope that when a Minister next comes before the House and talks about open government, you will reserve a suitable note of scepticism.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for the Chair?

Mr. Mullin: I am attempting to draw inconsistency to your attention.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Member challenging inconsistency in the Chair?

Mr. Mullin: Not at all Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order, as the hon. Member knows full well.

Overhead Power Lines

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

2.37 pm

Mr. William Hague (Richmond, Yorks): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise a subject of great importance to my constituents and to many people who are interested in environmental matters and the future of the electricity industry. The same subject was raised a few days ago in another place by my noble Friend Lord Crathorne.

I am also grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy who is responsible for energy matters, for being here in person to reply to my remarks even though he could have asked a more junior Minister to be here instead. My hon. Friend is already familiar with many of my concerns and complaints about the manner in which permission can be granted for the construction of overhead power lines. He was good enough to invite me and my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) to his Department in July to discuss the matter. He knows that while my concern is general and covers the national approach to the subject, it arises from the plans of the National Grid Company to erect 50 miles of overhead power lines across Cleveland and North Yorkshire, largely across my constituency.

I am pleased that the Government ordered a public inquiry into the applications to build the power lines, as that is what I and other colleagues asked for. That inquiry is now over. The National Grid Company has presented its case, but it has had to face a formidable array of arguments from North Yorkshire county council, other local authorities, and the extremely well-informed pressure group, Revolt. My hon. Friends the Members for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) and for Ryedale and I have sent our evidence to the inquiry in support of the arguments of those organisations that the applications are not necessary in the first place, have not been based on an adequate assessment of the alternatives and have not sufficiently taken into account the inevitable impact on the local environment.

My hon. Friend the Minister will no doubt receive the report of the inquiry in due course and it will make many nights of good bed-time reading. It will come as no surprise to me that my hon. Friend will be unable to comment, in advance of receiving that report, on the merits of the particular applications by the National Grid Company. It will come as no surprise to him, however, that I believe that they should be refused outright.

It is important for my hon. Friend to know that the strong feelings shown by me and my constituents on this matter do not arise from simple, uniformed Nimbyism. What we have seen of the procedures for deciding where power lines and power stations should be located, and what we have seen of the policies and practices of the National Grid Company, have led us to conclude that the conditions under which the Secretary of State can grant permission for overhead power lines need to be changed in some respects, interpreted more strictly in others, and made more specific.

One of the deeply unsatisfactory aspects of the local case to which I have referred is that although the construction of the new Enron gas-fired power station at Wilton has been cited as the reason for the power lines, no thought was given to the matter when planning permission was granted for the power station itself. That point has been taken by the Council for the Protection of Rural England and I know that its representatives visited the DTI last week to discuss that matter.

I believe that CPRE is right to argue that we should amend Electricity and Pipeline Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1989. Surely those regulations should include explicit reference to the fact that environmental statements accompanying applications for consent to build power stations under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 should include an assessment of the likely impact of associated developments, including power transmission lines. It is not good enough to give approval for a large new power station and to tell people in nearby areas only afterwards that huge power lines must be erected through their community as a direct consequence. That clear lesson can be drawn from what has happened in Cleveland and North Yorkshire and I hope that my hon. Friend can accept it.

The question of planning procedures is, however, only the first of many issues that this case has thrown up—many of them are more far reaching and fundamental. It is too late now for any amendment to the 1989 regulations to affect the North Yorkshire case. Instead, I hope that my hon. Friend will make full use of his powers under section 37 of the 1989 Act and reject applications to build power lines or impose on them, according to the words of the Act,

"such conditions . . . as appear to the Secretary of State to be appropriate".

If he were to do so, he could force the National Grid Company to give greater weight to concerns about the environment and health. He could encourage the development of new technology and avoid the creation of huge inefficiencies, overcapacity and waste in the electricity distribution system. I should like to consider those three elements in turn.

First, on the environment and health, let us be in no doubt that 50 miles of pylons—it is proposed that they should run largely alongside a similar, smaller existing line, which will thereby create a corridor of wire under which some people will have to live, and they would cross an outstanding rural landscape—represent substantial visual pollution. In the past few years, the House has passed laws to reduce lead in the atmosphere, phase out CFCs, take the sulphur out of power station emissions, clean up rivers, and so on. We should not be content to build huge overhead power lines across our countryside, with little thought about how we could avoid that. The environmental standards of the nation have changed since the National Grid Company last built power lines on such a scale.

Let us be in no doubt that the evidence on the health implications of such lines, while still inconclusive, is steadily building up to confirm a link between high-voltage power lines and childhood leukaemia. Is my hon. Friend aware that the Swedish National Board for Industrial and Technological Development is now convinced that radiation from power lines can cause leukaemia and that the board is now drawing up options to deal with that for the Swedish Government to consider? Within a few years, the National Grid Company and the Government may bitterly regret the construction of new overhead power lines.

The Minister may say that it is all most unfortunate, but that there is no alternative. That is wrong. In respect of North Yorkshire, the inquiry has been shown a number

[Mr. William Hague]

of alternative arrangements which would achieve a similar reinforcement of the security of the national grid. My hon. Friend will read about them in the inquiry report, so I shall not delay the House today by detailing them. For today, suffice it to say that the case for the National Grid Company's applications becomes compelling only if one assumes that further gas-fired power stations will be built on Teesside in future, stations for which consent has not yet been given and which I hope will never be given.

Even if there were a compelling need, the Department of Trade and Industry should use its powers under the Electricity Act 1989 to push the NGC towards the development of new and more acceptable technology. The old Central Electricity Generating Board described in a 1976 report the possibility of developing new superconducting cables which would have far greater capacity than conventional power lines, would neutralise magnetic fields, thereby obviating the health hazards, and would greatly reduce transmission losses.

In 1976, the only known coolant for such cable was helium. Since the introduction of new, high-temperature superconductors, efficent transmission with much cheaper and more readily available hydrogen and nitrogen coolants is now feasible. That was all set out by the CEGB 16 years ago; yet since then the National Grid Company has done little or nothing to develop such technology.

If the company argues that the nation requires for the future an underground superconducting spine running down the country connecting Scotland with the south of England, that would be applauded by us all. It can expect no support, by contrast, for sleep walking into the future proposing time-honoured techniques on a take-it-or-leave-it basis while rejecting all sorts of better technologies as too expensive. A similar myopic approach in the oil or gas industries would have ruined our environment long ago. The Minister would do an enormous service for the nation if he shook the National Grid Company from its complacency by refusing to give consents for overhead lines until or unless a more imaginative and forward-looking attitude is taken to the development of new technology.

The Minister should use his powers to give the National Grid Company a good kick. Its behaviour is symptomatic of a business which faces no competitive pressures and can tell anyone who argues with it that there is no alternative to whatever it proposes. Until a meeting arranged by a local pressure group in North Yorkshire, the National Grid Company had no idea that the Department of Transport found no problem in principle with underground electric cables by the side of trunk roads. Duties should be placed on it by the Government to promote new technology to tackle environmental and health issues and to maintain a transmission grid that is efficient and economical, not just technically secure according to licence standards.

I referred earlier to the area of waste, inefficiency and overcapacity in the provision of the nation's electricity and the system for transmitting it. The overhead lines project in North Yorkshire has been costed at about £200 million. That cost must ultimately be passed on to the electricity consumer. Yet its purpose allegedly is to ensure the connection of a new power station, or perhaps power stations, to the grid at a time when generation capacity in the United Kingdom is 32 per cent. in excess of peak winter demand. According to the National Grid Company's own seven-year statement, that surplus capacity will increase to 57 per cent. by 1997.

To any outside observer, that would seem strange. Even stranger, however, is the fact that the bulk of extra generation is to be built in areas remote from the centres of demand, resulting in the proliferation elsewhere in the country of power lines and towers, heavy and expensive transmission losses, expensive reactive compensation plant and a reduction in the stability and security of the whole electricity transmission system. How can there be reported plans to build four or five gas-power stations on Teesside when the excess demand for power is in the south of England? The north-east is already an exporter of electricity.

I know of no energy expert in the country who would not argue that if gas must be used for the large-scale generation of electricity—we have already debated that argument and will debate it on other occasions—it would be far more energy efficient to pipe it as gas near to the centres of demand before turning it into electricity. Transmission losses in the piping of gas are minimal, but when electricity is transmitted by overhead power lines from the north to the south of the country, about 10 per cent. of the power is lost. That is a serious waste of the nation's natural resources and adds to the huge cost of constructing the power lines in the first place. There is little doubt that electricity prices would be higher than necessary as a result.

We now have the ridiculous situation where the National Grid Company, through no fault of its own, feels compelled to construct an electricity transmission network to cater not for the demand for electricity but for a grossly excessive generating capacity. Just as bad, it must plan to cater for that capacity despite the fact that, by any judgment of economics or energy efficiency, the capacity is being provided in the wrong place.

There is little point in making fine-sounding statements in Rio about energy use or encouraging people to insulate their homes if we then allow the construction of a transmission network which leads to unnecessary waste and transmission losses on a considerable scale. The solution lies not just in a reform of the electricity market, which may be a subject for the review which my hon. Friend the Minister is conducting, but in a more competitive transmission system for gas. British Gas is the sole owner of the national gas pipe grid. It seems to be charging excessive amounts for gas transmission, thereby encouraging the generation of gas-fired electricity near the onshore terminals rather than near the demand for electricity.

I realise that I have raised a wide range of issues, but they are all interlocking and crucial to consider before my hon. Friend and his colleagues consider whether to grant consent for large numbers of new overhead power lines. My opposition to the power lines proposed for North Yorkshire is founded not on Nimbyism, but on the well-founded view that the way we have structured our electricity and gas transmission systems will lead to waste and inefficiency, compounded by an unimaginative use of technology with serious consequences for the environment and possibly for the nation's health.

My hon. Friend the Minister should use his powers to withhold consent for new overhead power lines and new gas-fired power stations until those vital issues have been resolved. If and when they are resolved, he may find that many potential future applications to build new overhead power lines will become unnecessary. Where they turn out to be unnecessary, he should insist on proper consideration of all alternatives and on the strictest possible approach to environmental and health matters. Although I do not expect him to be able to give me instant satisfaction or answers to every point that I have raised, I hope that he will show that he is now moving in the right direction.

2.52 pm

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) not only on succeeding in raising this matter on the Adjournment but on doing so for the second time, which is rare in the House. I also congratulate him on varying his argument from the first time that he raised the subject. As he kindly said, I was able to see him shortly after I took up my present responsibilities, when he put the case that he has made today on behalf of his constituents extremely powerfully in my office at the Department of Trade and Industry.

As my hon. Friend expected, I cannot respond to the points that relate to the public inquiry, which are of considerable importance to him, his constituents and the Government. As he rightly said, when the inquiry inspectors have completed their investigation, they will report to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade with their findings and recommendations. I look forward to considering the arguments and what has been said. Given the nature of the inquiry, I must limit my remarks today to the general issues which my hon. Friend has raised and not take up the particular issues that have been raised in the public inquiry.

My hon. Friend talked about gas transmission charges. I am sure that he is aware that the entire function of British Gas—the way in which it and its different businesses operate—is currently the subject of an inquiry before the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I am sure that, among other things, the commission will be taking into account the sort of issues that my hon. Friends have raised.

In any debate about overhead supply lines, account has to be taken of the statutory responsibilities of the companies concerned. The National Grid Company which is responsible for the 275kv and 400kv transmission lines, has clear obligations under the Electricity Act 1989, through its transmission licence, to offer terms within 90 days for any prospective new connections to the grid. If the terms are accepted, the NGC must provide, under the law, the link in to its system. In addition, the NGC must carry out any necessary extension or reinforcement work resulting from that connection by the power station. The regional electricity companies, which are responsible for the lower voltage lines, also have a statutory duty to connect to their network and to give a supply of electricity to any premises where the owner or occupier of those premises has made a request for such a supply.

All proposed overhead lines in England and Wales, apart from those to supply individual properties and a few other minor developments, require the consent under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989, and of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade in his capacity as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. All applications for consent are fully and carefully considered by my Department.

The number of applications made for overhead line consent in England and Wales is now—this may surprise the House—around 1,500 a year. Most of the applications are fairly short lines, typically just a few hundred metres or less. Applications are often occasioned by the need to move existing lines to enable developments to take place. In consequence many newly installed lines once commissioned, are followed by the dismantling of existing lines, giving rise to little or no net increase in overhead line length. In fact quite often, through improved routing, and sometimes also partial undergrounding, companies are able to achieve worthwhile net reductions in the lengths of overhead lines in the areas concerned.

My hon. Friend raised the specific question of Teesside Power. He referred to it as Enron. The Electricity and Pipelines (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1990 to which he also referred, implement the relevant European Community directive, and provide that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade shall not grant consent for a power station under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 unless he has first taken environmental information into consideration. This environmental information is the environmental statement submitted by the applicant, together with any representations made about the likely effects of the development. While Teesside Power's environmental statement referred to the need for a link with, and uprating of, the grid, these matters are the responsibility of the NGC and not Teesside Power. Consequently, and not surprisingly, Teesside Power could not be expected to provide detailed information on them.

It should be appreciated—I think that my hon. Friend hinted at it—that the NGC's programme of strengthening the grid in the north is not solely to meet the needs of Teesside power station; it also has to meet other needs, such as the upgrading of the Anglo-Scottish interconnector.

Of course, an overhead line may need to be able to cover not just one power station project but several. It makes no sense to require all projects that would involve an overhead line to come forward at precisely the same time. That is a recipe for inaction. A better way is to approve a power station and then consider overhead lines on their merits, if they are necessary. That does not preclude the turning down of an overhead line. There is always the option of re-routing or laying it underground, and of course the power station would not be able to proceed unless a satisfactory overhead or underground route for the connecting power line could be identified.

Mr. Hague: Is there any reason why the company making the application, Teesside Power in this case, could not ask the National Grid Company what the implications for it would be if a power station were constructed? That could then be taken into account in the environmental assessment. That seems simple, easy and practical.

Mr. Eggar: As I understand it, Teesside Power referred to the need for a strengthening of the grid, but it could not possibly give the sort of information that would be necessary for integration. It would be extremely difficult if all power generation projects were required to follow through the consequences of any affirmative decisions that

[Mr. Eggar]

were granted, right the way through to any changes that might occur in the national grid. This is a complex matter and there are always compensating factors to be considered. We are not often dealing with only one project leading to one defined and dedicated line.

The EC environmental assessment directive requires an environmental statement to be prepared as part of overhead line applications that are considered likely to result in significant effects on their surroundings. The National Grid Company will provide an environmental statement for all its major new overhead line proposals. The United Kingdom's Electricity and Pipelines (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1990 also enable my right hon. Friend to call for such a statement with any other application, including those for lower voltage lines from the regional electricity companies, if he considers that they will have a significant impact on the environment. All overhead line applications at 132,000 volts and above must be advertised, as must the existence of an environmental statement, when one has been produced. A period of four weeks following the last advertisement for a project is allowed for representations to be made to my right hon. Friend.

The Government have an open mind about any possible health risks posed by overhead lines. Allegations of cancer resulting from overhead lines are unproven, despite continuing studies in a number of countries, including the United Kingdom. The incidence of childhood leukaemias is small and it is difficult to establish any correlation between that incidence and overhead lines. Measurements of electromagnetism are in any event similar at foot level from underground cables to those at head level from overhead lines.

In March this year, a review carried out by an advisory group headed by Sir Richard Doll, on behalf of the National Radiological Protection Board, concluded that there was no firm evidence of a risk of cancer or leukaemia from electricity supplies or ordinary domestic electrical appliances.

More recently, as my hon. Friend said, two reports have appeared from Sweden on this subject and those reports are interesting additions to the many studies that were considered in Sir Richard Doll's report. The Swedish reports have been referred to Sir Richard Doll's advisory group and we now await its assessment of the new data.

My hon. Friend made a number of references to the National Grid Company's approach to new technology. He is aware of the technical issues relating to undergrounding, the costs of which are many times those of overhead lines.

Superconductivity, to which my hon. Friend also referred, is still—despite the CEGB's report of 16 years ago—an emerging technology, and requires further development before it can be commercially exploited by the NGC or others. The most promising area of commerical exploitation of superconductivity is submarrine propulsion—but even that is very much in its infancy.

The Government are committed, under schedule 9 to the Electricity Act 1989, to the preservation of the environment, which is a requirement of that schedule. Under that legislation, promoters of all overhead lines must take full account of the need to preserve beauty and to conserve flora and fauna when formulating their proposals. Promoters have a duty to do all that they reasonably can, subject always to their statutory duty to supply, to mitigate any effect that their proposals would have on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any flora, fauna, features of special interest, buildings or objects.

Whenever my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State considers any overhead line applications, he is required to take account of the environmental implications and the extent to which the applicant for consent has complied with his duty under schedule 9 to the 1989 Act.

I have taken careful note of my hon. Friend's concerns, but the procedures that I outlined provide a satisfactory and appropriate basis for the consideration of applications for overhead line consent and ensure that such considerations take account of environmental effects.

My hon. Friend is no doubt awaiting with considerable interest the inspector's recommendations and my right hon. Friend's decision. I assure my hon. Friend that his remarks in the House today and on previous occasions, as well as his comments to me in meetings, will be carefully weighed when I consider matters in the wider context. I am sure that my hon. Friend has served his constituents extremely well, both this afternoon and previously.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at six minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 23 November 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Single European Market

1. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made during the United Kingdom's presidency of the EC Council on improving transport infrastructure in order to maximise the benefits to be gained from the single European market; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor): At its meeting on 26 October, the European Community Transport Council under the United Kingdom presidency reached provisional agreement, subject to the agreement of the European Parliament, to extend the regulation on EC transport infrastructure for a further two years. Investment in road and rail infrastructure is now at record levels in Britain and will assist British business in making the most of the single European market.

Mr. Salmond: Given that the geographical limit of the Government's rail policy seems to be docklands and of their road policy the M25, what provision has been made to extend transport links for the single market for the world beyond Watford Gap? If it is appropriate to spend £1,700 million to extend the Jubilee line to nowhere in particular and £300 million to build 1 mile of motorway in Limehouse, why is it not appropriate to spend £80 million on electrifying the railway line from Edinburgh to Aberdeen, the oil capital of Europe and from where most of the funds that the Government have squandered over the past 10 years have come?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman is being astonishingly and misleadingly selective, and he knows it. He knows that he is talking arrant nonsense. He is well aware that there is a substantial road-building programme from the channel ports all the way to Aberdeen, which will greatly assist Scottish businesses. I was in Aberdeen recently for a meeting and the chairman complained that there were still 20 miles of single carriageway road between Aberdeen and Paris. That shows the degree to which there are already motorways and dual-carriageway roads. The hon. Gentleman is aware of what is being done on what soon will be the M74, he knows of the Moss End terminal and he should know that the M25 is probably the greatest bottleneck to the Community for Scottish businesses. He is talking total nonsense.

Mr. Adley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that when it comes to infrastructure on both sides of the channel, actions speak louder than words? If the Government, for entirely respectable reasons, decide that they must protect and restore the national heritage after the fire at Windsor, could they not use the same approach to improve our rail infrastructure? Will he study the Development (Loan Guarantees and Grants) Act 1929 to ascertain whether that might be appropriate in the current circumstances?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend must know that we are expecting British Rail to have record levels of capital investment this year and for the next three years. They will be well above the levels of the 1970s and 1980s. In real terms, they will be at twice the level of those for most years. There is a substantial investment programme in British Rail, including one for the channel tunnel, but funds cannot be unlimited. We must have a mind to other spending claims as well as a mind to the overall level of Government spending. The fact that capital investment is at record levels shows the priority that we are giving to British Rail.

Mr. Martlew: Is the Secretary of State aware that unless £800 million is spent on the west coast rail line to upgrade it to the standard of the east coast line, my constituents —indeed, all those living in western Britain—will not be able to benefit from the single market?

Mr. MacGregor: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman acknowledges the substantial sums that are already being spent on the east coast line. Some improvement to the infrastructure of the west coast line is taking place now. Falling revenues have caused British Rail to reconsider its overall plans for the moment.

Mr. Horam: Is there any possibility of European funds being used for the channel tunnel rail link?

Mr. MacGregor: Some European funds are already being used for studies on the rail link. It is for British Rail to put forward proposals for next year. Fundamentally, we need to study the overall financing of the high-speed channel tunnel rail link after I have received Union Railways' recommendations for a precise line. We are publishing the options and can then consider the financing.

Channel Tunnel

2. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his proposals to upgrade rail links from south Wales to the channel tunnel.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): It is for British Rail to bring forward proposals to upgrade the rail network. For channel tunnel services, BR intends to utilise the existing freight terminal at Cardiff for freight and to provide a night time passenger service from Swansea to Paris and Brussels. Passengers from south Wales will also be able to connect with the inter-capital services from Waterloo.

Mr. Hain: The Minister must accept that that is wholly inadequate for the needs of south Wales. Does not the Government's abysmal failure to invest in a modern, direct link from south Wales to the channel tunnel—coupled with the 500 rail job losses resulting from the pit closure programme and with British Rail's job loss programme —mean that south Wales is in danger of being left with a skeleton service by international standards?

Mr. Freeman: On the hon. Gentleman's point about a direct link, I am sure that he appreciates that when the channel tunnel rail link is built between Folkestone and King's Cross, that will permit direct services via King's Cross on the Great Western line all the way to Cardiff and other parts of Wales. Therefore, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will support the channel tunnel rail link project when my right hon. Friend introduces proposals for consideration.

Mr. Rowe: My hon. Friend will know how grateful I am that our right hon. Friend has said that he will publish the proposals when he receives them from Union Railways. Will my hon. Friend confirm that he is fully seized of the anxieties of all local authorities in Kent that the channel tunnel rail link will suffer from the present plans to run it overground? Will he also confirm that he is not prepared to sacrifice the environment of Kent for a cut-price line, especially as the building of major capital projects is probably cheaper now than it has been at any time?

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend will publish a proposed route for consultation as quickly as possible after he has had the opportunity to study the proposals from Union Railways. He will not subscribe to a cut-price route that abandons all sensible environmental protection. I give my hon. Friend and his Kent colleagues the assurance that the Government will carefully consider the best environmental protection possible with regard to the rail link.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Does the Minister think that the proposal to upgrade the line south of London, which would avoid the need for services from south Wales and the west country to come into the capital, would be a much better alternative? Otherwise, will not London and, in particular, the area around King's Cross become the equivalent of Heathrow—where people can be stuck for hours because of the difficulties of air traffic finding a slot? Why do not the Government invest in the future rather than in short-term plans that will make London a nightmare for rail travellers?

Mr. Freeman: I believe that King's Cross is a sensible terminus for the new high-speed channel tunnel rail link. The capacity created will definitely be needed at some future stage. That choice of terminus will also benefit those who live in the north-east and north-west.

However, there is much to commend in the hon. Gentleman's specific point about routing to the south of London—presumably through Redhill and then on through Reading. I shall draw his comments and those of other hon. Members who have made the same point to the attention of the chairman of British Rail.

Speeding (Villages)

3. **Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to reduce excessive speed in villages.

Mr. MacGregor: I have today laid a draft order to remove the requirement that local traffic authorities obtain my consent before establishing a speed limit on any principal road. In addition, I shall shortly be issuing a circular advising local authorities, when setting a speed limit, to place greater stress on environmental considerations and less on the need to show that the road has a poor accident record.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: My right hon. Friend will be aware that many villages in my constituency are bisected by busy roads. Do such villages have to wait for someone to be killed or for a series of serious accidents to happen before action is taken to control excessive speed?

Mr. MacGregor: Many villages in my constituency are in a similar position. I have long been aware of the concern among villagers that it appears that they have to suffer serious road accidents before a speed limit can be allowed. I share that concern. I have changed the criteria so that that will no longer be the case.

Traffic (Town Centres)

4. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will visit mid-Staffordshire to assess the effect of traffic on town centres.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit mid-Staffordshire at present. But I shall be in the west midlands on 16 December listening to the views of all the local authorities on traffic problems in their areas.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my hon. Friend aware of the huge traffic build-up that occurs when travelling north and south on the A51 through Rugeley and Brereton? Is he aware of the even more desperate need of a bypass in Stone, which is an ancient and beautiful market town?

Mr. Carlisle: My hon. Friend has pressed clearly on me the need for a bypass in Stone. I well understand his argument. We shall make an announcement shortly on our backing for local authority schemes in the coming year. I can assure my hon. Friend that I shall listen carefully to the clear expression of his constituents' views.

I understand the need for a bypass in Rugeley. Our bypass programme is substantial. The Government have included 130 bypasses in the present programme, and there are dozens more bypasses in the local roads programme. So my hon. Friend speaks for many other constituents besides his own.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that the problems of mid-Staffordshire are replicated throughout much of the midlands and the north-west of England because people are switching from rail travel to roads as a result of the poor quality of service on the west coast main line? Is it not essential to get the new rolling stock for the west coast main line as quickly as possible? Would not investment in railways be much better than putting one or two extra bypasses here and there, because investment in the railways would help the whole country?

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman's question is far from the subject of this question. We have a balanced programme with a substantial investment in railways. The hon. Member would do well if he could press the claims of his constituents as well as my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) presses for his.

London Underground (Investment)

5. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what level of capital investment in London Underground he is expecting to authorise in the coming year.

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): The settlement reached will allow investment of about £1 billion in London Underground, including the Jubilee line extension in each of the next three years. Investment next year in London Underground will be higher in real terms than at any point in the 1970s or 1980s.

Mr. Carrington: Does my hon. Friend agree that London desperately needs new underground lines to relieve the congestion on London transport? The news in the autumn statement that the Jubilee line extension will go ahead, subject to private sector money becoming available, is good news. Will my hon. Friend confirm when he expects work to start on the Jubilee line extension?

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend is right that we need to continue extending the infrastructure of tube lines in London. We made it clear in the autumn statement that funds for the Jubilee line are reserved. My hon. Friend will appreciate that it is a matter for negotiation between the two parties to the partnership—the Government and the creditors of the former Olympia and York. Those discussions are proceeding. I hope that we shall be able to start construction in the near future, subject to those discussions.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Does the Minister recognise that, in addition to the capital problems that London Underground faces, it has a severe revenue problem, which is one of the reasons why 5,000 jobs are under threat? Although I welcome the fact that tomorrow's impending strike appears to have been called off, on the ground that there will be no compulsory redundancies, does the Minister accept that the loss of 5,000 jobs will have a serious effect not only on safety on London Underground but on passengers' perception of safety and may lead people back onto the roads?

Mr. Norris: I know that the hon. Gentleman has not been here long, but it might be a good idea if he knew what he was talking about before he started on a rant of that nature. The first thing to establish is that the reductions in jobs are a result of the progress in contracting out services, which produces better quality services for passengers. The basis of the company plan always was voluntary redundancy and more staff on stations, not fewer. In short, I reject everything that the hon. Gentleman says, with the one exception that I join him in expressing pleasure that both sides have seen the sense of continuing to implement the company plan, as they appear from the recent announcement to have done.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My hon. Friend will have heard the welcome on both sides of the House for the Jubilee line new investment. In what way can he and the House be satisfied that the remaining funds for London Transport will allow maintenance and re-investment in existing lines to continue so that there is no deterioration in track or trains?

Mr. Norris: May I direct my hon. Friend to the fact that investment in the next three years—excluding the Jubilee line and for that matter the crossrail project, the funds for which are also protected—will be about £½ billion greater than in the past three years. That should give any hon. Friend the reassurance that he seeks. We shall continue to improve the quality of the existing infrastructure, as well as adding to it through the significant projects that I have mentioned.

Mr. Keith Hill: Can the Minister confirm that, as a result of the autumn statement, the long planned modernisation of the Northern line will be delayed for at least a further three years? Does not that mean that travel conditions for my constituents in Clapham and Balham on the already atrocious misery line can only get worse?

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman must not be caught in one of those embarrassing political time warps. I suppose that he has read the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report. If he has, he will know that the MMC singled out the Northern line as one on which it had noted a significant improvement in the service.

Mr. Tracey: My hon. Friend has mentioned the MMC report, which says that £700 million per year is required for core funding of the London transport network—the underground and indeed, the bus services. Can my hon. Friend give the House an undertaking that that level of funding will continue to be provided alongside what he said about the Jubilee line and lines such as the Northern line?

Mr. Norris: The figure in the MMC report is London Transport's assessement of the cost of producing the decently modern metro service, to which the Government remain entirely committed. In this year's settlement, London Underground Limited will continue to tackle the backlog of under-investment which the report identifies. Clearly, it is for London Transport to determine the priorities for the investment at its disposal. I confirm to my hon. Friend that we remain entirely committed to the principle.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is it not a fact that in his autumn statement the Chancellor announced a 30 per cent. reduction in capital investment for London Underground, as compared with the figure that was announced in the autumn statement of 1991? The chairman of London Regional Transport says that the reduction will mean that the Northern line modernisation will not go ahead. It will mean the closure of Aldwych station and eventually the loss of 7,000 jobs in the supply industry. Is it not amazing that we have the most expensive underground system in Europe and that we have the angriest travellers, the angriest management and the angriest staff? That is a remarkable achievement, even by the Minister's standards.

Mr. Norris: If I have to pick something to answer out of all those points, I make the point that I understand the hon. Gentleman's disappointment at the level of the settlement, even as he expressed it. However, he will know that investment in the survey period will still be higher than in any year in the 1970s or 1980s. That represents a considerable investment measured in hundreds of millions of pounds—investment not merely to maintain the system in its present state but to improve it, and it excludes the commitment measured in billions to extending the system.

Car Commuting (Central London)

6. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest information he has on the daily car commuting journeys into central London and the equivalent for five years ago.

Mr. Norris: In 1991, the daily number of people entering central London by car during the morning peak was 155,000, down from 166,000 five years previously.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the Minister accept that no less than 17 per cent. of all commuter journeys in and out of central London are made by car, congestion and pollution are getting worse, and the danger to Londoners is growing worse as a consequence? Should not the Minister take steps to reduce further the level of car commuting in and out of central London and concentrate on reducing the cost of bus and train travel, so that this will be a cleaner, safter city in which to live?

Mr. Norris: The actual figure for commuting by car is something like 14 per cent., so I agree with the hon. Gentleman about that. I agree also that our policy should be to contain and, where possible, to reduce car commuting into central London. That is why we devoted substantial funds to improving our public transport network—not only the tube but buses. Bus priority measures include the pilot red route, which I hope the hon. Gentleman agrees has produced considerable benefits. However, I disagree with the hon. Gentleman to the extent that I do not believe that the answer is simply to slash fares. That is a disastrous policy, which would leave the taxpayer with a huge bill merely to cover operating costs —instead of investing resources in improving the system.

Mr. Dunn: Does my hon. Friend the Minister accept that for many people, the car is the only way of gaining access to central London? Will he promise to hold an inquiry in respect of the roadworks on the M20, A20, on two points on the A2 in my constituency, and at the Blackwall tunnel that are all being undertaken simultaneously—that is, at the same time? Will he hold an inquiry, so that we may achieve ease of access from north-west Kent into central London?

Mr. Norris: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is a former education Minister, for pointing out the precise nature of his question. Using grammar as simple as I can muster, I may tell him that I entirely—that is probably the wrong word—rather, wholly accept his comments about the necessity in some cases to use a private car. It is just a shame that some single-issue lobby groups do not appear to recognise the obvious truth of my hon. Friend's observation. As to the particular problems that he mentioned, I will undertake to bring them to the attention of the appropriate officials.

Mr. Harvey: Given the cautious welcome that the Secretary of State for Transport gave recently to proposals for road pricing, will the Minister give an undertaking that any revenue raised from any road pricing scheme will be used to provide an effective and affordable public transport alternative?

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman will note that—subject to your allowing it, Madam Speaker—my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will shortly be answering a question on that subject.

Rail Privatisation

7. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to ensure the continuation of British Rail's safety standards after privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: We are committed to ensuring that high safety standards are maintained. We have asked the Health and Safety Commission to arrange for a thorough study of the safety implications of our proposals and to make detailed recommendations.

Dr. Spink: Is my hon. Friend aware of the concern in south-east Essex following weekend press comment that the Fenchurch Street line may be subject to closure in the future for safety reasons? Will my hon. Friend comment on that, and guarantee that the £50 million made available to British Rail to invest new signalling on the Fenchurch Street line will be ring-fenced? Will my hon. Friend meet me at Benfleet station in December to discuss all those and many other problems on the Fenchurch Street line?

Mr. Freeman: The press speculation is entirely incorrect. I have spoken to the chairman of British Rail, who has confirmed that the investment in signalling on the line has been approved. British Rail is now negotiating with the contractor chosen to install the signalling to ensure that the best possible terms are included in the contract, but there is no doubt that the work will proceed.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Minister aware that British Rail has made it clear that it will be able to undertake only repairs as opposed to major renewal schemes? Is he prepared to state that the report that he is to receive will be published quickly so that the general public can assess the accuracy of his chaotic plans for privatisation?

Mr. Freeman: British Rail will have the capacity to invest about £1,000 million next year—which will include investment in safety work—following this year's higher figure, which includes preparations for the channel tunnel.

I can give the hon. Lady the assurance that she seeks: we shall publish the Health and Safety Commission report as soon as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received and considered it.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: We have heard that investment in British Rail is reaching a record level. Will my hon. Friend pass on to British Rail a message from the travelling public that they want the money to be spent on improvement in services? Will he tell British Rail that passengers are tired of hearing about British Rail's campaign for yet more funds and feel that, instead of holding out the begging bowl, BR should face up to the challenge offered by privatisation? Only then can the British public be given the real service that they deserve.

Mr. Freeman: The Government have always accepted that investment constitutes one contribution to the improvement of service. That improvement can be seen on the Chiltern and Northampton lines, and will shortly be seen on the Kent link line. On Wednesday, with several other hon. Members, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I will be helping to launch the Kent link service officially. It is to receive £700 million of investment. As for management effort, the citizens charter has made a difference on Network SouthEast. I agree with what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Minister now admit that the timetable for this unwanted and unworkable privatisation is in tatters? This country's financial settlement will lead British Rail to close stretches of track on safety grounds because it cannot meet the capital costs; on the other side of the channel, the French Government have just announced a grant of £4 billion for SNCF in the coming year—almost three times the British figure. Which Government have their priorities right? Should the priority be unwanted, unworkable privatisation, or decent investment in a safe public railway system?

Mr. Freeman: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new post. Sadly, however, he always seems to devalue the strength of his argument by exaggeration.

My right hon. Friend's introduction of a railways Bill clearly depends on the early passage of the paving Bill. I think that all hon. Members would accept that, as a courtesy to the House.

Red Routes

8. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he is making on the installation of red routes in Greater London.

Mr. Norris: Following the success of the pilot red route, I have designated 315 miles of priority routes. I have set objectives for the traffic director, who is now consulting on his network plan.

Mr. Jessel: Does my hon. Friend agree that the red routes—the brainchild of our former excellent colleague Sir Philip Goodhart—are not being introduced nearly fast enough? When the economy revives, London will face monster traffic jams. Will my hon. Friend ensure that the red routes on the A316 Great Chertsey road and the A4 Cromwell road are put in as quickly as possible, that being the main route into London from Twickenham?

Mr. Norris: As you will know, Madam Speaker, the Great Chertsey road is not only the road into London from Twickenham, but the road down which Bill Sikes took Oliver Twist en route to the blag in Chertsey. With that in mind, we shall of course deal with the matter at an early date. The traffic directors' draft network plan proposes implementation of that section during 1994.

I shall be delighted to pass on my hon. Friend's congratulations and good wishes to Sir Philip Goodhard, who did indeed articulate the original concept.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: Will the Minister reconsider his previous refusal to meet traders in my constituency who view the imposition of red routes in Finchley road as catastrophic? I quote from what they say: "If they are—"*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I should inform all hon. Members that during Question Time they are not allowed to quote.

Ms. Jackson: I apologise, Madam Speaker. The traders in my constituency believe that if red routes are imposed in the Finchley road there is no way that either they or their businesses can survive.

Mr. Norris: As one who has spent all his life in small business—I did not intend it that way; it just turned out that way—I take very seriously indeed the idea that businesses might have been adversely affected by the introduction of the priority routes. I have examined with the greatest care all the evidence that has been submitted to me in an effort to demonstrate that proposition. There is not the slightest evidence that priority routes have had any impact on businesses in the priority route areas. [HON. MEMBERS: "Nonsense."] I hear Opposition Members, from a sedentary position, claim otherwise. They are of a particular mind about red routes, but there is no evidence whatever for the proposition that they advance.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend agree that what we have heard is an example of the misinformation going around London about the red routes? Will he redouble his efforts to make sure that the truth about the results of the experiment comes out? Will he constantly point to the improvements through the reduction in pollution and rat running and also to the improvements in bus reliability and the number of legal parking spaces?

Mr. Norris: I agree with my hon. Friend. Certain political positions were taken up on the matter by Opposition Members. The obvious advantages of the scheme now being evident, they are in some difficulty. They continue to peddle alarming disinformation—for example, regarding the supposed disadvantages to shopkeepers in the area. The reality is exactly as my hon. Friend says: improved safety, improved bus reliability and the much better management of traffic in the area, to the benefit of all concerned.

Railway Manufacture

9. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take measures to ensure the continued possibility of the manufacture of railway locomotives and rolling stock in the United Kingdom.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and I have already taken such measures. In his autumn statement last week, my right hon. Friend announced, in addition to further substantial external financing limits for British Rail, new leasing arrangements which would allow British Rail to order an extra £150 million of new rolling stock in the run-up to privatisation.

Mr. Bayley: I welcome that change. The Government are welcome to plunder the Labour party manifesto for many more of our proposals. Will the Secretary of State ensure that British Rail has the revenue to pay the leasing costs? Will he specifically seek to obtain the Chancellor of the Exchequer's approval to reverse the £40 million cut in British Rail's finances announced in the autumn statement the week before last? Will he also seek to ensure that British Rail's budget is not cut to £1,500 million in the following year and to £1,080 million in 18 months' time? Is the Minister aware that when his colleague the Minister for Public Transport was in York on Thursday last week he described as "bunkum" my fear that job losses would result from the under-financing of British Rail—just hours before the British Railways Board announced 5,000 redundancies? Or was the Minister for Public Transport not aware that those redundancies were coming? Did the Secretary of State not tell him?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot answer all the hon. Gentleman's questions or I should be here for 20 minutes, but I will answer some of them. The announcement that

British Rail made last week on voluntary redundancies—a commercial decision that it reached—had nothing to do with privatisation or anything announced in the autumn statement. Like any company with falling revenue and rising costs, it took action to deal with that. The redundancies will be voluntary, and British Rail has an extremely good record for so managing staff reductions over many years. As a result of the autumn statement, compared with the 1970s and 1980s British Rail will be able to make record capital investment of about £1 billion over the next three years. Part of the graph of the external financing limit reflects the fact that, this year and in the forthcoming year, we shall peak on rolling stock for the channel tunnel.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Charters

30. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what new charters he intends to introduce.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave: Twenty-seven charters have been published so far. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor will publish his courts charter on Wednesday, and five more charters will be published in the next six months.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Chancellor think that our democracy would be improved by the introduction of a voters charter, which would create an elected second Chamber and put controls on national spending at election time? The Register of Members' Interests for the previous Parliament showed that 14 per cent. of Labour Members had outside jobs, whereas 85 per cent. of Conservative Members had two, three and sometimes four or five salaries from outside. As name tags are a main feature of the charters, would not a voters charter benefit from having a list that hon. Members could wear on their lapels showing the companies that are filling those Members' pockets with money, so that voters and the House would know whether Members were speaking on behalf of their constituents or on behalf of Megagreed plc?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am afraid that the question goes a little wider than my responsibilities, wide though they are. I used to be a supporter of an elected upper Chamber, and if we had one with a solid Conservative majority, which would be the result, we might have less difficulty in that Chamber. I hear what the hon. Gentleman says about the other matters and will report them to the Leader of the House, who is the proper recipient.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that what he said today about the courts charter will be most welcome news to members of the public, witnesses and practitioners who have had to cope with the vagaries of the system? Will he accept my word for it that the way in which listing hearings take place often shows scant regard for those who need to use the criminal courts and simply means that important items are decided according to the whim of court listing clerks?

Mr. Waldegrave: I believe that my noble and learned Friend's charter will be widely welcomed, but I must leave it to him to present it on Wednesday. Many of my constituents, perhaps like those of other hon. Members, have been disappointed by the way in which they have been treated by the courts whether as witnesses or as victims. The charter will be welcome in setting proper targets for the courts' treatment of people.

Ms. Mowlam: Does the Minister accept that the letters that I have received from constituents do not talk about the wonders of the charter, but show that they think that the Minister's handling of it has made it more of a farce than an asset to consumers? Does he accept that his credibility as a Minister is in doubt when he claims, as he has in the House, to have no departmental responsibility for monitoring specific charters or for providing information? Despite that, he still believes that he is the Minister for open government. Surely his failure to stand up to Ministers at the Foreign Office means that he is not up to the job.

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that the hon. Member may have strayed into the wrong debate. If, as an Opposition spokesman, she did not receive letters criticising the Government there would not be much point in her existence. The point of the central campaign is to get charters established throughout the public service. That has been done and I think that the hon. Member will find that the White Paper that we publish on Wednesday will catalogue formidable progress in the past year.

Research (South Dorset)

31. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much Government-funded research is carried out in South Dorset.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend's constituency of South Dorset has a wide range of important Government-funded research facilities. They are as follows: the Defence Research Agency at Southwell, Portland and Holton Heath; AEA Technology at Winfrith; MAFF Fish Diseases Laboratory at Weymouth; the NERC Institute of Freshwater Ecology at Wareham; and the NERC Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, also at Wareham.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my right hon. Friend for that excellent list and for the research that he has done. Will he reflect that although we have an immediate problem with the reduction of military research and the research at AEA Technology, Winfrith, we have a long-term opportunity for both Government and private industry to come down and use this excellent centre of research in my constituency?

Mr. Waldegrave: I strongly support what my hon. Friend says. The list shows the strength and depth of the scientific resources and the people involved in science and technology in his constituency. They constitute a major national asset.

Mr. Connarty: As the Government have decided today to abandon one source of energy research—fast breeder programme—what money is being given and will be given to examining the potential for energy from bio-fuels? Can the Minister give us some idea of the key areas in that field which his new Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology will be targeting?

Mr. Waldegrave: The ending of the long research programme on fast breeders has been judged broadly as being the right decision, sad though it is. I note the comments of Lord Marshall of Goring on that in the newspapers today. There is other work going on, and on the very matter that the hon. Gentleman mentioned—bio-mass—early work is being done and more will no doubt be done in the future.

Citizens Charter

33. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has had in European Council of Ministers meetings on application of the principles of the citizens charter.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): Although I have had a useful meeting with my French opposite number about the citizens charter, it has not yet been discussed in meetings of the European Council of Ministers. The citizens charter and the British approach to improving public services is, however, attracting interest in many European countries. We shall be describing some of our achievements at a Europe-wide conference on service for the citizen on 3 and [illegible] December. This is being organised in London as one of our presidency events.

Dr. Twinn: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the conference. Does he share my sense of disappointment that our partners in the European Commission have shown insufficient interest in producing the levels of accountability and efficiency in the public services that we are learning to demand in this country? Will he redouble his efforts to ensure that they do show it?

Mr. Jackson: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. One of the problems with the Commission is that it is not a direct provider of services to the public. The charter concept focuses on the direct provision of services to the public. We certainly intend to ensure that the Commission is kept fully abreast of these important developments.

Mr. Winnick: Do European Ministers not ask the obvious question: what use is the charter to so many people in this country who are losing their jobs and facing tremendous problems as unemployment continues to mount? Does not all this illustrate the fact that the charter is just a cosmetic exercise when seen by people who daily face the possibility of unemployment lasting months or perhaps years? They know that all this is just a mockery.

Mr. Jackson: That is not so. In other European countries there is a keen awareness of the dilemmas—of the need to control public expenditure while meeting rising expectations of quality in public services. Our approach is seen as interesting and innovative in that direction. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the recent campaign in the United States, where Governor Clinton campaigned on the slogan of re-inventing government, involving the use of techniques pioneered in this country.

We in Britain pioneered privatisation around the world; now we are taking the lead around the world in the improvement of public services.

35. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he intends to issue his White Paper on the progress of the citizens charter.

Mr. Waldegrave: On Wednesday.

Mr. Moate: Will my right hon. Friend put paid in the White Paper to any rumours that British Rail is seeking to reduce the standards and targets set in the passengers charter, particularly those in respect of punctuality, because it is said that British Rail is finding them too hard to achieve? Does he agree that my constituents and other travellers in Kent expect, as set out in the charter, the highest standards of punctuality, time keeping, regular services, and cleanliness—and the new rolling stock which was the subject of an earlier question of mine that was not reached?

Mr. Waldegrave: As my hon. Friend would expect, BR's targets for next year are under negotiation with the Department of Transport. The presumption behind the citizens charter programme is that standards should rise.

Mr. Kaufman: What use are the charters to our constituents when, if we, as hon. Members, raise with Ministers cases involving social security, employment, immigration and many other matters, instead of responding to us Ministers shuffle us off to unaccountable quangos, agencies and units? When will the Government end that farce and restore the proper accountability of Ministers to the House of Commons?

Mr. Waldegrave: The accountability of agencies, to which the right hon. Member has referred, is perfectly clear. Chief executives answer for management issues which have been delegated to them, but the line of accountability to the House remains absolutely, as it was, to Ministers. That is the truth.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. Friend agree that despite the sneers from the Opposition, the citizens charter is extremely popular? It gives people—council tenants, workers and hospital patients—their rights. There are no faceless people on the end of the telephone who will not give their names. This is what the people want and we are giving it to them. That is upsetting the Opposition no end.

Mr. Waldegrave: Not for the first time in the House, my hon. Friend speaks for the ordinary people of this country. The Opposition speak for the provider groups—the public sector trade unions and the old gangs who have not provided the service that we need.

Ms. Hoey: Will the White Paper take into account the effect of the pay freeze, which will mean a cut in the wages of most workers in the public sector? Does the Chancellor agree that staff morale, which his Department concedes is so crucial to the implementation of charters, is likely to continue to decline so long as unemployment continues to grow and the Government have no strategy for job creation?

Mr. Waldegrave: Restraint in public sector pay is exactly a strategy for job preservation and job creation elsewhere. What is more, the new earnings survey shows that in the past two years public sector pay settlements have run ahead of private sector pay settlements by a significant amount.

Mr. Kaufman: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In view of the Minister's reply, I give notice that I will raise the matter on the Adjournment of the House.

Madam Speaker: I do not believe that it was the substantive question of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) in any event, but I take his point.

Mr. Spring: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is extraordinary that the Opposition parties, who are supposed to be so committed to freedom of information, are so opposed to the publication of information about schools' performance which has been so widely welcomed by many parents around the country?

Mr. Waldegrave: I strongly agree with my hon. Friend. It was very noticeable that, of the nine leader articles that appeared the next day, only the *Daily Mirror* remained loyal to the Labour line. I do not understand how the Labour party can be against the provision of information to the users of a service, even though I now understand that the Leader of the Opposition was pushed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister into taking his line on the matter.

Patients Charter

37. **Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress is being made under (a) the patients charter and (b) other charters.

Mr. Robert Jackson: We have made considerable progress through legislation and the publication of the 27 follow-up charters referred to by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy. As he has said, we shall shortly publish a White Paper describing progress to date and our plans for future developments.

Ms. Eagle: I thank the Minister for that response. Does he agree that the patients charter is now regarded by most people as nothing short of a sick joke, given that waiting lists are rising again and cuts in expenditure on the health service mean that services are being denied and cut despite the glossy promises in what is now a sham and a pointless, useless waste of time?

Mr. Jackson: I think that the hon. Lady is ill informed in speaking of cuts in spending on the national health service. Half the people who are given appointments in the NHS are seen within five weeks, the two-year maximum waiting list has been imposed since April and the 18-month waiting list will be reduced for hip, knee and cataract operations from April 1993. Substantial progress is being made in the health service under the citizens charter.

Mr. Rowe: Will my right hon. Friend confirm my clear impression that the most valuable feature of what the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has published to date has been that management at all levels have come together to discuss and work out ways in which their services can be made much more responsive to the public and that, for example, recent publication of the charter by the Kent police has been very widely welcomed within Kent and is serving as a model for forces elsewhere?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. My right hon. Friend was able to visit the police in Kent very recently and see them at first hand. My hon. Friend is right to draw a connection between the charter and better management in public services. The charter is not simply a matter of pious aspirations, as the Opposition seem to think. It is rooted in the whole development of thinking about how to organise great organisations such as the public sector. What we are introducing across the board is management by contract. Management by contract implies management by standards, and management by standards expresses and underpins what has been done through the citizens charter.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: As the Royal Cornwall hospitals trust in Cornwall was the latest to announce ward cuts and closures as a result of financial difficulties, will the Minister confirm weekend press reports that he and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster are about to concede that the health charter and the rail charter failed to meet their targets?

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman is entirely misinformed. Our objective with the charters is that standards should be realistic, that they should be demanding and that they should be reviewed with a view to improving them and extending them to make them more demanding.

Citizens Charter

38. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will meet members of the Bolton Forum, when he next visits the north-west, to discuss the workings of the citizens' charter.

Mr. Waldegrave: As my hon. Friend knows, I am visiting Bolton tomorrow. Although a formal meeting with the Bolton Forum is not in my programme, I hope to meet individual members in the course of the day.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my right hon. Friend find many opportunities to visit Bolton, not only to meet members of the Bolton Forum, which is proving to be an excellent example of successful partnership between the public and private sectors, but to visit the successful city challenge schemes and, I hope, have further opportunities to visit the theatre?

Mr. Waldegrave: The latter item to which my hon. Friend referred depends on my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip. On the former point, I am delighted to see the £37·5 million that is now potentially available to Bolton over the next five years for city challenge, and I congratulate my hon. Friend on the part that he took in winning that money for his constituents.

Market Testing

39. **Mr. Deva:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish figures showing the year-on-year increase in the amount of central Government market testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Details of our market testing plans for the period to 30 September 1993 will be published on Wednesday, but I am happy to state now that we expect well over £1 billion worth of services to be market tested by the end of September next year. This compares with an average of about £25 million in previous years.

Mr. Deva: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the dramatic improvement in market testing that has occurred so far. Will he ensure that those improved efficiencies will be passed on to the consumer?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can confirm that the improved efficiencies and indeed any savings that there might be within Departments will be available to those Departments to plough back into the very services where efficiency gains are being made, for the benefit of those services and for those who use them.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that in the past two or three days there has been a lot of market testing going on, and it has gone along the following lines: "Do you think that the British public should have to pay for the fire at Windsor castle?" The market testing returns are of the order of 90 per cent. against.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is aware that we have a statement on that matter later.

Mr. Skinner: Ninety per cent. of the British public are against paying for the fire at Windsor castle. The Queen should be made to pay for it. That is the market test this weekend. Instead of talking about all that consumer crap, the right hon. Gentleman should make sure that she pays for the fire.

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that the level of the hon. Gentleman's thoughts are about the same as the level of his language. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage got it much nearer right when he said that the hearts of people in this country have gone out to Her Majesty the Queen over that tragedy.

Public Services

40. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what measures he has adopted to increase the availability of information about the performance of the public services.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The citizens charter calls on all public services to provide more and better information on their performance. Details of the improvements in public service performance will be set out in the White Paper to be published on Wednesday.

Mr. Lidington: Will my hon. Friend confirm that from next year the parents charter will give further information to parents about the performance of the state schools to which they send their children? Will he and his colleagues continue to reject calls from the teachers' unions and the Opposition to maintain secrecy?

Mr. Jackson: I can certainly give that assurance to my hon. Friend. The publication of schools charters and the information flowing from them are an important step forward in the charter movement. My hon. Friend asks about the publication of performance standards. I visited the Employment Service in the north-east last week and saw for myself the publication of citizens charter performance standards in Employment Service offices. A great deal of performance against those standards is now being published.

Mr. William O'Brien: When the Minister obtains information about local services, will he take into consideration the fact that organisations are saying that, because of lack of resources, the indicators prove that there is a reduction in the service being provided for the public? Will the Minister take on board the information that points to a reduction in services, and the fact that resources for local services should be improved?

Mr. Jackson: I ask the hon. Gentleman to tell me the specific stories afterwards. My understanding is that charter standards are leading to increases in services provided, but I shall consider any case that he might bring forward.

GATT

3.30 pm

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): With permission, I should like to make a statement about the latest developments in the GATT Uruguay round of trade negotiations.

As many hon. Members will have heard, the European Commission and the United States Government announced on Friday that they had reached agreement on the remaining issues separating them in the negotiations. Those included key points in the GATT agriculture agreement, and the separate but related trade dispute over Community support for oilseeds production.

That is excellent news. It opens the way to a full GATT agreement between all 108 parties to the Uruguay round. Most immediately, it removes the threat of an imminent trade war with the United States over oilseeds.

I should like to congratulate the two Commissioners directly involved, Mr. MacSharry and Mr. Andriessen, as well as the United States negotiators—Mr. Madigan, the Agriculture Secretary and Mrs. Hills, the United States Trade Representative. I should also pay tribute to my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who have done so much to work for the agreement.

The main features of the agreement were, on agriculture, the cutting of quantities of subsidised exports by 21 per cent. and on oilseeds, a limit on the area under cultivation. We have still to see all the details, but it would appear that a GATT agriculture agreement on those lines will be broadly consistent with the reforms of the common agricultural policy regimes agreed by the Community last summer. The Commission will be preparing a report on compatibility with CAP reform.

That is in any case just one of the whole package of Uruguay round agreements. The results should be judged on the balance between all the elements. The Council of Ministers will take a final decision on whether to accept the deal when all the elements are in place.

Talks will be restarting in Geneva this week so that the other 95 participants in the Uruguay round can consider what has been agreed. I believe that it is possible to complete the negotiations this year and we will be urging all parties to reach a conclusion as soon as possible. Apart from agreeing the necessary changes to the agriculture text tabled by the GATT director-general, Mr. Dunkel, at the end of last year, there remains a great deal of work on other aspects of the Uruguay round negotiations.

Negotiations on liberalisation of trade in services and tariff reductions have to be completed. Much work had already been done on this and was waiting for a final resolution on agriculture. Final agreement is needed on the establishment of a multilateral trade organisation and a single dispute settlement system covering all the GATT agreements. Legal texts must be finalised for all the agreements—not only agriculture, services and tariffs, but intellectual property and investment, textiles, anti-dumping, subsidies and a whole range of other GATT rules and procedures. This is a formidable agenda much remains to be done.

Completion of the negotiations this year would meet the target set by the Munich G7 economic summit, and by the Birmingham European Council. It would enable texts to be ready for presentation to the United States Congress before the 2 March deadline under their "fast track" approval procedure.

Let me remind the House what that will mean. It will mean perhaps $200 billion extra yearly output for the world by the end of this decade. It will mean improved opportunities for our exporters. It will mean that we are able to take advantage of increased trade in services. It will mean that our inventors and artists have a better protection for their intellectual property—it has been estimated that the United Kingdom record industry alone loses £1 billion a year through piracy. For developing countries it will mean western markets being more open to their agricultural and textiles products. The gains to them from increased trade could exceed the total western aid budget.

In short, this is a good deal—for the United Kingdom, for the European Community, for the United States, for the developing countries, and for the world. With determination and good will on all sides, I believe that such an agreement can be reached by the end of the year. I hope, therefore, that the whole House will join me in welcoming the achievement of the Community and the United States.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): All parts of the House will join the President of the Board of Trade in congratulating the negotiators to the GATT treaty, particularly Ray MacSharry, who might well have felt that it was not his job to return to those negotiations. However, he has helped to break out of a difficult stalemate to achieve an honourable agreement.

The whole House will also share the right hon. Gentleman's relief that the world is not to be plunged into a trade war in which everyone would have lost. Does he agree that it is important that other countries do not draw the conclusion from the American experience that all that is necessary to secure concessions is to threaten to start a trade war? Will he therefore confirm that the agreement that has now been reached involves concessions on the United States side, concessions which the United States negotiator initially rejected?

I endorse what the President of the Board of Trade said about the boost that the agreement will provide to the poorest countries, which are most in need of greater access to the wealthier markets of the west and which had most to lose if talks had broken down between the two main trading blocks of the west. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will appreciate that all 100 member countries that are parties to the GATT talks stand to gain from that agreement.

Some in the House may be surprised that the right hon. Gentleman made a statement without reference to the well-known objections taken by France to the agreement that has been reached. Will he therefore take this opportunity to confirm that it is also true that France will be a net beneficiary of a GATT agreement? Will he also take this opportunity to urge the Government of France to accept the GATT talks and the GATT agreement in the round and not to judge it by the single issue of farm subsidies, because French industry stands to gain more than French farmers will lose?

May I press the President of the Board of Trade on the problems that are still outstanding? Agreements are still to be concluded on financial services, telecommunications and maritime services—the right hon. Gentleman referred to some of those difficulties in his statements. How confident is he that those difficulties will be overcome before the March deadline, when the fast-track mandate runs out for the United States Congress? Has he had any indication that the President-elect would be interested in rolling forward that fast-track mandate for a further year, were that to prove necessary?

The President of the Board of Trade will understand that a statement on trade and tariffs today will be judged by the House against the background of the trade figures on which he has not volunteered a statement today. Those figures show another increase in the visible trade gap, which is now running at an annualised rate of £14,000 million with the other countries that are party to GATT, or £1 million for the time it will take the House to discuss the statement. Is the right hon. Gentleman not concerned that, for the first time in a recession, Britain is seeing imports rise faster than exports? Does he accept that the single most important change in our pattern of trade with the world during the many years of the GATT talks is that, until the early 1980s, Britain never had a deficit in trade in manufactured goods, but, since then, it has never had a surplus in its trade in manufactured goods?

Will the right hon. Gentleman now admit that the stimulus that GATT will provide to world trade, if it is successful, makes it all the more urgent that the Government start to stimulate investment in new plant to provide training and skills and offer the strategy for industry that is now essential to rebuild the manufacturing capacity that they have destroyed and which we need to compete in world trade?

Mr. Heseltine: It is sad that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who began by so warmly welcoming the important and positive aspects of my statement, characteristically sought to cloud the good news by trying to divert attention away from it. That is characteristic of the Opposition's mean-minded approach.

May I display my characteristic generosity and concentrate on the early parts of the hon. Gentleman's response. The position is not quite as simple as he suggested by implying that one needs only to start a trade war to achieve results. Two issues were involved and were running concurrently. One was the dispute between the Community and the United States over oilseeds, which had been the subject of continuing discussion in which the Americans believed that they had used all the appropriate means open to them to get redress. GATT panels found on their side twice, yet no progress had been made. In the end, GATT persuaded the Americans to take the steps that they took—dangerous steps, without a shadow of a doubt.

But that matter was coincidental with the negotiations proceeding towards a settlement of the areas outstanding in the present Uruguay round. Inevitably, the two matters became interrelated, and it is to the credit of those who negotiated a settlement that they took that extremely difficult issue and resolved both the matters satisfactorily.

The second issue about which the hon. Gentleman asked was the position of France. I have never tried to pretend—nobody could—that the French Government do not have problems with their agricultural interests. However, the hon. Gentleman is right to say that France relies on its agricultural economy perhaps only to the extent of 5 per cent. Therefore, for the overwhelming majority of French commercial and industrial interests, a successful conclusion of the GATT round is as much in the interests of France as the rest of the world.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether I was confident that, under the renewed GATT procedures, we shall be able to make progress. I can only hope that that is so, and I wish those responsible every good fortune. Everybody knows that the rest of the world has had to stand apart while the disputes between America and the Community have been resolved. They are now back in the picture and will have their own views and self-interests. But they will appreciate, as did the hon. Gentleman, that the fast-track opportunity in the United States expires on 2 March and that it is, therefore, to everybody's interest to get within that arrangement—not to consider extending it, as the hon. Gentleman said, but to take advantage of the existing window that is now open in the American procedures.

No one should understate the dramatic opportunity for the whole world, particularly the less-developed world, of a successful outcome of the sixth Uruguay round.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): Although I welcome the agreement that has been reached, is it not true that what may be good news for world trade in the long term may prove to be rather bad news for farmers in the short term? Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that our farmers will not be significantly worse off under the terms of this agreement than they would have been under the original CAP reform package? So that the House may decide exactly what is going on, can the financial details be laid before us as soon as possible?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who displays a rightful concern for agricultural interests in this country. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food believes that the present agreement between the United States and the European Community is compatible with the CAP reform announced earlier this year. That does not mean that there are no difficulties for farmers within the CAP reform, but they are not exacerbated by the GATT negotiations.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does the President of the Board of Trade accept that there is considerable relief among Liberal Democrat Members that a trade war has been averted and that progress is being made towards the eventual settlement of the GATT round? However, may I take up the points made by the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord)? The settlement and the CAP reforms will further squeeze farm incomes throughout the Community, and rural communities need measures to help compensate for that. Will the right hon. Gentleman assure us that attention will be given to that? Does he also accept that the final shake-out of the GATT round will have a far-reaching effect on many industries and requires a Community-wide strategy to ensure that we can take full advantage of it, defeat unemployment and have a regional policy? When does he think that our balance of payments deficit will be turned into a surplus?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member asks me to go further than I went in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord). We all realise the pressures applied on the agricultural industry as a result of the CAP reform, but it is the view of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that the agreements reached last Friday are compatible with the

[Mr. Heseltine]

CAP reforms announced earlier. The CAP reforms contain measures, particularly agri-environmental measures, designed to help the sort of people to whom the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) referred.

The wider issue of the balance of trade is a matter of concern. The position in terms of the manufacturing industry has been deteriorating for most of the post-war period. It is a profoundly important issue, but not one to be discussed in this context.

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be a wide feeling of relief at the successful conclusion of the talks? They have, after all, taken six years, as they started under the previous British presidency. Does not my right hon. Friend's statement show how important it is to set up a new disputes machinery so that the damaging row between the Americans and the Community will not occur again? How does my right hon. Friend see the way forward for negotiations within the Community? Can matters be settled by qualified majority, or does the Luxembourg compromise still exist? I thought that it had been abolished in 1983.

Mr. Heseltine: My right hon. Friend shows a perceptive understanding of many of the problems involved. Everyone feels a sense of frustration that it has been six years since the talks got under way. People have a clear understanding of the scale of the potential opportunity available. By our failure to reach agreement, we have prevented such success coming at the pace that we would like.

My right hon. Friend was perfectly right to say that one of the issues that had frustrated progress was the inadequacy of the disputes machinery. It is to be welcomed that, within the text proposed by the director-general of GATT, an improved disputes machinery is there to be negotiated. It is important to stress that, within the agreement between the United States and the Community, a peace clause has been injected so that both sides know that when the agreement has been reached there is no recourse to further reopening of the issues in the context of the agreement. Such a reopening of the issues could destabilise the agreement.

As for qualified majority voting, I believe that the position is that the Commission, which is authorised to negotiate on behalf of the Community, is now empowered to move back into the GATT talks in Geneva and negotiate there as the Community's representative. When and if a satisfactory outcome to a GATT round is achieved, it will be for the Community at large—the Council of Ministers—to determine whether that agreement, taken in the round, is acceptable. That decision is taken by the Council of Ministers by qualified majority voting, and it is to be greatly questioned whether the Luxembourg compromise is relevant in such circumstances.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): It is well appreciated in Canberra and Wellington that Ministers here have kept in close touch with Australia and New Zealand about the negotiations. As for the multinational trade agreement that is still to be concluded, may we be assured that there will be continuing close contact with Australia and New Zealand, and all member countries of the Cairns group, as with Commonwealth countries generally?

Mr. Heseltine: I am extremely grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for raising that issue—what he has said is accurate. During our presidency of the Community—and as a nation which sees wider world trade as economically beneficial to the world community—we have tried to keep in touch with those people not directly immersed in the dispute across the Atlantic. I confirm what the right hon. Gentleman said—we have kept closely in touch with the Cairns group of Ministers. I can go further and say that now that the GATT process has returned to Geneva, we shall continue to keep in touch across the world and use our good offices to bring about a speedy resolution of outstanding matters. Such a policy will embrace a continuing relationship with the Cairns Ministers and a wider Commonwealth connection.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I add my thanks to my right hon. Friend and his team for the success that has been achieved to date. I wish, however, to emphasise what lies ahead. With responsibility for access to, and reduced tariffs in, the world market, there comes a responsibility for true and fair prices. Does my right hon. Friend recognise that the textile industry in particular is looking to the conclusion of anti-dumping arrangements that are more meaningful than those which emerged from the previous GATT round?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend raises a most important issue. The position of the textile industry is especially important in the GATT round, because the multi-fibre arrangement is designed to be phased out and replaced as GATT arrangements come in place. The position of the United Kingdom is clear: we are determined to ensure as best we can, with all the energies that we possess, the interests of the United Kingdom textile industry. The House will be glad to know that in the draft GATT agreement there are provisions for a transitional period of 10 years. The agreement offers better protection, for example, for intellectual property rights, improved GATT rules against unfair or disruptive trade and the prospects of greater access to other markets. I have in mind especially the high tariffs on textiles that are maintained by the United States and certain developing countries, which would be beneficially affected downwards.

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): I share the relief that a damaging trade war with the United States has been averted and that the MFA will continue, to the benefit of my constituents. Will the President of the Board of Trade accept that he should not be so evasive about the other significant trade factor, which is the sign that Britain is not paying its way? Yet again, disastrous balance of payments figures have been recorded. Unless policies that bear on the engineering industry and manufacturing industry generally are changed, the opportunities demonstrated by the GATT round will not be available to the United Kingdom in full measure.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman must not have been present in the Chamber when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made his autumn statement, as a result of which we saw interest rates coming down, new tax allowances to encourage investment and a range of announcements to stimulate capital expenditure, plus a determined attack upon inflationary wage claims that would otherwise undermine Britain's competitiveness.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): I warmly welcome the agreement and extend congratulations to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who, in his capacity of President of the European Council of Ministers, is reputed to have played an important and valuable role. But may I put it to my right hon. Friend—I am sure that he is fully aware of this—that not only French farmers are concerned about the agreement? Farmers in my constituency—and, I am sure, throughout the country—are extremely worried. Does he understand that it would not be acceptable for set-aside to be raised above 15 per cent? Farmers in my constituency will look to the Government for special help to cushion the effect of all this.

Mr. Heseltine: I am sure that my hon. Friend will want to explore the matter with my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, but I understand that Commissioner Ray MacSharry has said specifically that there is no likelihood of set-aside being increased above 15 per cent.

As for my hon. Friend's tribute to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, there is not the slightest shadow of doubt that no one did more in a benign way to influence the outcome of the agreement last Friday. There is not the slightest doubt that his relentless pursuit of sanity and reason helped to achieve the agreement that has been warmly welcomed this afternoon.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I regard "benign way" as a studied insult to the Prime Minister. Is the Secretary of State aware that, contrary to all the opinion that has been expressed up till now about GATT being wonderful and beautiful, the view still prevails among socialists—those who believe in intervention in the internal market of the economy and the external market—that GATT will not ensure full employment, a regional policy, a position in which our coal industry does not have to compete with slave labour economies in Colombia and South Africa and a situation in which farmers and farm workers in Britain do not have to compete with the sunshine states of Florida and California?

Some of us believe that there is no such thing as a level playing field in world economics. The truth is that, while people are clamouring for GATT, the net result will be that third-world economies will suffer, as will people in this country because the dole queues will increase.

Mr. Heseltine: We have just heard the voice of the international brotherhood of man. The hon. Gentleman tells us of the views that still prevail among socialists. The question for this House is whether any socialists still prevail.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): May I add my welcome for, and relief about, the agreement to the welcome already expressed by other hon. Members? I am glad that my right hon. Friend has told us when he expects a general agreement to be concluded. Can he say whether that final agreement will be discussed in the EC under the British presidency or the future Danish presidency and also whether the French could delay agreement until after their Assembly elections?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will not be surprised to hear me say that we are working on that problem. We very much hope that the agreement will be concluded under the British presidency, but it must be clearly understood that it is not now within the gift of the EC to dictate the pace at which the GATT round makes progress.

Having answered the first half of my hon. Friend's question in that way, it follows that the answer to the second half is that, just as we are not in a position to bring forward the ultimate conclusion, neither are we in a position to disrupt progress. All that is now within the GATT negotiating machinery.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I join hon. Members on both sides of the House in welcoming the fact that a damaging trade war has been averted. The President said that the agreement was broadly consistent with the agreement on reform of the common agricultural policy. Is he aware that, even if it is only minutely inconsistent with that agreement, that could mean the end for tens of thousands of Welsh hill farmers? I urge him to make available all the details as soon as possible, because morale in the industry is very low.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will have heard me say that the full details of last Friday's agreement have not yet been made available to us, but that the broad declaration has made it clear that the terms are consistent with the CAP reforms. The hon. Gentleman has a particular interest in agriculture, especially hill farming. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is as concerned as the hon. Gentleman about that category and, indeed, about all categories of agriculture. He will carefully study how the new agreement will affect hill farmers.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Has it not been demonstrated in the House this afternoon that we are all in favour of free trade until it affects our particular interest or industry—whether it is coal, hill farming in Wales, farming, textiles or manufacturing industry that is protected in this country? In view of the prejudice that has been shown in the House, will there be any opportunity for third-world countries truly to take advantage of the GATT agreement?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend raises a most important point. The answer to his question is yes, there will be every opportunity for third-world countries. Although in the negotiations leading to a successful GATT round every country is bound to argue for its national self-interest, in the end all countries have to consider the agreement in the round to judge whether they gain more than they lose. Some industries or some sectors of industries in individual countries may not think of themselves as natural winners, but the overall national interest and the overall trading interests of the world gain. It will not be possible for those countries that are adversely affected in some small way to use that as an excuse for denying the third world the opportunities that are built into a successful GATT round.

Mr. Campbell-Savours (Workington): How can a reduction in rapeseed and cereal exports be secured without increasing set-aside above 15 per cent?

Mr. Heseltine: I have already explained that the GATT agreements are compatible, as we are advised, with the common agricultural policy reforms. Obviously, the

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compatibility of them will be explored when the full details of the settlement are available. Of course, a certain set-aside provision is already anticipated in the CAP reforms.

Mr. Mark Robinson (Somerton and Frome): I am sure that my right hon. Friend, like me, will welcome the day when the Opposition are prepared to support and welcome a settlement such as the GATT agreement, which has been asked for and demanded by British farmers consistently. The settlement is welcomed in Somerset.

Will my right hon. Friend and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food do all in their power to persuade the French Government to place the broader international interest above the interest of a few French farmers?

Mr. Heseltine: I can assure my hon. Friend that there has been a continued dialogue between Ministers in Her Majesty's Government and Ministers in the French Government. That dialogue will continue.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): The President of the Board of Trade has said that he believes and hopes that the GATT agreement will be concluded by the end of the year in accordance with the wishes and aspirations of the G7 countries. Although Opposition Members would welcome a conclusion if it were possible, we accept that there are so many ramifications, difficulties and negotiations that we may be looking at the deadline of 2 March. Of course, that brings in the confluence with the elections in France.

In his statement, the President of the Board of Trade said that the agreements reached in America were "broadly" in line with the CAP reforms in May. The matter is of great importance to the French, and it will have to be dealt with, beyond simply reaching a broadly consistent agreement.

The right hon. Gentleman will remember our last debate on the multi-fibre arrangement when the hon. Members for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) and for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) and my hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) raised the issue. As he is aware, the multi-fibre arrangement ends on 31 December. Although we welcome his statement that there may be 10 years protection for our textile industry as a consequence of the new GATT arrangements, can he give an undertaking that, between now and 31 December, the multi-fibre arrangement will be extended?

Mr. Heseltine: We anticipate that the multi-fibre arrangement will, in some way, be the subject of a carry-over arrangement until the new GATT arrangement is in place. At present, the Community is negotiating with suppliers of textiles to the Community to ensure that satisfactory arrangements are in place in any interregnum. For example, agreement has been reached with Hong Kong.

The hon. Member asked about the use of the word "broadly". One must use that word because, for example, the CAP reforms have not yet embraced wine or sugar. There is not a finalised agreement that can be set alongside the Friday arrangement, so we must use words that show that there are still matters of uncertainty but that within the broad view there will still be compatibility.

I fully understand the position of the French Government. They entered into a negotiation which gave authority to the Commission to negotiate on a certain basis. The Commission must satisfy all members of the Community that it has discharged that authority within the remits that it was given. It believes that it has done so. The Commission must continue any further discussions on the matter.

I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that there are many ramifications ahead. That is certainly the case, but the Commission must now make progress. It is not for individual countries within the Community to frustrate that position. The ability of individual countries in the Community to make a judgment will depend on a successful outcome of the entire GATT round, when it will be put to the Council of Ministers for qualified majority approval.

Dr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. There is another statement and, as the House knows, I take points of order after all the statements have been completed.

Windsor Castle (Fire)

4.4 pm

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): With permission, I should like to make a statement to the House about the tragic fire at Windsor castle.

Shortly before midday on Friday, a fire started in or near the private chapel close to the state apartments. It took hold rapidly. The county fire service arrived within eight minutes and built up to 39 fire appliances and more than 200 firefighters. By late afternoon, the fire had been contained in the north-east corner of the castle. The fire services continued fighting the fire throughout Friday night, and by Saturday morning it had been largely extinguished.

The fire severely damaged several of the state rooms in the north-east corner of the castle, including St. George's hall and the grand reception room. An extremely effective pre-planned salvage operation was carried out to remove pictures, furnishings, carpets and other valuables from threatened rooms.

I visited the castle on Saturday and saw the extent of the damage. I am sure that the House will wish to join me in saying to Her Majesty that we share with her the sadness of the devastation of what is, at one and the same time, her home, a major state building, and a unique asset and attraction of our national heritage.

I would like to pay tribute to the county fire services, to the Windsor castle auxiliary fire service, and to all those who so quickly and efficiently helped to salvage so much from the burning buildings. In very difficult and dangerous circumstances they performed with skill, courage and dedication. There was no loss of life and only limited damage to works of art—one picture, one sideboard, and an antique carpet appear to have been lost. The fire was contained to one area, and the contingency planning was put into effect most successfully.

Investigations into the cause of the fire started almost immediately, and I will receive a complete report in due course. Scaffolding is being erected to stabilise the structure, and temporary roofing will be provided. Surveys will then be carried out to identify what action is needed to restore the buildings, and a full report is expected within a month. Meanwhile, the rubble will be carefully sifted by experts from English Heritage and elsewhere, working in close co-operation with the royal household, to provide essential information for authentic restoration work. It will then be possible to estimate the scale and cost of the restoration work, and to plan for it. Those of the state apartments that have not been damaged will be open to the public as soon as feasible.

Windsor castle is the property of the state, and it is the Government's responsibility to ensure that resources are provided to maintain it in a manner commensurate with its status, and its role on occasions of state. Therefore, I have no hesitation in saying that resources will be provided to restore that most precious and well loved part of our national heritage.

Once preliminary examinations of the circumstances of the fire have been completed and considered, I shall want to decide in consultation with the royal household that further investigations are necessary.

Windsor castle is a world famous symbol of this country. I believe that it is our duty to ensure that the damage is repaired as soon as possible.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): The Opposition share the profound sense of loss at the destruction of such a valuable part of our national heritage in the Windsor castle fire. However, we regret the failure of the Minister to set up a public inquiry into the causes of the fire and the lessons to be learned. We echo the tributes to the impressive work undertaken by the firefighters of the Berkshire fire service and others involved in the rescue operation. They displayed great courage in extremely difficult circumstances. All of us owe a great debt of gratitude to them. However, Opposition Members have several serious concerns about the safety arrangements and fire precautions at Windsor. Those questions were not fully dealt with by the Minister.

Sir John Garlick's report following the fire at Hampton court recommended more effective fire drills held jointly between the local fire brigade and Hampton court palace staff. Was that recommendation implemented in the case of Windsor castle? How many fire drills have there been involving castle staff and the Berkshire fire service, and what were the dates of those drills? If the Secretary of State does not have that information today, will he let me have it tomorrow? On the same basis, can the House be informed whether British standard 5839—the code of practice for the installation and servicing of fire-related equipment, including the use of a logbook—was implemented at Windsor castle during the period before the fire?

Why did the Property Services Agency, as part of its preparation for privatisation, transfer responsibility for fire protection at royal buildings to the royal household two years ago? Does the Secretary of State agree that if, as he said, they are buildings of the nation and part of the nation's heritage, the nation should be responsible for fire protection?

Can the Secretary of State say why the Government closed the Crown Suppliers, which was responsible for providing expert advice on fire protection? Can he inform the House who is left within the Government to provide expert advice to Government Departments and to the royal family on anti-inflammable materials? Will the Secretary of State tell the House whether it is true that the royal household refused English Heritage access to survey parts of the castle that have been rewired and structurally altered in the past few years?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that Windsor castle's 12 part-time firemen were made redundant under a cost-cutting exercise five years ago? Does he agree that the fire could have been dealt with much more effectively in the crucial first few minutes of the blaze if that force had still been in place? Will the right hon. Gentleman comment on suggestions that there was considerable ambiguity about the respective roles of the royal household, the PSA, the internal fire prevention services and the Berkshire fire brigade—an ambiguity which delayed the firefighting exercise?

Is the Secretary of State aware that, according to documents leaked to *The Sunday Times*, the castle was considering abandoning its computerised alarm system because it was "very labour-intensive"? Is it not the case

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that, as the consequences of cost cutting, high-pressure water-jet pumps were replaced by inferior pumps less capable of fighting a major blaze?

Can the right hon. Gentleman give more details of the safety conditions imposed on the private contractors involved in rewiring the area around Windsor chapel? Were contractors undertaking electrical work in that part of the building where the fire started? English Heritage, the National Trust and most national museums have banned hot work except with stringent safeguards. Can the Secretary of State say whether such safeguards were in force at Windsor?

Can the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that he will include within the remit of any inquiry clarification of what is public and what is private property on the Windsor estate—what is ours, what is theirs, and whether there are any grey areas?

The Garlick report on the Hampton court fire concluded:

> "Perhaps the most important lesson of the Hampton Court Palace fire . . . is that the preservation of our national heritage requires that the best material contribution from science and technology is matched by a corresponding commitment to securing the best organisation and use of human resources."

The whole country is asking whether we learned those lessons.

Several of my hon. Friends as well as members of the public raised the question of who should pay. The right hon. Gentleman has already pledged this afternoon that the total cost will be paid out of the public purse. While there is a great deal of public sympathy for the monarch, there is also legitimate public concern that the total cost of repair should not be paid exclusively by the taxpayer. Has the right hon. Gentleman ruled out a contribution from the royal family, and would he welcome such a contribution if it were offered?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Lady has asked me a series of questions. I am grateful for the sympathy that she expressed at the outset.

The hon. Lady asked about the inquiry. I did say that, as soon as we had received the preliminary report, I would discuss with the royal household whether there were further matters that we should investigate. She also asked about fire service drills. If that is a matter of particular importance to her, I shall let her know the dates of drills; but they occur on a regular basis. One of the most recent rehearsals was carried out in the Brunswick tower, which was affected by the fire.

Although the part of the castle that was affected by the fire is not subject to fire regulations, it is the royal household's policy to comply with them. It is, however, in the nature of such ancient buildings that it is not possible to carry out all the regulations that are laid down for modern buildings without destroying some of the historic fabric. I understand that the regulations are being complied with in the castle as far as that is feasible; indeed, fire precaution measures exceed the guidance set out in them.

The hon. Lady asked a number of questions relating to the part-time fire service. The changes made in 1991 have brought about a positive improvement in part-time arrangements. The complications were reduced when a central Government Department and the Property Services Agency, as well as the royal household, became involved. It is, I think, universally agreed that the previous arrangements were unsatisfactory, and that the present ones are much better.

The hon. Lady asked about the denial of access to English Heritage. The rewiring which occasioned the issue did not involve significant renovation work, and English Heritage experts were not needed; they have, however, been fully involved in renovation of the round tower. The hon. Lady also asked about cuts. The castle-based fire service has increased its full-time staff from five to six. She mentioned 12 part-timers: I acknowledge that that figure has fallen to nine, but if volunteer part-timers came forward, they would willingly be accepted.

It was suggested that there had been delay owing to ambiguity. On Saturday, I spent a long time with the relevant officer in the Berkshire fire service. He was clear that the arrangements—for which there had been preparation—had worked extremely well. The castle fire service was used for its specific purposes, providing guidance and, in particular, identifying the order in which objects should be removed.

The hon. Lady asked where the distinction lay between public and private property. Responsibility for the fabric of the castle rests with the Government, as it has done since 1831, before the introduction of the great Reform Bill. The contents of the castle constitute a royal collection, and responsibility for them therefore rests with the Queen. Let me stress to the hon. Lady, in terms of the question that she asked——

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): She asked about hot-work certificates.

Mr. Brooke: I shall come back to that.

The hon. Lady asked specifically about public and private property. The state apartments, where the fire occurred, were not Her Majesty's private apartments, and were, therefore, essentially public. Not all of them are open to the public all the time, but they are state rooms in which state functions occur.

As for the question that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) just prompted me about, when we have received the report on the origins of the fire, we shall be able to go into the practical details.

The hon. Member for Clwyd finally asked me whether the lessons of Sir John Garlick's report had been learned. A substantial series of works were put in hand, including those at Windsor castle, as a result of his recommendations. In the context of what the hon. Lady said about who should pay, I have already referred to the Government's responsibility, which goes back over 160 years, for the fabric of the castle. The responsibility for that lies clearly and firmly with the Government.

Mr. Michael Trend (Windsor and Maidenhead): In thanking my right hon. Friend for his full statement, will he bear in mind the fact that my constituents in the royal borough are particularly distressed by the damage caused by fire to the castle? Does he accept that, while the castle is a priceless part of Britain's national heritage, it is to my constituents, and particularly to the good townspeople of Windsor, a familiar friend that they hold in great affection? It is a central part of their lives and their livelihood. I speak not only for myself but also for my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay), with whom I share parliamentary representation of the roayl borough. He sits on the Treasury Bench and, as the House understands, cannot speak at this time.

Does my right hon. Friend also agree that various of the royal borough's and county's services, led by the fire service combined with the expertise of the auxiliary service in the castle, were of the highest standard during the terrible events of last weekend?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks, just as I was grateful for his presence in the castle on Saturday when we looked at the damage. Of course I link with any remarks those of my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East. My hon. Friend expresses a universal view when he praises the quality and effectiveness of the work done and the co-operation achieved in fighting this disaster.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): May I, on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends, join in the sympathy that has been extended to Her Majesty and in the admiration that has been expressed to the firemen? May I also express our relief that the chairman of English Heritage, Mr. Jocelyn Stevens, has not been able so far to deprive us of the expertise that will enable the rubble to be investigated by English Heritage experts?

The question of the public interest in Windsor castle and all the royal residences goes beyond the fabric of the building, which has been protected by the 1831 Act, to its contents—the works of art and the decorations. The accident of the Queen choosing to reside in a certain part of the castle cannot determine how best those objects have to be protected. A proper and full inventory is needed of buildings that are publicly protected, and also of their contents, so that the public can be assured that they are being properly protected.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his remarks, both of sympathy and of admiration. In the context of what he said about English Heritage, the people who gave advice on the restoration of Hampton Court palace, as well as experts from other parts of the public services and elsewhere, are not the precise people with whom his question was connected in the context of English Heritage's plans. As to the hon. Gentleman's question about an inventory, I understand that what is known as photogammetry has been carried out in all the rooms concerned, and that there is therefore a substantial record against which restoration work can be conducted.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that we on the Benches behind him warmly endorse what he has said, in particular his expression of sympathy to the Queen? Is my right hon. Friend further aware that, when £60 million is divided among a population of 57 million, it come to about £1 a head, or, spread over 10 years, to about 10p a head per year; and that I know of no one who would resent paying such a sum to restore a vital part of Britain's heritage that draws an immense number of foreign visitors, which benefits Britain as a whole? Is my right hon. Friend also aware that Hampton Court palace staff rushed to the scene and helped to rescue the paintings?

Mr. Brooke: I am quite certain that the views of sympathy that my hon. Friend expressed are shared throughout the House. He expressed a notional cost fugure, and although I have seen figures quoted in the press, I cannot lend any credence to them, as such preparatory planning has not been done. I am certain that those who came from Hampton Court palace, like everyone else involved, enjoy the gratitude of the nation for the manner in which the works of art were so successfully rescued from the castle.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Since the Secretary of State is quite rightly paying considerable resources to Windsor castle following an accident for which I do not blame the Government, does he agree that, where we lose our heritage as a direct result of the Government's action, the Government equally should pay money? I think in particular of Frickley Colliery Athletic football club and Grimethorpe colliery band, both of which will cease to exist, and which, as the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Mr. Trend) said, are crucial to the communities that they represent.

Mr. Brooke: I do not know precisely where responsibility lies—*[Interruption.]* No, people should not become excited. I genuinely recognise the significance of what the hon. Gentleman said, and it is one of the considerations that I have been putting my mind to in the context of potential closures.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that those who have been deeply distressed by the fire over the weekend have been almost as distressed by some of the mean-spirited comments that have been made following it? Will he emphasise that we are dealing with an official residence where people are entertained in the name of this country by our head of state, who represents much better value than most presidents, and that it is just as legitimate to spend money on this as it would be if a misfortune happened at Chequers, whoever was the occupant at the time?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the treasures of the royal collection cannot be sold and are available to the public, who see them in their thousands, if not millions, every year? Does he further agree that we can be encouraged not only by the wonderful efforts of the firefighters in rescuing so many treasures but by the fact that we know from Hampton Court that we have brilliant British craftsmen who will be able to restore the building to its former glory?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's admirable common sense, and I hope that his comments will inform the argument about the issue, because he is quite right about the essence of the castle and its contents. I entirely share the admiration that he expressed about our craftsmen.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): My right hon. and hon. Friends and I wish to be associated with the Secretary of State's expression of sympathy to the sovereign, but who is ultimately responsible for the decision not to insure such buildings, and did the premium saved cover the cost of the damage?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's initial expression of sympathy. It is a long-established principle of Governments, of all parties and colours, that we do not insure such buildings, and I should be surprised if the Treasury had not done a calculation showing that it is a more economical way of proceeding.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): This fire was undoubtedly a tragedy and a disaster for the nation. My right hon. Friend will recall that, following the similarly awful fire at Hampton Court, Ministers at the Department of the Environment, then responsible for that building, called for an extensive report on the precautions that should be taken for the future. I refer to the report by Sir John Garlick.

My right hon. Friend has said that the lessons of the Hampton Court fire and the report on it have been duly noted. Can he assure the House that the Government have provided the necessary financial means to carry out the lessons of the report?

Mr. Brooke: I should perhaps have clarified earlier the fact that the lessons have been not only learned but acted on. My hon. Friend will recall from his time at the Department of the Environment the scale of the assistance given to Hampton Court palace. The programme mounted in Windsor and elsewhere has been on a larger scale still, some of it devoted to rewiring and related issues and some of it to fire precautions.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I have not lost one second's sleep over this tragedy—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame".] No lives were lost, and that is what is most important.

How can we suddenly find any amount of money—perhaps as much as £60 million—when in the same week most local authorities may be capped, when cardboard city still exists, when houses are falling apart and when people are being dispossessed? How can the right hon. Gentleman justify that?

Mr. Brooke: I mentioned earlier the cost involved. How this matter will be funded will depend partly on what is required. I do not expect the likely amount to be easily absorbable in the budget of my Department, but I shall discuss that with my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary when I have had an estimate of the costs. Clearly, restoration in cases like this involves work spread over a number of years.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): My right hon. Friend confirmed that Windsor castle has been the responsibility of the Government since 1831. Will he also confirm that it has been open to the public throughout the 19th century and into this century, and that substantial overseas earnings are gained by its being open for tourism? Will he also confirm that Her Majesty is personally responsible for the maintenance of the royal collection, which has been greatly added to during the course of this reign, and that she will pay a large sum of money for the restoration of any damaged works in the collection?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend's last point was entirely correct. As for the castle being open to the public, the range of media bids that I have received from other parts of the world is an indication of how much the rest of the world regards Windsor castle as a symbol of the nation.

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): The Minister will recall making a statement to this House on 26 October regarding the redirection and concentration of budget resources for English Heritage. On that day, such redirection and concentration meant that 180 historic sites were deemed no longer within its remit. How is it that, in less than a month, the Government have found sufficient funds to underwrite, apparently, the entire reconstruction work necessary after the great fire of Windsor? Where has the money come from? Would it have been spent on other aspects of English Heritage's remit if the fire had not occurred?

Mr. Brooke: On the date in question, I answered a private notice question: I did not make a statement. The hon. Lady's question about that is not wholly germane to today's statement. Since then, discussions have continued on the nature of the negotiations that will occur with bodies that will perhaps be prepared to take over such sites. I told the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) a moment ago that I still have to discuss funding with my hon. Friend the Chief Secretary.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that most sensible people will reject the mean and Pecksniffian attitude of the Opposition? If Windsor castle is not part of our national heritage, it is hard to know what is. Is my right hon. Friend aware that the overwhelming majority of people, apart from a few readers of *The Sun* like the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), would gladly contribute to the restoration?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his robust Dickensian adjectives, and I share his view of the attitude of the country.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that English Heritage has proposed that royal immunity from planning legislation and public inspection should be removed from unoccupied palaces? Should not that arrangement be extended to occupied palaces? Is it not a fair share of responsibility that the Government should be responsible for repair to the fabric of the palace, as it is a heritage property, and that the Queen, as I understand it, will be responsible for restoration and treatment of any paintings or artefacts that need treatment?

Mr. Brooke: In answer to an earlier question, I made it clear that the royal household went beyond the guidance for fire regulations, even though the royal household is not specifically and directly responsible for them. Similar considerations apply in terms of other regulations. The hon. Gentleman's concluding question was entirely accurate.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the lessons and warnings to be absorbed from this episode go beyond royal palaces? Does he also agree that, at a time of recession, many national treasures, not necessarily in public ownership, are also at risk as a result of people cutting protection and care and maintenance? Does he accept that it is part of his responsibilities to ensure that no existing or potential national treasures are at risk from fire and similar irreparable damage?

Mr. Brooke: I must take issue with my hon. Friend's phrase about cutting care and maintenance, which implied that that had been the case in this instance. I assure my hon. Friend that that was not the case, but of course I share his view about the care that we should extend to national treasures.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is it altogether wise for the Secretary of State to give undertakings to anyone until he has received the surveyor's report? Is it not accepted by structural engineers that ancient walls are destabilished when they are subjected to intense heat? Might not each Norman stone have to be dismantled and reconstructed, and would not £60 million be only a starting price for such work? Does the Secretary of State recollect that he attended the Adjournment debate on Pitchford hall, and that there are many other calls on English Heritage? It might turn out that some of our heritage, like Linlithgow palace, might have to remain in ruins and the cost of repair be absolutely disproportionate.

Mr. Brooke: I have been careful in all my answers to say that I have no precise indication at the moment of what the cost will be, and the determination of how we resolve that must await the figures. I acknowledge the possibility behind the hon. Gentleman's question, because he will know what had to be done with individual timbers at Hampton Court palace. On the other hand, I have to say—I agree that this is not an informed statement—after touring the castle on Saturday, that those from the fire service themselves said that, because of the building's quality, it was less likely that the walls would have to be dismantled than might be the case in more modern walls.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): My right hon. Friend is aware that the Isle of Wight enjoys a very special relationship with the royal family, not least because of Osborne house, which houses one of the foremost collections relating to our government of India. In due course, will my right hon. Friend find time to write to me to confirm that the fire precautions in the royal palace are adequate and up to date?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend is quite right to bring Osborne house to my attention. My Department has a particular responsibility for the house and I will gladly write to him. I am due to write to him on other matters in relation to the House in any event.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The most important fact is that no life was lost. Did the Secretary of State consult the Prime Minister, the royal family, their advisers or anybody else before he decided to sign a blank cheque on our behalf and at our expense? If not, why not? Does he accept that the argument that the taxpayer should pay the bill rather lends support to the argument that the royal family should pay taxes just like everybody else?

Mr. Brooke: In answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question, I was asked at Windsor on Saturday a specific question: "Who will pay?" I enunciated the statutory responsibility of my Department for royal palaces. The hon. Gentleman's second question is for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): Will my right hon. Friend take heart from the remarkable restoration of York minster? Will he ensure that we employ the nation's finest craftsmen and builders to put the building right? Will he ensure also that visitors can see the restoration as it is being undertaken?

Mr. Brooke: Of course I assure my hon. Friend of the quality of craftsmen whom we will use. My hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), the Under-Secretary of State, will be visiting York next week, and there will be a further opportunity for consultation.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Is not the Secretary of State trying to have it both ways, in saying that Windsor castle and the royal collection are part of the national heritage for which we should have national collective responsibility, even though ownership of the royal collection is not with the nation? Will he now enter into discussions with the royal household formally to transfer ownership of the royal collections into the public domain, so that all of them are open to the public and so that responsibility for them lies with the Museums and Galleries Commission and with himself?

Mr. Brooke: All those who have visited Windsor in the past have been impressed with the scale of that part of the royal collection which is available on show. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that those parts of the royal collection which are on public show are moved around from time to time. I repeat that responsibility for the royal collection is not that of the Government but that of Her Majesty the Queen.

Points of Order

4.42 pm

Dr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Further to the point of order that I sought to raise earlier, Madam Speaker. Can you help the House with respect to the refusal of the Minister of Agriculture to answer questions on the GATT agricultural agreement, bearing in mind the hundreds of thousands of food and agricultural jobs in this country are involved, as is the case in France and throughout the European Community?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman and the House are aware that, as Speaker, I have no authority or responsibility to call a particular Minister to the Dispatch Box to answer those questions. If I had that responsibility, it might look as though I was selecting favourites.

Dr. Strang: I am grateful for your reply, Madam Speaker. I hope that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the House will appreciate that hon. Members on both sides of the House want to question the Minister of Agriculture on important agricultural issues.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): I rise to seek your guidance on a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have given notice to the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney) that I am about to raise this matter. When documents are quoted from by Ministers in this House it is the normal practice for that document to be available through the Library of the House. Can I draw your attentionto column 208 of the *Official Report* of the debate on Tuesday 17 November, when the hon. Member for Bradford, North said that he was quoting from a DTI document that had been published only overseas in overseas missions? When challenged as to the veracity of what he was quoting from, he said he would see me outside to give me a copy.

I have seen the hon. Gentleman on five occasions outside and written to him, and I still have not got the document. I wonder whether you could give some guidance as to how we could get this matter clarified.

Madam Speaker: Really, I do get some points of order. That really is a matter between the hon. Members concerned. The hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney) has promised the hon. Gentleman a document. Perhaps he will pursue it in order to obtain that document, but let me inform the hon. Gentleman and the House that, when a member of the Opposition or any Back Bencher makes reference to an official document, they do not have to lay it on the Table as a Minister has. Those are the rules of our House, and those are the rules of our proceedings.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Earlier today, a woman from Derbyshire rang me and said that she had had a fire on Friday and has to foot the bill herself. "Will you ask a Minister to stand up at the Dispatch Box," she asked, "and say that the Government are going to pay my bill as well as the Queen's?" I think that it is utterly wrong that the taxpayer——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows very well that that is not a point of order for the Chair.

Statutory Instruments, &c

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

CHILD SUPPORT FEES

That the draft Child Support Fees Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

COMPANIES (FEES)

That the Companies (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 2876) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

COMPANIES (DISCLOSURE)

That the draft Overseas Companies and Credit and Financial Institutions (Branch Disclosure) Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Companies Act 1985 (Disclosure of Branches and Bank Accounts) Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Opposition Day

[6TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Arms Exports (Iraq)

Madam Speaker: We now come to our debate on the conduct of Ministers on arms exports to Iraq. First, I must tell the House that I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister. Secondly, I must tell the House that, because of the demand to speak in the debate, I have had to limit speeches between the hours of 7 and 9 to 10 minutes. Would hon. Members speaking outside that period exercise considerable voluntary restraint?

4.45 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move,

That this House notes the evidence that up to July 1990 Her Majesty's Government was granting export licences for the supply to Iraq of defence equipment and munitions machines in clear breach of the Howe Guidelines of 1985 preventing the export of equipment that would significantly enhance military capability; is concerned that as a result of Her Majesty's Government's private change of policy British servicemen may have been exposed to fire from shells and rockets made in munitions factories equipped by Britain; regrets that no statement was made in Parliament or in public about the covert change in policy and that honourable Members were persistently misled by assurances that the Guidelines were being observed and that Britain had not helped arm Saddam; deplores the willingness of Her Majesty's Government to see citizens put on trial for exports at which Ministers had connived and to put their liberty at risk by attempting to prevent the disclosure of documents crucial to their defence; and believes that the conduct of Ministers in this matter has been inconsistent with the security of British troops, with open government, and with the just administration of legal process.

Two years ago, British troops were assembling in the Gulf in order that in the new year they might drive Saddam out of Kuwait. Because the Royal Scots recruit in my region, I, like many hon. Members, had many constituents on that expedition. On the eve of the offensive, I met on a number of occasions the support group of the wives and mothers of those men. I remember those meetings clearly, because they were so heavily charged with the emotions of those families, who knew that their men were going to face one of the largest standing armies in the world, lavishly equipped with some of the most sophisticated weaponry in the world.

The first charge against the Government is that, in the two years before the Gulf war, they had helped to equip that war machine, and in two years provided hundreds of millions of pounds' worth of machine tools straight to the factories that made the weapons.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Will the hon. Gentleman give way? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Cook: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman on this occasion, but I warn the House that many facts need to be put on the record, and I am sure that it would wish me to make progress with my speech.

Mr. Hayes: Does the hon. Gentleman think that it is wise that he should heed the old legal maxim that he who comes to equity should come with clean hands? Does he agree that he is presently serving time on the Opposition Benches for his economies with the actualité some time ago? *[Interruption.]* Why should the public believe him today, when they are of the view that the debate is nothing more than party political muck-raking? Leave the inquiry to Lord Justice Scott.

Mr. Cook: As my hon. Friends have already concluded, I was in error in giving way, but, for the avoidance of doubt, because I had some difficulty in following the hon. Gentleman's reasoning, at no stage have I exported either arms or machine tools to any other foreign power.

Conservative Members armed Saddam when they had ample evidence that he was a brutal tyrant who had already used his war machine to invade one neighbour, and, as that war with Iran would down, intensified his use of his war machine to terrify his own population.

In 1988, when the guidelines on exports to Iraq were relaxed, Lord Howe, the then Foreign Secretary, was telling the world and the House that he had compelling evidence that gas had been used to kill 5,000 Kurds, mostly women and children, in the Halabja massacre. At the time, his Minister of State, now the Minister for open government, was particularly indignant at Question Time on Saddam's gas attacks on his population, but, a year later, he was agreeing to arm Saddam, provided that the Department of Trade and Industry answered any questions about it.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cook: I will give way on this occasion to my hon. Friend, but again I make the same observation.

Mr. Corbyn: Is my hon. Friend aware that, shortly after the Halabja massacre in 1988, I was part of a delegation, which included Kurdish people, to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office? We met the said Minister, who expressed great disquiet about the gas attacks. However, when asked whether he would forthwith suspend all export credits, arms sales and trade with Iraq, he said that he would not, because trading interests came above considerations of our relationship with that tyrant.

Mr. Cook: As my hon. Friend reminds us, not only did the Foreign Office know that the regime was brutal: it knew that the ideology of Saddam's party revolved around his ambition to be the leader of a pan-Arab world. A stepping stone to that ambition, and at the heart of his war machine, was the drive to develop strategic weapons of mass destruction, to destabilise the middle east and to enable him to dominate it. In short, we helped to arm a man we knew to be brutal in his past conduct and megalomaniac in his aspirations.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No.

I have read that people who have seen the documents have accused their authors of cynical conduct. Having read them, it was not Ministers' cynical decisions that impressed me, but their stark naivety in thinking that they could arm a brutal, unstable dictator and that he would not use those arms. Why did Ministers not ask in those

[Mr. Cook]

documents, "Why does that man want such sophisticated weapons in such vast quantities?" They knew what the machine tools were for—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Oh, they knew.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I shall not give way.

The machine tools were pre-programmed for use in munitions factories. The Iraqis sent specifications of what they wanted from the tools, which were programmed to make fuses and shell casings. There was no question of their having a dual purpose.

Mr. Brandreth *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I shall not give way—there is quite enough information to embarrass the Government in my speech.

Nor can it be said that the machine tools were put in packing cases and sent to Iraq, where Saddam Hussein diverted them without anyone here knowing about it. Matrix Churchill sent workers to Iraq to set up the machine tools, to train their operators and to repair machines which did not work.

During the past week, I have been approached by Matrix Churchill employees who knew that the company was making machines to make weapons. They cannot believe that anyone could be in any doubt about that. I have here a statement from an employee who was sent to repair a machine which had already been installed. He writes that, when he got there,

"it was obviously a munitions factory. The main gates were guarded by at least 25 to 30 soldiers, all armed with automatic weapons. The surrounding areas were guarded by surface-to-air missile launchers, manned by a five-strong squad. Everywhere I looked there were large and small rockets, again with missile launchers. The ground was littered with spent shells."

It was not a general engineering factory—not even Saddam put a missile launcher to guard a car factory—but a munitions factory, at the heart of his war machine, and Ministers knew that that was where the machine tools were going.

I notice that the amendment refers to the "overriding consideration" of whether the equipment was lethal. The machine tools went into lethal weapon programmes. We know that at least two went into the Scud missile programme and that at least 30 have been found in Saddam Hussein's nuclear warhead factories. We know that many went to a factory that was intended to produce half a million shells per year. Those Scud missiles, nuclear warheads and Howitzer shells were lethal weapons.

To be sure, Saddam Hussein did not intend to stuff the machine tools down the barrel of a supergun and use them to shell his enemies. He had a more lethal purpose: to produce the weapons he needed to wage war on his enemies and critics.

The 1985 guidelines do not confine themselves to barring lethal equipment. They also bar any defence equipment which would significantly enhance military capability.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): The hon. Gentleman makes much of the fact that the machine tools were sent to make weaponry. Will he take it from someone who has operated most types of machine tool, that I know of no tool that cannot be converted to a military purpose? Can he tell me whether, in 1986 or 1987, he or the Labour party asked for all sales of machine tools to Iraq and Iran to be banned?

Mr. Cook: Surely the hon. Gentleman's logic should make him question whether the machine tools should have been exported if they were all capable of being converted. The hon. Gentleman does not seem to have been listening. I have been arguing that there was no need for Saddam Hussein to convert the tools, as they were pre-programmed and specified to produce fuses and shell cases. Before they were sent, the Matrix Churchill factory produced fuses and shells with them to find out whether they worked.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I shall not give way.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I understand that the hon. Gentleman does not wish to give way. Is that correct?

Mr. Cook: Yes.

The 1985 guidelines did not merely ban lethal equipment but also any defence equipment which would significantly enhance military capability. Between 1988 and 1990, we did just that, and Ministers knew it, because in 1989 they received a report from the Ministry of Defence entitled: "British Assistance to the Emerging Iraqi Arms Industry", which listed in its appendix five pages of companies providing defence equipment to Iraq, and which came to the conclusion that assistance from British companies had helped to build

"a very significant enhancement to the ability of Iraq to manufacture its own arms, thus to resume the war with Iran."

The Ministry of Defence concluded that Ministers had broken the guideline not to enhance military capability.

I notice that, in the amendment, the Government accuse us of "sensationalised" disclosures. If we have been sensational, it is only because we have published documents that show what Ministers did in meetings. I would not disagree with their choice of words. The picture that emerges from those documents is of Ministers arming one of the world's most brutal regimes and breaking their guidelines to do it. I agree with those on the Government Front Bench that that is sensational, and the Government knew it. We know that because, when the document was first produced in 1989, it was unclassified. In December 1990, it was marked "Restricted" in handwriting.

Why? Would someone on the Government Front Bench like to tell us? It was not as if the document would have been of any value to our enemy in the Gulf war. Saddam knew what we had provided—he knew rather more than the British Parliament. The document was reclassified because the Government became embarrassed at the major role which Britain had played in rebuilding a war machine that British troops had to fight.

There is another reason why Ministers might well be embarrassed. They not only helped to arm Saddam, but it looks as if Britain will have to pick up most of the bill. The Government agreed a new credit facility to Iraq in 1987, and the then Chief Secretary to the Treasury approved it —he is now the Prime Minister. Before he denies it, I accept that no one told him what he was approving. I am sure that no one showed him the letter of November 1987 from the Export Credits Guarantee Department, which said:

"A notional 20 per cent. has been set aside for military business"—

no nonsense there about dual use or general purpose machinery, only a clear credit facility for military business.

Today, a written answer from the DTI confirms that £830 million is outstanding, on which the ECGD might be invited to honour guarantees, in respect of exports to Iraq. If we assume that a notional 20 per cent. of that sum was for military business, the British taxpayer stands to foot £170 million to pay for the equipment that we provided for Saddam's war machine. We did not just arm his forces —we paid for them into the bargain.

I hope that no one today will claim that it was right to approve those exports on commercial grounds, because, judged as a commercial decision, it was a disaster for which the British taxpayer is still paying.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I cannot resist the hon. Gentleman, and I shall do so in a moment.

That £830 million is not that much less than the annual budget of the President of the Board of Trade when it is stripped of the swollen redundancy payments for miners. How much better would British industry benefit if that money had gone into supporting investment and training in British industry rather than in arms exports to a foreign power.

Mr. Oppenheim: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy in giving way. Will he answer the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page)? At any point in the middle or late 1980s, did Her Majesty's Opposition formally urge the Government to cease the export of machine tools to Iraq? Yes or no?

Mr. Cook: The answer is that, for once, we were naive enough to trust what we had been told by the hon. Gentleman's colleagues on the Front Bench *[Interruption.]* There is no point in the hon. Gentleman intervening if he does not listen to the answer. We were told by Ministers that they would not allow the export of lethal equipment or any defence equipment that enhanced the military capability of the Iraqis or the Iranians. We now know from the documents, however, that Ministers knew perfectly well that it was not general purpose machine tools that were being exported, but defence equipment that would produce some of the most sophisticated weapons. That was a clear breach of what the House had been assured.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No, I shall not.

Let us consider the defence that the Government have put forward. The commercial defence—the fact that we needed the money—is at least better than the most contemptible defence of all, which is to dump all the blame on Alan Clark. The idea is that the rest of them did not know what he was up to: he sneaked in by the back door at night and took all the decisions after the rest of them had gone home. That will not wash, because Alan Clark left the DTI in July 1989, and the most controversial decisions were taken after that date.

That defence will not wash because the Government are trying to blame the one man who told the truth. That is the real crime of Alan Clark, according to the Government. It is not that he participated in secret meetings to export arms to Saddam, or that he misled Parliament, but that he let the cat out of the bag.

If the President of the Board of Trade wants to point the finger at any colleague, let him point it at those who have yet to own up. Let him point it at Lord Trefgarne, who, in October 1989, said that the case for the guidelines had

"weakened to the point of extinction"

Let the finger point at Nicholas Ridley, who, in July 1990, wrote to the Prime Minister pressing for another "thorough review of policy". Let the finger point at the current Foreign Secretary who, on 19 July 1990, chaired a meeting of Ministers to review that policy, which resulted in a decision to release material for Saddam's Asa rocket project in the two weeks in which we now know he was massing his troops for the invasion of Kuwait.

I noticed that, just before the weekend, journalists were briefed that Ministers had really wanted to tell Parliament about the outcome of the meeting on 19 July—it was just that the summer recess came too soon to tell us. I have my doubts about how sorry they are that they did not tell us. First, as Ministers are well aware, anyone who had made such a statement in the last week of July 1990 would have looked a proper ass the next week when Saddam walked into Kuwait.

My second reason for doubt is even more compelling. If Ministers are really sorry that they did not tell us before the summer recess about what they had agreed at that meeting, they could always have told us after the summer recess. After the invasion of Kuwait, they were given many chances to do so by my hon. Friends, who wanted to know the truth about those exports. Not once in the answers that we were given was there even a glimpse that the guidelines had been bent.

On 3 December 1990, the then Minister for Trade, the right hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury)—he is still a member of the President of the Board of Trade's team at the DTI—said in the House:

> "The guidelines . . . were set out . . . on 29 October 1985, and since then they have been scrupulously and carefully followed"—[*Official Report,* 3 December 1990; Vol. 182, c. 29.]

In August 1991 the right hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley), who is still a Cabinet colleague of the President of the Board of Trade, told the Select Committee on Trade and Industry:

> "Our examination of the records shows that the policy announced in Parliament in 1985 was adhered to both in the spirit and in the letter."

Not a word there about the fact that, in December 1988, the letter of the guidelines was changed without any announcement in Parliament and that, by November 1989, the spirit of the guidelines had been extinguished.

It is not surprising that we were not told. It is a repeated theme of the minutes and memoranda disclosed to the court that Parliament should not be told and that the public must not be allowed to know. As one official expressed it:

> "There seems to be considerable merit in keeping as quiet as possible about this politically sensitive issue."

When Alan Clark proposed that the guidelines be relaxed, he added in his letter:

> "I would not propose an announcement of any decision."

When one reads the documents, one becomes persuaded that the problem that Ministers perceived was

[Mr. Cook]

not that Saddam might use the machines to make weapons; what they were really worried about was that the public might find out what they had decided.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Does the hon. Gentleman at least acknowledge that Ministers were under pressure at that time from Opposition Members who were keen to maintain their constituents' jobs and constituency businesses? Is not he aware of the pressure brought to bear on Ministers by Opposition Members?

Mr. Cook: No, I am not aware of any such pressure. If the hon. Gentleman has knowledge of any hon. Member who exerted such pressure, he owes it to the House to disclose who he is talking about. In case he gets hold of my reply and misrepresents it, as the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) has sought to do with other information—I note that the hon. Gentleman has already left the Chamber; he is probably out researching this point even as I speak—I should say that I met representatives from the Machine Tool Technologies Association a month ago. I have written to that association to learn what minutes it had written up of our meeting, just so that we are both clear about it.

Those representatives presented me with their demands for the machine tools industry. Those demands did not include any demand that we should sanction exports to dicey regimes that might use them against British troops. However, those demands contained a full list of the added help that is needed to provide investment in small industry and the stimulus for business to buy machine tools, as well as the help it needs for training. It is that pressure that my hon. Friends have constantly applied to the Government, and to which they never received any response.

Mr. Churchill: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No, I must get on.

I have recited the replies that we received in the House. Earlier this year, the Prime Minister released the document entitled "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", in which he said that Ministers had a

> "duty to give Parliament and the public as full information as possible about the policies, decisions and actions of the Government."

If hon. Members play back the answers that we have received on exports to Iraq and asked themselves whether those questions provided

> "as full information as possible about the policies . . . of the Government"

on arms exports to Iraq, the answer must clearly be a resounding no. I doubt if even Conservative Members are convinced about that. No one else in the country is—at any rate, according to the latest opinion poll, 3 per cent. believe that Ministers have told the whole truth, while 83 per cent. do not.

There is, rather remarkably, one person among that 3 per cent.—I presume that he must be counted among that group—who was possibly the most curious victim of all the statements to Parliament. It turns out that the Prime Minister himself was misled by those ministerial statements. Until two weeks ago, he really believed that his Ministers had always observed the guidelines. He was shocked when one of his former Ministers said otherwise in court two weeks ago.

The Prime Minister's defence is well known. It is simple, if inelegant: nobody told him. When he was Foreign Secretary, nobody told him that his No. 2 was in dispute with the Department of Trade and Industry over Matrix Churchill exports. Nobody told him that the Foreign Office was in dispute with the Northern Ireland Office over the Iraqi purchase of the Learfan factory. Nobody told him even when he was briefed to meet the Iraqi Foreign Secretary, and nobody told him when he was Chancellor and his private office was warned of Customs' concern over Matrix Churchill. Nobody told him what happened at the meeting of 19 July, to which he was invited but could not make it—no doubt because nobody told him where it was being held.

It would take another John Bunyan to do justice to that Pilgrim's Progress around the key offices of state, preserving such invincible innocence. I am driven to wonder whether he ever asked why nobody told him. Since Alan Clark's appearance in court, has he had in any of his officials and asked them why they did not tell him what was going on? They knew—they told Lord Howe when he was Foreign Secretary about the controversy, and they briefed the present Foreign Secretary about the controversy.

The Prime Minister had the same private secretary as those other two Foreign Secretaries—Mr. Stephen Wall. Mr. Wall knew what was going on, because he briefed those two Foreign Secretaries. Did it never occur to the Prime Minister to ask Mr. Wall why he was allowed to continue to state that the guidelines had been observed, when half of Whitehall knew that they were being broken?

It will not be difficult for the Prime Minister to question Mr. Wall, because, after he moved to 10 Downing street, he appointed Mr. Wall to advise him on foreign policy affairs. I presume that it was Mr. Wall who advised him before he said in the House, two weeks ago, that, from 1985 until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the Government operated under guidelines set out by the Foreign Secretary in 1985.

There is one way to convince me that nobody told the Prime Minister—for him to haul Mr. Wall over the coals for having done such a rotten job of briefing him. If he will not do so, the implication will clearly be that, either at the Foreign Office or at Downing street, Mr. Wall shared all he knew with his boss.

The President of the Board of Trade has a better defence that the Prime Minister. He has an alibi, because, during the key period of 1988-90, he was nowhere near the scene of the crime. He was busy writing books calling for a strategy for industry, a partnership with business and a programme for the steel, aerospace and car industries. Those books provide such embarrassing proof that his private views diverge from his public policy that I daily expect him to slap a public interest immunity certificate on the Library to prevent if from disclosing the fact that it has a copy.

That brings me to the third charge against the Government. First, they armed Saddam; secondly, when he used those arms against a British ally, they covered up the fact that they had provided the arms; and thirdly, as the cover-up unravelled, rather than own up, they were willing to see three executives of Matrix Churchill go to prison.

The President of the Board of Trade is one of four members of the Government who signed certificates seeking to prevent disclosure of documents vital to the defence of the three executives. I have read all three certificates, and admit that the President's certificate was worded carefully and with great attention. I suspect that his was the only one drafted personally rather than by an official. It has the mark of being signed by a man who was troubled by what he had been asked to do.

I cannot say the same about the certificate signed by the Home Secretary. It does not have the same stamp of an agonised conscience. There is one notable difference between the Home Secretary's certificate and those signed by the other three. The other three Ministers all signed that they had read the documents in front of them, whereas the Home Secretary's certificate said that the documents

> "have been shown to me".

Such a formula will come in handy the next time he is asked whether he has read the Maastricht treaty.

Let us be clear about the purpose of those certificates. The parent certificate, as acknowledged by the President in his certificate, is the one signed by the Minister of State, Foreign Office. In its opening paragraph, that certificate says:

> "The purpose of this certificate is to explain to the court why, for reasons of public interest, such documents should not be so disclosed."

Over the page, the certificate says:

> "The production of such documents would be injurious to the public interest"

and

> "it is necessary for the proper functioning of the public service that the documents should be withheld from production".

The intention behind that certificate is plain: it was to persuade the judge not to disclose the documents. Let there be no pretence about the purpose of the certificates: they were submitted with the purpose and in the hope that those documents would not become public property.

Back in 1956, under another Conservative Government, the then Lord Chancellor, Lord Kilmuir, said that the Government would never claim immunity in a criminal case. The reason for that is easily understood. It is wrong in principle that, when liberty is at risk, evidence that could be vital to the defence of a defandant should be withheld. It was exactly that principle that Ministers endangered when they sought to prevent the defence from getting those documents.

Let us suppose that Judge Smedley had accepted the arguments in the certificates and had decided that disclosure was contrary to public interest. Let us suppose that he had not released those documents to the defence and that the three business men had been convicted. Would the Government be confident that they had done the right thing? Could they persuade themselves that they had behaved honourably when those three executives went to prison?

If they do not answer those questions to the House, they must do so to their own consciences, because the public interest also requires that there should be a fair administration of justice. It is in the public interest that justice be done, and justice would not have been done had those documents not been released.

I fully understand why the Attorney-General was so keen to advise Ministers to keep the documents locked away, and why the Government would not wish to release them for another 30 years. They tell a tale of deceit, of how Ministers agreed in private to arm Saddam, even though they knew how brutal he was. They tell of how they conspired to conceal from Parliament what they were doing; how they desperately tried to cover up what they had done when they found Britain at war with Iraq; and how they let three business men face prison rather than release the documents that would show what Ministers had done.

Those documents have convinced the nation that it was not the executives of Matrix Churchill who should have been in the dock but the Ministers who approved what they were doing and who deserted them when they were caught. We have given Parliament an opportunity to return a verdict on the conduct of those Ministers. Tonight we shall vote to record our contempt for the Ministers who misled the House, deceived the public and tried to muzzle the courts.

5.18 pm

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

> 'notes that up to August 1990 Her Majesty's Government granted export licences for the supply of goods to Iraq in accordance with guidelines which had as their overriding consideration not to supply any lethal equipment and which also restricted the supply of any defence equipment; recognises that it will be for Lord Justice Scott, under the terms of his inquiry, to consider whether these guidelines were followed; welcomes the Government's decision to give the inquiry wide terms of reference which will enable Lord Justice Scott to examine all of the facts, including the decisions taken by those signing public interest immunity certificates in the Matrix Churchill case; and deplores the sensationalised attempts of Her Majesty's Opposition to anticipate the inquiry's findings.'.

It may be for the convenience of the House if I set out at once the order in which I intend to cover the principal issues raised by the debate. First, I intend to explain the procedures within which British export policy was conducted in the context of the changing pattern of events from 1984 onwards. Secondly, I shall refer to how the rules were applied. Thirdly, I shall discuss the trial of the three directors of Matrix Churchill and the role of Ministers in issuing public immunity certificates. Fourthly, I shall cover the establishment of the Scott inquiry, its terms of reference and related matters.

In December 1984, the Government drew up a set of guidelines to govern the export of defence equipment to Iran and Iraq. Those guidelines were formalised in 1985 when Lord Howe, the then Foreign Secretary, announced them to the House of Commons on 29 October 1985.

The then Foreign Secretary said that there were four constraints. He said:

> "(i) We should maintain our consistent refusal to supply any lethal equipment to either side;
> (ii) Subject to that overriding consideration, we should attempt to fulfil existing contracts and obligations;
> (iii) We should not, in future, approve orders for any defence equipment which, in our view, would significantly enhance the capability of either side to prolong or exacerbate the conflict;
> (iv) In line with this policy, we should continue to scrutinise rigorously all applications for export licences for the supply of defence equipment to Iran and Iraq."—[*Official Report*, 29 October 1985; Vol. 84, c. *450*.]

Scrutiny was to be carried out by the interdepartmental committee on exports to Iran and Iraq, which comprises officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Trade and Industry and other Departments as necessary. Not only would individual licence applications need to be

[Mr. Michael Heseltine]

scrutinised, but it was obvious that, in many cases, a judgment would have to be exercised as to whether or not certain potential exports came within the rules. I draw attention only to the words "significantly enhance" or "prolong or exacerbate", so that the House may appreciate the detail of the judgment that was bound to be necessary.

I make two observations. First, by no means all our major competitors were so constrained—*[Interruption.]* I should have thought that Labour Members would welcome the fact that we gave a lead in the matter. Secondly, it is obvious that any interpretation of those rules required careful consideration of individual export licence applications. The embargo did not prohibit the export of all defence-related equipment.

The substance of that policy remained in place until it was overtaken by the United Nations embargo on all trade with Iraq that came into effect after the invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. A change in the wording of the guidelines was obviously necessary to reflect the fact that there had been a ceasefire in the Iran-Iraq war. Questions have been raised about the nature of the change in the guidelines and why it was not announced to the House. Those matters will need to be explored by Lord Justice Scott on the basis not only of looking at the numerous documents, but of talking to the Ministers and officials involved in making those decisions at the time.

I should like to stress one point. It has been suggested that a change in the wording of the guidelines meant that dual-use goods and industrial equipment, such as machine tools, would no longer be caught because they did not provide direct assistance in the conduct of operations. In fact, during that time, scrutiny continued of dual-use goods, including machine tools.

In June 1990, my predecessor, Lord Ridley, wrote to the then Prime Minister suggesting a consideration at Cabinet Minister level of changes in the guidelines. In July 1990, Ministers discussed the desirability of a continuation of the rules under the chairmanship of the Foreign Secretary against a background where circumstances appeared to have changed beyond those that gave rise to the rules in the first place——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: I shall not give way as I must explain the context of what I am saying. I shall certainly give way later, but it is important that the sequence of this part of my speech should be heard in one piece.

The circumstances had changed beyond those that gave rise to the rules in the first place. Equipment from all over the world was being sold to Iraq. British companies were at risk of losing orders.

I shall remind the House of the background circumstances. In 1990, Iraq was purchasing industrial and dual-use equipment in the world market from a wide range of countries, including the United States, west Germany, Japan, France and Switzerland. The group of Ministers decided to recommend to their colleagues in government that a collective decision be taken to revise policy, but not to permit the export of lethal equipment. That same group of Ministers also concluded that any change should be announced to Parliament.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) made a number of grave allegations today, one of which was that when the facts were fully revealed it would become clear that Ministers had no intention of announcing the change to Parliament. I merely wish to tell the hon. Gentleman that he is absolutely wrong. [HON. MEMBERS: "Prove it."] I am only making the point that I have read the papers that Lord Justice Scott will read, and I am telling the hon. Member for Livingston that what he has said today is utterly without foundation.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Is the strategy of the Secretary of State today to be as follows: when documents of which he is aware appear to support his argument, he will quote them to the House, but when documents of which he is aware do not support his argument, he will say that we must wait for the inquiry?

Mr. Heseltine: That is not my strategy. The hon. Member for Livingston gave an impression of what is contained in certain documents—which he cannot have read—that is diametrically wrong. I happen to have read the documents, and can tell him that I am diametrically right.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): On that point, will the Secretary of State explain why the then Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), said at a meeting with Lord Trefgarne and Alan Clark that he was prepared to anounce publicly then —as he was in January—the form of words adopted and agreed in January?

Mr. Heseltine: As the right hon. Gentleman will know, that was not the meeting to which the hon. Member for Livingston was referring. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) is referring to an earlier meeting, but the meeting that is of consequence—and on which the House is rightly focusing —is the meeting at Cabinet level chaired by the then Foreign Secretary. It was at that meeting that it was decided that it was appropriate to change the guidelines and announce them to the House of Commons. That did not happen, because by the time that it would have been possible to do so, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait had taken place.

Mr. Robin Cook: The President is absolutely correct. A fortnight after the meeting that apparently relaxed the guidelines, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. However, the President has not explained why, if the meeting at Cabinet level decided that the House of Commons should be told, when Ministers were repeatedly asked questions during the next two years, not a single reference was made either to the meeting in 1990—which the President now regards as critical—or to the changes in the guidelines in 1988 or the many decisions in between that represented a weakening of those guidelines to the point of extinction. If it was decided in July 1990 to tell Parliament, why was there a failure to do so in the subsequent two years?

Mr. Heseltine: Because they never changed the guidelines. That is the point that the hon. Gentleman cannot understand. The meeting decided that it would recommend a change in the guidelines and that if a decision to do so was taken, that would be announced to Parliament. However, the guidelines were not changed, so it was not appropriate to make an announcement to Parliament.

Mr. Robin Cook *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Hon. Members cannot just stand up when the Secretary of State is addressing the House. They must wait to see whether he gives way.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The House will recall that, earlier today, the Speaker said that, when Government documents were quoted, they must be placed on the Table of the House. The Secretary of State has referred to Government documents, Cabinet and other meetings, and told the House that it should wait until Lord Scott replies before commenting on the matter. Those documents should be made available to the House; otherwise the Scott inquiry is just a way of silencing the House in its task of establishing the accountability of Ministers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Madam Speaker's ruling was clear on state papers and direct quotations therefrom.

Mr. Heseltine: In the event, as I said, Iraq——

Mr. Benn: Further to my point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With great respect, Cabinet papers are state papers. There is no distinction between one type of state paper and another. The Secretary of State has quoted from a state paper, and that paper should now be made available to the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It appears that Cabinet papers are not state papers. I shall take further advice and report to the House later.

Mr. Heseltine: In the event, Iraq invaded Kuwait. These proposals were not considered further and were never implemented. The House will be aware——

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The President of the Board of Trade has stated that, when the Overseas and Defence Committee of the Cabinet, on 19 July 1990, considered the possibility of changing the guidelines on the embargo—I quote the words which he has offered this afternoon—"circumstances had changed." Did the Committee take into account the fact that among the circumstances that had changed was the fact that it was known that Iraq was seeking to acquire nuclear triggers to manufacture nuclear weapons? Did the changed circumstances include the knowledge that it had become public that Iraq was trying to manufacture a supergun with British parts? Did the Committee consider the fact that, three days before it met, *The Sunday Times* had published a story about British-manufactured titanium parts for the manufacture of Iraqi missiles? In the circumstances, was it appropriate for the Committee to recommend relaxation of the guidelines?

Mr. Heseltine: The right hon. Gentleman is as aware as I am that that is precisely why we are having an inquiry. We are having one precisely to establish who knew and who should have known and whether these matters should properly have been taken into account. That is the purpose of the inquiry.

The House will be aware that publicly available memoranda were submitted to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry for its inquiry into supergun and exports to Iraq in general. The memoranda listed details of the exports from January 1987 to August 1990.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the President of the Board of Trade give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No.

The House will be interested to know that during that period—January 1987 to August 1990—Iraq concluded contracts for the import of defence equipment worth an estimated $11·3 billion. Contracts placed with United Kingdom companies during that period were worth only $200 million, less than 2 per cent. of Iraqi procurement.

Even today, there have been references to export credit guarantees supporting sales of defence goods to Iraq, and suggestions that the taxpayer will be paying £200 million for the sales. The facts are as follows. The Export Credits Guarantee Department provided support for United Kingdom exports from 1984 onwards under a series of intergovernmental protocols. These covered both short-term and medium-term credits. From 1985 onwards, however, a limit was applied to medium-term credit for defence-related goods. As the hon. Member for Livingston said, at the end of 1985 the limit was 20 per cent.

The total of medium-term export credits taken up between 1983 and 1989 for defence-related goods came to just £54·3 million, or 6 per cent. of medium-term credit taken up for all goods by Iraq. That is entirely different from the figure produced by the hon. Gentleman a few minutes ago. When he quoted the amounts that are outstanding—that have not been repaid by Iraq—he was talking in the main, with the exception of the £54·3 million to which I have referred, about goods for peaceful purposes—industrial contracts in British factories for British jobs.

All exports, whether benefiting from short-term or medium-term credits, were subject to export licensing regulations and any claim against export credit would normally be invalid if such a licence had not been obtained. The defence-related equipment supplied under medium-term credit did not include armaments of any sort. It ranged from radio communications equipment to power supplies, video recording systems and diesel test equipment.

That brings me to the allegation that, while rules were in place, they were flouted with ministerial connivance, if not positive encouragement. The seriousness of such allegations cannot be overstated, but nor can they be examined with the care that is appropriate without a full and independent inquiry. Certainly, they cannot be examined with only partial discovery of the evidence or selective quotations. That is why the Government immediately set up an inquiry under Lord Justice Scott.

Of course there was a continuing debate in Whitehall about the desirability of individual export contracts. Some were turned down—for example, Hawk aircraft, civilian helicopters and small boats. That is clearly established. Clearly, Ministers and officials had to weigh what were often conflicting interests in changing circumstances. In interpreting policy guidelines, judgments had to be made about British contracts for British factories offering British jobs in circumstances where others in other nations were queuing up to fill the orders if we did not. No Government can escape, or should try to do so, from their legitimate consideration of our national interest in these circumstances.

I shall return to the Scott inquiry.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the President of the Board of Trade allow me to intervene?

Mr. Heseltine: No.

I make the point at this stage——

Mr. Dalyell: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No.

I make the point at this stage. The Opposition demanded an inquiry under the Tribunal of Inquiries (Evidence) Act 1921. That was the request of the Leader of the Opposition. If we had agreed to it, the debate would not be taking place today. Little of the press coverage would have been permitted. The first consequence of a 1921 Act inquiry is that the matter becomes sub judice. Secondly, the time scale is likely to be of a different order. It is fair to say, however, that one advantage of such an inquiry is that the country might have been spared the activities of the hon. Member for Livingston.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No.

The hon. Member for Livingston applied all his energies to blaming my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The hon. Gentleman was the impresario who so debased the general election campaign with the cynical exploitation of a five-year-old girl. He has been up to his old tricks again. The headline screamed, "Cook Reveals All". You and I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, might have faced so daunting a prospect with less than our usual equanimity. The hon. Gentleman is not exactly what one might call a Chippendale.

Behind the gory headline, it was obvious——

Mr. Dalyell: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No.

It was obvious that this matter was being played for every piece of applause that the hon. Member for Livingston could find. He had no intention that——

Mr. Dalyell: Will the right hon. Gentleman allow me——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall be most grateful if the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) will resume his seat. It is clear that the Secretary of State will not give way at this stage.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member for Livingston had no intention that all the evidence should be produced at once for a full appreciation of the matter. Not a bit of it. It was to be a selected quotation here and an inaccuracy there for day after day. It was to be another revelation and another gathering of pencil-sucking journalists, with row after row of discarded raincoats. It was not to be done with the flourish of a sort of Soho stripper. This was not a striptease, it was a Cooktease.

I shall give the House two examples of the hon. Gentleman's techniques. In his letter to the Prime Minister on 13 November, he quoted Lord Trefgarne, then a Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry, as saying that the operation of the ministerial guidelines had "weakened to the point of extinction."

I shall give the House the full quotation.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Another state document?

Mr. Heseltine: It is a document from which the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend quoted. However, I shall not quote it selectively; I shall quote the whole passage, which states:

"The continuing ceasefire has necessitated reconsideration of the operation of the ministerial guidelines and weakened to the point of extinction any case for prohibiting exports of general purpose industrial equipment for fear that it might be put to military use."

That is a very different letter. If the hon. Gentleman cannot even quote accurately from Government documents, what credence can we place on his preposterous allegations about the extent of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's knowledge of the affair?

Mr. Benn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Secretary of State has now said that he is quoting from a state document—*[Interruption.]* Yes, he said that. I am asking you to protect the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I am not engaging in argument. The House has responsibilities in this matter and the Secretary of State is quoting from a state document. Every Cabinet paper states, "This paper is the property of Her Britannic Majesty's Government." A state paper has been quoted, but the House is being allowed the opportunity to hear only certain passages that the Secretary of State wishes to reveal.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am quite sure that the Secretary of State is an honourable man, as is every hon. Gentleman and hon. Lady in the House. If he is quoting from a state document, it will have been tabled. If he is not, he has every right to quote from it.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Do you intend to protect the House against what has become an unworthy rant? Can we be told why, if all that the Secretary of State said is true, three men were prosecuted? If all the documents were debated by Ministers, why were those three Matrix Churchill directors prosecuted?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House knows that the Chair is not responsible for the quality of speeches.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In view of what my right hon. Friend has said, would it be in order for the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) to withdraw his earlier statement?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member for Livingston was not content simply with selective quotations. Grubbing around in the undergrowth, he though that he had hit on another winner. He discovered that a telegram had been sent from the Foreign Office, signed "Howe", to our embassy in Tokyo seeking information about an aspect of the Matrix Churchill affair. Even that argument exploded in his hands. The telegram never went to Lord Howe's office. All telegrams from the Foreign Office go out in the Foreign Secretary's name, no matter who originates them. If it is love and kisses from the cleaning lady in London to the third secretary in Moscow on his birthday, the happy message will go out in the name of the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Benn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it another point of order?

Mr. Benn: It is the same point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Nothing in my previous point of order reflected on the honour of the Secretary of State or any other Minister. I am asking you to apply the rules of "Erskine May". Ambassadorial telegrams are all state documents. We cannot discuss this matter if some people have access to documents. We have to protect the House, not one user.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have given a clear ruling—*[Interruption.]* Order. How can I give a ruling if hon. Members interrupt me? It is clear that, if a state document is quoted directly, it must be tabled. That is the ruling, and I expect all hon. Members to abide by it.

Mr. Heseltine: It is extraordinary that the whole debate is based upon quotations that the hon. Member for Livingston has taken from documents released to the court by the Government, yet not a word of protest is heard from Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen about their ability to quote selectively from those documents. All that I am doing, without quoting from those documents, is to set the record in a full context. That is the inevitable consequence of a debate that has been originated by the Opposition, not the Government.

Many hundreds of telegrams a day, from every Tom, Dick and Harry in the Foreign Office building, are sent out in the name of the Foreign Secretary. All that the debate reveals is that Labour has been out of office for a very long time. It no longer knows how government works, so Labour Members make it up and trust to luck. The hon. Gentleman got it wrong. The headlines faded—the six-inch banner on the front page subsided to an inside column headed, "Cook fails to convince"—*[Interruption.]* Oh yes, it was there.

The hon. Gentleman held about three press conferences, with more disclosures, and even the journalists began to lose faith in him. Indeed, even better than that, the hon. Gentleman is now beginning to realise that he has made a mess of it. I heard him on the radio on Saturday morning. I understand that he is about to carpet some hapless research assistant. He said:

> "I could not have done it all myself. My assistant worked all night."

That was the basis of three weeks of allegations by the hon. Gentleman. It is a terrible warning to the research assistant about where the blame will lie.

I want to deal with the suggestion that my right hon. Friends and I sought to cover up the evidence available to us in our Departments. The suggestion, which has been widely reported in the national press, is that we were prepared to allow innocent men to be convicted rather than expose the Government to the risk of criticism. If for no other reason, the Scott inquiry is essential to establish the facts.

My three colleagues and I were each approached with a request to sign a public interest immunity certificate. It was not a collective decision; we were each signing in respect of papers within our own Departments. It was for each of us to read the papers in our Departments and to satisfy ourselves that they came within the categories either of security or of advice to Ministers—and if we were so satisfied, we had to sign.

Lord Justice Scott will satisfy himself on whether we acted properly. He will consider what we said and did and he will have before him the advice that we have received from the Attorney-General, which my right hon. and learned Friend explained to the House on 10 November. I shall add only one thing—that I want to express my gratitude to Mr. James Hunt QC, who appeared for the defence in the Matrix Churchill trial. In a letter to *The Times* on 13 November——

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): He is not a QC.

Mr. Heseltine: Mr. Hunt is a QC. It is intolerable that the Opposition should seek to denigrate those who are responsible for the conduct of justice.

I shall quote from the letter written by the QC who appeared for the defence in the Matrix Churchill case. The letter says:

> "We feel bound to state that much of the reporting elsewhere in the media of the government documents issued has caused us to think we must have been present in an altogether different court.
>
> The plain fact of the matter is that counsel for the Crown said at the outset, when placing the public interest immunity certificates before the court, that the question of disclosure was a matter for the trial judge and not for the Ministers concerned. Public interest immunity cannot be waived by either the prosecution or the Ministers. It was for the judge to decide whether the interests of justice in ensuring a fair trial for the defendants outweighed those considerations of public interests referred to in the certificates.
>
> There was no question of anyone attempting to suppress evidence. In the event, the judge decided in favour of disclosure and the documents were immediately produced. Although views may differ as to the importance of the documents, the approach of counsel for the Crown to the question of public interest immunity was entirely in accordance with our understanding of the decided cases."

I could not have put the matter more clearly. That is the position as I understood it. I would not have acted in the way that I did unless I had been absolutely satisfied that the judge would make available those documents or those parts of a document which he considered necessary for the proper course of justice. Therefore, I totally and absolutely reject the accusations of the hon. Member for Livingston.

Mr. Robin Cook: I repeat the question that I asked in my speech. If Judge Smedley had accepted the advice in the certificates that disclosure would be contrary to the public interest and the documents had not been revealed, and if the three executives had been convicted, does the President of the Board of Trade believe that in those circumstances justice would have been done?

Mr. Heseltine: That is simply another grave accusation about the judge in charge of the trial. The judge was in a position to exercise a judgment. I knew that he would exercise that judgment, because I had established beyond question that he would consider the documents. If the judge had considered the documents necessary for the conduct of justice, he would have released them. If I must rely on the Attorney-General or the hon. Member for Livingston, it is the simplest decision that I have ever had to make in my life.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): I have read my right hon. Friend's certificate. I think that it is an artful and true document. If it was a duty, why was the duty not invoked in the Ponting case when the prosecution made available, without Crown immunity or the claim for Crown immunity, the Crown jewels?

Mr. Heseltine: It is about eight years since I stood here to deal with the Ponting case. If I remember correctly, I agreed at that time to make available the documents known as the Crown jewels to a Select Committee of the

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House. I did that so that the House could have an opportunity through its Select Committee to consider deeply sensitive, secure information. Having done that, I was grateful that the Select Committee supported the Government's judgment at the time. The House was as fully briefed as possible, compatible with the immensely secure information that those documents contained.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): As the Secretary of State is telling the House about the state of his knowledge, will he tell us whether he knew when he signed the certificate that the three accused had been acting in accordance with Government policy, and that one of them had been giving valuable information to the security services?

Mr. Heseltine: The certificate that I was asked to sign did not ask me to become involved in investigating or even understanding the nature of the prosecution. However, it asked me to look at documents in my Department and determine the technical issue of whether they were within one of two categories. That is the issue which I was asked to determine. That is the nature of the certificate, and I signed it on that understanding.

Mr. Campbell: It is a simple question, yes or no. Did the right hon. Gentleman know the information that I put to him earlier?

Mr. Heseltine: It is clear from what I said that I was not involved, and I was not expected to be involved, in the conduct of the trial. I had not sought to involve myself in the issues that the trial raised. In no way was that my responsibility.

We are dealing simply with whether Ministers should have signed the public interest immunity certificates. I was advised that it was my duty to sign them, and I did so on that basis.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I shall ask the Secretary of State two questions, one of which he has already been asked but to which he has not comprehensively responded. Did he know—yes or no—that the people who were to go on trial and who were the subjects of information contained in the certificates had been of assistance to the Government? When he signed the certificates, was he aware that they were relevant to criminal proceedings that would affect the liberty of the subjects?

Mr. Heseltine: Of course I was aware of the significance of the trial and the charges upon which the outcome of the trial depended. That is why, as Lord Justice Scott will want to establish, I asked the questions and discussed the matter in the way that I did. It is essential that Lord Justice Scott looks at the matters. It is the only way in which the allegations made—I believe irresponsibly—by the Opposition can be adequately dealt with. What I knew, what I should have known, the questions that I asked and the questions that I should have asked are matters which will be properly examined.

I repeat what I said earlier: I had to decide whether the legal position gave me any discretion in signing the documents. If counsel acting for the defence believed that Ministers had no discretion, why should I be persuaded that Opposition Members had a greater insight into ministerial duties than counsel who were responsible for defending the very people that Opposition Members were concerned about?

Mr. Kinnock: I recognise that, in responding to a question with another question, the Secretary of State is engaging in a fair parliamentary debating technique. However, he still has not answered two basic questions. I shall concentrate on the first one.

When the right hon. Gentleman signed the certificate, did he know that the people to which the material related had been of assistance to the Government in collecting intelligence information which was of use to the Government?

Mr. Heseltine: The right hon. Gentlleman must be aware that I, as Secretary of State, am not in a position to involve myself in prosecuting proceedures. That is not a ministerial responsibility. The right hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that the moment one is drawn into discussions on that subject, a vast range of sub-questions arise which can be dealt with only by a proper and full inquiry.

The charge against Ministers is that they tried to conceal the facts from the court. I did not try to conceal the facts from the court. That is the responsibility that I bear. I have no doubt whatever that the matter will be fully——

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No, I will not give way. I have given way several times.

I have no doubt whatever that the matter will be explored exhaustively by Lord Justice Scott's inquiry, and properly so. The issue that the House is invited to examine is whether Ministers properly signed the certificates. On the legal advice to us, there was no discretion.

Mr. Kinnock: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is clearly important that the House should never be misled. It would be dreadful, would it not, if a right hon. or hon. Member were accused of seeking to mislead? It is important that we understand that no charge has been levelled against the President of the Board of Trade. A simple question was asked. The right hon. Gentleman cannot be dragged into anything if the honest answer is the simple one—no.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman was formerly the Leader of the Opposition, and knows that that matter is not for the Chair.

Mr. Heseltine: In the event, as the House knows, the papers themselves were to play no part in the prosecuting counsel's decision to recommend to his clients, the Commissioners of Customs and Excise, that the trial should be ended. The evidence of Alan Clark under cross-examination proved the critical point and is now the subject of investigation.

The House will want to be satisfied about the nature of the inquiry to be undertaken by Lord Justice Scott. It has been kept fully informed. Lord Justice Scott has wide terms of reference. His inquiry is not restricted to the Matrix Churchill affair but can cover exports over the whole period from 1984 to 1990. He will consider the PII issue and the decisions taken in relation to prosecution.

Ministers will be required to give evidence and officials have been instructed to co-operate. All Government papers sought by Lord Justice Scott will be provided to him. He alone will determine which matters he considers relevant and he will be able to cover them all in his inquiry. Lord Justice Scott will have unfettered discretion as to what to publish and whether, or what parts of, his inquiry will be in public.

Lord Justice Scott knows that if he feels unable to obtain satisfactory attendance or answers, he is free to ask the Government to convert the inquiry into a 1921 Act inquiry. If he asks, the Government will agree to his request. I do not believe that the Government could give more comprehensive reassurance than I have just repeated.

I was dismayed to read in *The Independent* this morning an article on page one that carried the headline,

"Labour raises doubt over Iraq arms export inquiry."

I will quote the second and third paragraphs of that report:

"Robin Cook, Labour's spokesman on trade and industry, also raised doubts about the independence of the Scott inquiry, saying: 'What we see at the end of the day will depend on negotiations with Lord Justice Scott and the Government . . . The inquiry is staffed by the same Treasury solicitors that advised those government ministers not to disclose documents in the Matrix Churchill case.'"

Once again, the hon. Member for Livingston makes two extremely serious allegations. The first is that Lord Justice Scott could have his independence constrained by negotiations with the Government. I utterly refute that charge. I urge the hon. Gentleman to confirm my understanding of Lord Justice Scott's independence. Does the hon. Gentleman really believe that Lord Justice Scott would allow his independence to be constrained by Government?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Robin Cook: A moment ago, the President of the Board of Trade said that it was open to Lord Justice Scott to come back and to reconstitute the inquiry as a tribunal of inquiry. The right hon. Gentleman is well aware that, if Lord Justice Scott did so, the proceedings would take place in public, the evidence would be on the record, and everyone would know what went on in private. If the right hon. Gentleman believes that there may be a case for coming back in that way and for leaving Lord Justice Scott to request that, why do the Government not agree now to allow the inquiry to take place in public—and prove to the whole world that it is taking place in public and is independent, and that the evidence is fully reported? If the inquiry were so set up, would the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that it would not be staffed by the same Treasury solicitors that advised his Government?

Mr. Heseltine: It took the hon. Gentleman a long time to think of that answer and a long time to give it—the problem is that it answered a question that I did not ask. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that Lord Justice Scott would allow his independence to be compromised by negotiations with the Government? That is the issue.

Mr. Cook *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman, from a sedentary position, shakes his head. Why does he do so when in *The Independent* this morning he was quoted as saying that Lord Justice Scott would allow his independence to be compromised by negotations with the Government?

That is a scandalous performance by a leading member of the Opposition. The hon. Gentleman has smeared—he has more than smeared—a judge of the High Court, and he does not have the guts to admit it. He does not have the guts to withdraw it. I hope that that point will not be lost on Lord Justice Scott.

Mr. Cook: The right hon. Gentleman just used the word "guts". If the right hon. Gentleman has the courage, and if the Government believe that they have nothing to hide and that they they can face the future, why does not the right hon. Gentleman accept the challenge that I posed a moment ago, and make the inquiry a tribunal of inquiry so that it will take place in public and we can see what the Government have to hide?

Mr. Heseltine: Just by asking a second question, the hon. Gentleman does not hide the fact that he could not answer the first.

Let us make a little progress. The allegation has been made that

"the inquiry is staffed by the same Treasury solicitors that advised . . . ministers not to disclose documents in the Matrix Churchill case."

The solicitor who will assist Lord Justice Scott was selected precisely because he had no previous involvement in the affair. Lord Justice Scott is entirely satisfied with that arrangement. The hon. Member for Livingston smears Lord Justice Scott and smears the Treasury solicitor, and only attempts to hide his embarrassment by asking quite different questions. The hon. Gentleman lowers the already low esteem of his conduct in the affair.

I want to make one final point, which has been doubly reinforced by the conduct of the hon. Member for Livingston this afternoon. No one disputes the seriousness of charges being investigated. No one should doubt the Government's immediate response in setting up an inquiry under Lord Justice Scott, yet a political dimension has clouded the atmosphere in which the affair has been conducted over the past few weeks.

A nauseating hypocrisy has flavoured the remarks and the behaviour of Labour Members. They cry, "Misleading the House." That from a party which secretly updated Britain's nuclear deterrent at a cost, in today's money terms, of £22·5 billion by adding the Chevaline programme to our Polaris submarines. Why did Labour do that? It was because an inner group of senior Labour Cabinet Ministers could not even trust their Cabinet colleagues, let alone the parliamentary Labour party.

Labour Members allege that we endangered British service men. I cannot remember——

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you ask the right hon. Gentleman to speak a little louder? I cannot hear him. —*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Heseltine: No matter how loudly I speak, a large number of Opposition Members will never hear or understand a word that I say.

Labour's second nauseating act of hypocrisy is its suggestion that the Government in some way set about endangering British service men. I do not remember mass pickets protesting at the sale of British weapons to the Argentines when Labour was in power. Then, Argentina was governed by a military Government whose civil rights reputation did not actually shine across the enlightened

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world. Of course that Labour Government did not know about the risks of a Falklands war. No one knew—just as no one knew that Iraq would invade Kuwait.

No one is going to take lectures from the hon. Member for Livingston—who, throughout his political career, has been enrolled under the battle honours of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and whose political career has been devoted to undermining the defence interests of our country. Conservative Members want an independent inquiry.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is clear that the Secretary of State will not give way. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is about to bowl me a genuine point of order.

Mr. Rogers: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The truth is that I could not hear the right hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am grateful. That is enough.

Mr. Heseltine: It is apparent that there is a need for Lord Justice Scott to get on with the inquiry. That is the only way in which the matter will be seriously investigated to the satisfaction of the House and a wider public.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Documents contained in appendix 8 of the Bingham report, relating to the BCCI inquiry, also bear on Lord Justice Scott's inquiry. Are they state papers, and are MI5 or MI6 intelligence papers relating to the case also state documents?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I certainly cannot advise on that.

Mr. Heseltine: The case for an independent inquiry under Lord Justice Scott has been proved beyond peradventure by the behaviour of Opposition Members. Conservative Members want an independent inquiry to be carried out by a distinguished judge, with all the evidence, and that is what our amendment seeks. We will vote against the Labour motion, which prejudges the issues, apportions blame and affronts the independence with which Lord Justice Scott has been entrusted.

6.11 pm

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I congratulate the President of the Board of Trade on a very good speech to the Conservative party conference. The problem is that this House is not the Conservative party conference, and I suspect that Opposition Members are not the only people to resent being treated as though it were. There are serious issues to be addressed, relating to the conduct of Government; the motion attempts to address them, but a number of them were not addressed by the right hon. Gentleman.

I shall begin by asking some questions about the nature of the inquiry, and I intend to quote from documents, but I shall not name any civil servant in relation to those documents, because I am old-fashioned enough to believe in ministerial responsibility. Ministers will know the documents from which I intend to quote.

My first point concerns the nature of the inquiry. At the time of the internal Government inquiry into the Westland affair—in which the President of the Board of Trade had more than a passing interest—I complained to the then Prime Minister that, had she been living in the real world, she would have been charged with wasting police time. I am now concerned that we should not waste Lord Justice Scott's time.

I believe that the terms of reference that he has been given are drawn too narrowly. In my view, it is not a question of inviting Lord Justice Scott to report on

> "whether the relevant Departments, Agencies, and responsible Ministers operated in accordance with the policies of Her Majesty's Government."

I am prepared to accept for the sake of argument that they may well have done that, in relation to the terms of reference. The question is: why was an overt policy relating to supplies to Iraq declared to the House and the public while a covert policy was pursued by Ministers over quite a long period?

A letter written today by the Prime Minister to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Liberal Democrats referred to the reasons for holding an inquiry of this kind, rather than a tribunal. According to the Prime Minister, a tribunal would have

> "suppressed all questions in the meantime".

That brings me to my first question. I know that the Secretary of State for Defence is to reply to the debate, and that the matters that I intend to raise are not strictly within his departmental responsibility; but I hope that we shall receive answers none the less.

My first question relates to the current police inquiries about the conduct of Mr. Alan Clark. Like the Secretary of State for Defence, I am just a humble graduate in Scots law, and I do not entirely follow English legal proceedings, but the Attorney-General will correct me if I am wrong. Am I right in believing that the current police inquiries into the conflict between the written and oral evidence of Mr. Alan Clark are pretty routine and have nothing to do with Ministers? Am I also right in believing that, if a decision were made to prosecute Mr. Clark because of that conflict, the prosecution could be stopped by the Attorney-Gerneral? If I am right, I believe that the Attorney-General should stop the prosecution. Not only would prosecuting Mr. Clark make him a scapegoat, as the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) suggested earlier, but it would also do exactly what the Prime Minister said that a tribunal hearing would do—that is, render the whole matter sub judice—and thus hamper Lord Justice Scott's inquiry.

The House wants the truth, not the prosecution of a former Minister. The Government appeared to be fairly easy in their mind about whether business men would go to gaol, and they will not lose any sleep over whether Mr. Alan Clark resides in one of the more salubrious open prisons. That, however, is not the issue. The question is whether Mr. Alan Clark will be available to give evidence to the inquiry, and whether the inquiry will get at the truth.

That brings me to my second question about the inquiry and the terms of reference. There is an extraordinary provision allowing Lord Justice Scott, if need be, to come back and ask for more powerful terms. I do not understand why it should be anticipated that Lord

Justice Scott will be obstructed in any way; however, I wish to raise a specific point, which I have raised before but to which I have so far received no answer.

Do the instructions given by the Prime Minister to Ministers and civil servants to co-operate with the inquiry apply to former Ministers? Do they apply to Mr. Alan Clark himself, to Lord Ridley, to Lord Trefgarne, to the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) —who had a walk-on part in the proceedings—and, indeed, to Lady Thatcher?

That last question is particularly important. Information in the documents made available to the court makes it clear that in two ministerial meetings—in November 1988 and in July 1990—what Ministers were discussing required the Prime Minister's personal approval. I do not see how the inquiry can proceed effectively without the active participation of Lady Thatcher. I assume that, before drawing up the guidelines the Prime Minister received an assurance that she would co-operate; in any event, I think that the House should know about it.

My third question relates to something mentioned by the President of the Board of Trade: the work of the United Nations Verification Commission for Iraq. Two days ago, in New York, I met Ambassador Ekeus, the chairman of the commission. The commission has done some remarkably effective work, and has been able to compile a list of all the supplies that went to the Saddam Hessein regime—not just from this country, but from others—before the invasion of Kuwait.

The list contains some equipment from this country for which Ministers could not possibly be held responsible, because it did not go directly to munitions factories or other places that have been mentioned in newspapers. It went under the guise of hospital contracts, schools contracts and so forth. Nevertheless, the list is now in the Government's hands. I well understand why it must remain secret: it is essential to the commission's work that it can compare what it knows from its own findings with what the present Iraqi regime is willing to own up to. I want to know whether the Government will make the list available to Lord Justice Scott. That is a specific question requiring a specific answer. Unless Lord Justice Scott can see the details of all the supplies sent by this country and others, I do not see how he can carry out his task properly.

My fourth and last question on the terms of reference is this. I interrupted the President of the Board of Trade on this subject, and I hope that we were not talking at cross purposes. So far as I can make out, the guidelines were changed twice—or, at any rate, preparations were being made to change them on the second occasion. I was referring to the earlier occasion when the memorandum on guidelines was changed in December 1988-January 1989. The documents reveal that the then Minister of State, Foreign Office—the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave)—made it quite clear to his fellow Ministers in October 1989 that he was willing to make the change public and that he had been willing to make the change public at the time the change was made. The House is entitled to know why it was not told of the slackening of the guidelines and why the House was misled in the opposite direction.

As we all know, the guidelines were announced in 1985. They were changed in December 1988. Yet the House was told in December 1990 by the then Minister for Trade— the right hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury), who is in his place now—the following. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) quoted only part of what he said; I shall give the quotation in full. This was in 1990, after the guidelines had been relaxed. In answer to Mr. Beaumont-Dark, then Member of Parliament for Birmingham, Selly Oak, the right hon. Gentleman said:

> "The guidelines to which the hon. Member referred are clear. They were set out by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) on 29 October 1985, and since then they have been scrupulously and carefully followed in the issuing of licences. No other country has such a careful method for scrutinising applications for export licences and for controlling exports."

Later in the same exchanges in the House, the right hon. Member for Hove said:

> "I assure him that we continually review our procedures for controlling defence exports. The procedures are applied most scrupulously and carefully. As he will see from recent events, we have further reviewed and improved those procedures, and we are open to further suggestions about anything that can be done to make them even better than they are."—[*Official Report*, 3 December 1990; Vol. 182, c. 29-35.]

The answers, I quote are important, because they relate to specific allegations concerning Matrix Churchill at a time when Customs and Excise had already started proceedings against the company and its directors. They amount to the Government's official response to Matrix Churchill and make it clear that the 1985 guidelines were upheld—and even, it was hinted to the House, strengthened—when in fact the reverse was the case.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): It is only fair to refer to the whole record. I have before me what officials said to the Select Committee—that in December that year they did indeed substantially tighten the operational procedures whereby they scrutinised applications, at which point certain companies, including Sheffield Forgemasters objected to the new, tighter procedures. The officials also told the Committee that the guidelines were changed in December 1988. That was said to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) who is sitting on the right hon. Gentleman's left.

Sir David Steel: Yes, that may have been correct in the Committee's proceedings. I accept that the procedures were being tightened up. What I am complaining about is that, even as late as 1990, Ministers were referring on the Floor of the House to the original 1985 guidelines. We were never told openly here what the changes were until recent events. That is the burden of my complaint.

The Prime Minister's answer to me has been widely quoted in the press, but not in its entirety. The House should listen again to this exchange. In January 1991 I asked the present Prime Minister this question:

> "After the Gulf war, bearing in mind what was done after the Falklands war, will the Prime Minister consider setting up a high-level inquiry into the acquisition by Iraq of British arms and technology, including some from private companies, quangos and Government Departments, so that lessons may be learnt, and so that never again will our forces be faced with an enemy armed partly by ourselves?"

This was the Prime Minister's reply:

> "There is a considerable degree of sensitivity about the supply of arms and equipment. As the right hon. Gentleman will know, for some considerable time we have not supplied arms to Iraq for precisely that reason."—[*Official Report*, 31 January 1991; Vol. 202, c. 1102.]

There is an elision, is there not, between "arms" and "arms and equipment" or "arms and technology"? Again the impression was being given at the highest level to the

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House that nothing of the kind had been going on for some time in relation to Iraq. The House was, I believe, consistently misled at every level by the Government.

There was an interdepartmental memorandum by a civil servant in October 1989 in preparation for one of the ministerial meetings. It was a memorandum to the Minister of State, Foreign Office, and it referred to the efforts being made by Alan Clark and Lord Trefgarne. It says:

> "Their letters are full of special pleading (Lord Trefgarne's astonishing claim that Matrix Churchill is somehow separate from Iraqi arms procurement activities/Learfan can be exploded by showing him the nice diagram in the FT of 21 September which demonstrates the organic connection!) and the letter from Matrix has all the hallmarks of having been prompted by and drafted in co-operation with the DTI."

That is a very serious allegation for one Department to make of another.

Another memorandum, this time from the Ministry of Defence in January 1988, argued:

> "We have obtained intelligence . . . that the lathes are to go to set up munitions factories to produce missiles and shells in large quantities. Had this information been available at the time that the licence applications were considered, the MODWG would have advised the IDC that the military assessment was that the use of the lathes for this purpose would constitute a significant enhancement in Iraq's capability to prolong the confict with Iran."

That, surely is an admission that equipment was being supplied which enhanced the capability and was therefore presumably in breach of the guidelines, wittingly or unwittingly.

Another memorandum from the Foreign Office—again I shall not name names—says:

> "It is likely that had we known from the outset that the machine tools would be used to manufacture munitions we would have recommended that licences be refused. At present, the Iraqis import most of their shells from the Soviet Union. The Iraqi aim is to replace this supply with local manufacture. It is therefore arguable that Iraqi capability will not be significantly enhanced."

That gives the game away. If one argues that, because Iraq intends to manufacture its own shells with equipment that we supply, it is therefore merely replacing Russian imports and its capability is not being enhanced, the guidelines are, of course, beautifully observed. That is why I believe that the terms of reference for the inquiry are nowhere near wide enough.

I intend no slur on Lord Justice Scott, who I understand to be a man of the highest integrity, but I do not understand how an inquiry into the Government's activities can be called genuinely independent when the terms of reference are laid down by the Government themselves. Why were the terms of reference not agreed with the Opposition parties? Had that been done, one would have had more confidence in the exercise in which we are engaged.

I turn from the inquiry itself to one of the other issues which ought to concern the House: the way in which information has been concealed from Parliament and from the public. My party and I, and other hon. Members, have long supported freedom of information legislation. I have not the slightest doubt that none of these activities would have gone on had we introduced the system which operates in the United States, under which the public can ask for papers after a certain amount of time has elapsed. I do not believe that these memoranda would have been flying around Whitehall if it had been known that, within five or 10 years, or whatever period the House decided was appropriate, they would be open to public scrutiny. They do not bear examination as they stand at the moment.

I do not want to weary the House with quotations, but I intend to quote briefly from four memoranda. One, dated January 1988, says:

> "If it becomes public knowledge that the tools are to be used to make munitions, deliveries would have to stop at once . . . The companies should be urged to produce and ship as fast as they can."

That was the advice that was given. Another memorandum states:

> "Meanwhile MTTA companies should maintain a low profile. Press or public attention would make it more difficult to permit fulfilment of contracts."

The then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Lord Ridley, has been quoted many times as talking of the dirty washing that would come out if the Customs and Excise case against Matrix Churchill were allowed to proceed. The final internal memorandum in 1988 stated:

> "There seems to be considerable merit in keeping as quiet as possible about this politically sensitive issue."

Merit for whom?

The case for the defence put by the President of the Board of Trade rested on the basis that, if we had not made these sales, others would have done so, and that the sales were in the interests of employment. That ignores a number of issues, such as what was happening to the Kurds at the time. The then Foreign Secretary, now Lord Howe, told the House:

> "We have certainly been appalled by the suffering inflicted as a result of the large-scale displacement of Kurds from their homes in Iraq. We have proclaimed the evidence of chemical warfare use as compelling but not conclusive. It is clear that Iraq has a case to answer, and we have been in the forefront of pressing the case in respect of these barbaric issues."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1988; Vol. 142, c.687.]

We are now told by the President of the Board of Trade that pressing the case seemed to involve millions of pounds, worth of export credits and relaxing the guidelines. We must not forget why Ministers were reluctant to announce these changes or to let all this information come out. They knew what the public and parliamentary reaction would be to continuing supplies to Saddam Hussein's regime.

The Kurds suffered then, and they are suffering now. It is clear that Iraq has succeeded in one of its principal aims —to establish a home-based munitions industry. As a result, it has been able to rebuild many of the tanks that were lost in the Gulf war, which are now surrounding the Kurdish safe havens for which the Prime Minister fought so hard months ago.

It is a very sorry tale, but unhappily it is not a new one. In a speech that I made towards the end of the Falklands war, I spoke of Ministers referring to the islanders as being under the heel of the fascist junta. I said:

> "it should be remembered that we were happily selling arms to that same Fascist junta not long ago. Morever, the Exocet missile, which has been frequently been referred to as a 'fire and forget' weapon might also be referred to as an 'export and forget' weapon." [*Official Report*, 13 May 1982; Vol. 23 c. 971.]

In Argentina, and now in Iraq, we sold equipment for arms that were used against our own forces. We should consider that in the context of the world-wide sale of arms, because, after the end of the cold war, the world is spending £450 billion a year on arms, and 75 per cent. of conventional arms sales go to the developing world. On the streets of Maputo, it is possible to buy an AK-47 for

$2. Our troops in Bosnia cannot have helicopter cover because of the existence of shoulder-launched missiles which have seeped through into former Yugoslavia from American supplies to Afghan rebels. The world is awash with arms.

Unless it becomes a central part of our foreign and defence police to get international co-operation to stop the arms trade, and ourselves to stop export credit guarantees for the supply of arms and equipment, to close down the arms sales agencies, and to use the defence-related work force for more sensible purposes, there will continue to be tragedies such as the invasion of Kuwait.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We are being invited to support the Government amendment, which welcomes the

"wide terms of reference which will enable Lord Justice Scott to examine all of the facts".

That implies that all the documents will be available to Lord Justice Scott. Many hon. Members are deeply worried that documents held by Departments or firms which may have been involved in this matter will be lost or removed.

I understand the rules on written parliamentary questions being referred to other Ministers, but I tabled question 329 to the Attorney-General asking whether he would take measures to

"prevent the unauthorised removal, destruction of and tampering with all documents relating to the sale of arms and components to Iraq, held within Government Departments and elsewhere."

It was passed—abandoned I think—by the Attorney-General to the Prime Minister.

That raises an important issue of whether the Attorney-General has been advising the House as an impartial Law Officer or as a Conservative politician defending the Prime Minister's hide. We require reassurance, first, on whether documents held by Departments and elsewhere are secure, safe and being held independently for Lord Justice Scott and, secondly, on whether the Attorney-General has been advising the House as an independent Law Officer or as a Conservative politician.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): The accuracy or otherwise of the contents of an amendment is not a matter for the Chair. The switching of questions is not a matter for the Chair, and it cannot be responsible for the quality of answers.

6.36 pm

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): So much of today's debate, as with the press, has been taken out of context. The hype with which so-called disclosures have been released in the press and used by Opposition spokesmen is pretty close to disgraceful. I shall give a couple of examples. Four journalists wrote an exclusive in this Sunday's *The Observer* on the way in which the Iraqis tried to buy the Learfan factory. What surprising disclosure was that, when in September 1989 the same newspaper disclosed exactly the same story, written by Alan George? It has taken four reporters four years to rewrite the story, to which the only addition was a quotation by the ubiquitous hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook).

In *The Engineer* of 26 October 1989, Mr. George again pieces together the Iraqi jigsaw puzzle. The entire Iraqi network across Europe for arms procurement is itemised, such as the fact that Matrix Churchill had been bought by Iraqi intelligence. On the Nick Ross radio programme last week, that journalist said that he had to put this information in a magazine as widely read as *The Engineer* because he could not interest any of the major national newspapers—*The Observer*, *The Independent* and *The Guardian*, which are now so fulsome in their condemnation—in the story.

Dates are scattered indiscriminately in newspaper stories—as they have been today. Most of the quotations that seem so damning are about official and ministerial meetings in 1989, 1990 and 1991, yet the war finished in October 1988. Of course, therefore, changes were made. Officials told the Select Committee on Trade and Industry that the third guideline was amended to take account of the ceasefire. Year in, year out, Opposition Members protest their concern about the decline in the manufacturing base in this country, so how can they say that Industry Ministers should take no interest in that?

Ms. Short: Two issues are at stake here: the first is whether the House has been misled; the other is whether Britain helped to build the monstrous regime of Saddam Hussein, which oppressed the Iraqi people, invaded Kuwait and then triggered a war. The hon. Gentleman has not dealt with whether Britain helped to cause the war.

Dr. Hampson: No one could claim that we helped cause the war, although of course we helped indirectly to arm Hussein.

Trade and Industry Ministers have a responsibility to assist British industry. The Committee had the evidence; companies were asking to be relieved of regulations and bureaucratic controls in what is, after all, an extraordinary market. In 1988, we sold £4 billion-worth of goods to markets in the middle east, importing only £1·3 billion from there. The middle east is a big market for everything, not just arms. In 1988, we sold Iraq goods worth £412 million and imported only £43 million-worth from Iraq. It is, as I say, big business. There was nothing to stop British companies selling goods to Iraq or Iran throughout the Iran-Iraq war. Throughout that time, there were trade fairs, to which British business men went. Ministers assisted them.

It might be argued that this was immoral, given the nature of the Iraqi regime. Some Opposition Members take that view of high principle—but Labour Governments never took it. No sensible person, I believe, would take that view. This country was seeking orders from around the world, against our major competitors, and many British manufacturing companies involved in those sales were facing great difficulty. In that context, the restrictions were severe, and after the ceasefire they were relaxed to help this country.

Page XII of our report mentions, in the context of restrictions,

"the consistent refusal to supply any lethal equipment to either side, subject to the consideration that we should attempt to fulfil existing contracts and obligations."

There is nothing there to say that we cannot sell arms to Iraq. So of course British suppliers could sell associated equipment, knobs for radar, and so on. Retrospectively, it is possible to point the finger and say that certain radar parts and tank spares were later turned against British soldiers, but that is hindsight with a vengeance. One

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cannot prophesy about this world. Existing contracts were maintained for perfectly understandable reasons, because companies needed the income and the jobs.

As the situation changed, so did the requirements. The key thing is that we never shipped or allowed to be shipped any "lethal" weaponary.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I noticed my hon. Friend's caveat, but is he suggesting that the Customs and Excise prosecuted Matrix Churchill casually or frivolously?

Dr. Hampson: I will come to that point later—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer it now."] I shall make my own speech in my own way. I readily concede that my hon. Friend has put his finger on a real point.

Which lethal weapons really mattered in all this? The Learfan project, involving missile technology, was stopped. The supergun tubes were stopped right across Europe. In country after country, the customs managed to stop all those parts. The Hawks did not go, either. It was a different story elsewhere, though. I hope that the German ambassador and others will forgive me for saying that Germany, which initiated the use of gas in modern warfare, was the country that supplied Saddam Hussein with his lethal gas capacity——

Mr. Benn: The hon. Gentleman is no doubt aware that the Royal Air Force used gas against Iraqi tribesmen in the 1920s. If he tells the story in its proper context, he must therefore admit that Britain has a heavy responsibility in this respect.

Dr. Hampson: The right hon. Gentleman's history is a little faulty: the first world war predated the 1920s.

The Condor II missile was a joint Austrian-German project, with heavy Swiss involvement. It had nothing to do with this country.

So other countries, notably the Germans, helped to produce the nastiest possible weaponry for Iraq. Opposition Members may disagree, but it is clear that we said that we would not deal in non-conventional weaponry but would scrutinise other contracts, case by case, as long as they involved conventional weaponry. That was certainly not in breach of the guidelines after the ceasefire of August 1988.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): How would the hon. Gentleman define a power-control system used in missiles fired by an explosive charge? That sounds remarkably like a supergun to me. Is it conventional or non-conventional? The power control system came from a company in this country—in my constituency.

Dr. Hampson: I cannot answer that now, so I will not attempt to. The hon. Gentleman gave neither dates nor context. Opposition Members tend not to separate out the dates, and say whether incidents took place during the Iraqi war or after the ceasefire——

Mr. Kilfoyle *rose*——

Dr. Hampson: No, the hon. Gentleman has had a good go——

Hon. Members: Answer.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Dr. Hampson: It is not my responsibility to answer, and I shall make my own speech. It seems to me that Opposition Members are slightly embarrassed when the facts are put in context. They do not put them in context, nor do they differentiate between the risks, case by case.

I should like to deal now with the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). The House knows that I do not fall over backwards to support the Government's case. Indeed, the Select Committee was deeply concerned about a number of events. I should say first, however, that it is outrageous that Opposition spokesmen knew nothing about Lord Justice Scott. He is a fiercely independent-minded man and if they knew of his role in the "Spycatcher" case, they would not say what they have said.

I trust that this inquiry will look into the reasons why the Customs and Excise proceeded with the case. It seems extraordinary that, just because a business man is occasionally involved with British intelligence, it has become conventional to imagine that he can proceed to act illegally. To the Customs and Excise, this man was fraudulently filling in forms regarding the end use of the equipment that he was selling. I hope that the Scott inquiry will look into that, because it is important not to portray Mr. Henderson as a new form of James Bond. We need to know whether he was acting honourably and in the national interest all the time, or whether he was using his connections with the intelligence service to legitimise or excuse his otherwise illegal efforts to make money.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Will the hon. Gentleman concede that, if, as we know, Ministers realised that these licences would be in breach of the rules but decided that they would be granted in order to secure the intelligence information, those Ministers were conspirators and partners to the crime?

Dr. Hampson: The right hon. Gentleman has clearly not scrutinised in even the most rudimentary way the flow of information that Opposition Members have released to the press. It is perfectly clear that Matrix Churchill had the contracts in 1987, before any such involvement. The company certainly had the contracts before my former colleague Alan Clark made his speech to the trade association representing the company. There appears to be another distortion in this area, that he was telling Mr. Henderson—nudge, nudge, wink, wink—"You fill it in improperly 'for peaceful purposes'." He did no such thing. He simply spoke to the trade association, and we must wait to see how that was interpreted.

We are entering the realms of myth and fantasy. Once the company was brought by the Iraqis, it immediately won contracts in October 1987. From what we have seen leaked in the papers, it seems that the Foreign Office Minister and other officials at the Ministry of Defence have said retrospectively that, if they had known in 1987 what was happening, they would not have allowed the contracts. However, as they had been allowed, and MI6 was involved with Mr. Henderson, as the letter from the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office of September 1989 which appears in *The Independent* states, they regret that, but they must now protect their sources.

If we wait for the Scott inquiry to put those issues in context, we will begin to see that there may have been reasons why, in relation to that company, matters were allowed to drift, and why it may now seem to have been unfortunate. However, we cannot extrapolate from that particular case to the policy in general in the way that the Opposition have extrapolated.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: There is a great danger that the hon. Gentleman might leave the impression of impugning the integrity of Paul Henderson and the others who were acting for British intelligence. The hon. Gentleman does not know the facts; I probably do not know all the facts. I will be referring to some documents later, from which it is clear that, before the issue of export licences, MI6 knew what the machines were going to be used for and what category of shells was involved. Government Departments were also aware of that.

Dr. Hampson: I await the Scott inquiry, and I hope that it will examine that matter. It is all too easy for business men in a very murky world in that neck of the woods to claim that everything is excused because of connections with the intelligence services.

I want the Scott inquiry to consult the intelligence services and state clearly whether the intelligence services found Mr. Henderson reliable; whether he really was collaborating and on what sort of scale—*[Interruption.]* With respect, we have not seen that information. One member of the intelligence services made a statement in court, but I want the Scott inquiry to consider the full relationship with Mr. Henderson and discover what emerges.

I do not want to be bogged down on that. I have given way on many occasions, and many other hon. Members wish to speak. The role of the Customs and Excise is very important. When we examined that matter in the Select Committee, we were deeply disturbed. They are the only totally independent prosecuting authority in the country. Unlike the Crown prosecution service and the Serious Fraud Office, Customs and Excise are not accountable to Ministers, the Treasury or the Attorney-General.

Did Customs and Excise proceed in the Matrix Churchill case because of what happened in the supergun case? In that case, the Law Officers were consulted about whether it would be proper, as a matter of prosecution policy, to continue the prosecution in the light of advice from the senior Treasury counsel. They did not proceed.

In the Matrix Churchill case, did Customs and Excise go to the Attorney-General? They did not have to, because they are not accountable to him, and it looks as if they did not. If they did not, why did the Attorney-General still not stop the case? We have heard that it is possible under Customs and Excise legislation that the Director of Public Prosecutions

"may take over proceedings instituted by the Commissioners and withdraw them and may be directed by the Attorney-General to do so."

It is important to know why Customs and Excise proceeded with the case. It is pretty obvious that they must have known that intelligence was involved. However, they still proceeded with the case. At what stage were Ministers aware of that? If they were aware, why did they not step in and stop the case?

Mr. Clark was quizzed on those matters by the Select Committee, in the context of the role of the intelligence services, and specifically about Matrix Churchill. He said that the case was sub judice, and that he could not comment on the latter.

However, when he was asked about the role of the intelligence services in relation to the supergun affair, he said that there was no question that, so far as he was aware, the intelligence services had used the companies to sell items to discover what was happening in the Iraqi military. When asked specifically whether he had asked his Department and whether he was convinced that that was the position, he said, "Correct." However, at another point, he said that he could not give an answer that would illuminate the activities of the intelligence services.

Therefore, we found ourselves in a trap. Mr. Clark may have been speaking for the intelligence services in the Ministry of Defence, but not for the intelligence services as a whole. In that area, we probably received rather disingenuous answers, or words that were very carefully and cautiously devised.

Arms dealing in the middle east is a particularly murky world. We heard about kickbacks of up to 25 per cent. of contracts. We know about the kind of people who arrange such things out there. Information about those very dubious and deceitful operations arrived in a Department manned by a handful of civil servants of pretty low rank.

The scale of the problem was staggering. In 1988, there were 57 staff in the Export Control Organisation, who handled 92,280 applications. They also handled the inquiries about the supergun case as people telephoned to ask for advice and guidance. The organisation had only just been set up. Many other operations had been brought together only the previous year under the one organisation, and there was huge responsibility on the shoulders of men of executive officer rank in the organisation. They had to make judgments and, at grade 7, they had to decide whether to pass the matter on to Ministers.

It is clear from the table in the Select Committee report that, because of the ceasefire, fewer cases were passed on to Ministers. At that time, the Export Control Organisation was primarily concerned with the cold war, the Warsaw pact and high-tec COCOM material. Iraq was not their primary consideration. It is very important to bear in mind the context and the personalities before one begins to imagine great conspiracy theories.

The Select Committee decided that, whatever the role of the intelligence services, there had been a cock-up in the way in which the supergun affair had been handled. We also concluded that, because of the way in which it had been handled, Ministers accepted that it had been handled wrongly and badly, and changes had to be made.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I was not going to intervene on the hon. Gentleman, because I always listen to him with interest in the Select Committee. However, the cock-up theory belonged to the Conservative side of that Committee and not to the Labour side. He was not the only hon. Member to share those opinions.

Dr. Hampson: That simply proves that the Labour party will seek a conspiracy wherever it believes one might rest. From the very beginning, at least two Labour members of the Select Committee wanted to blame everything on the British Government and so camouflage and whitewash the British intelligence services. The rest of us looked at the matter more objectively and accepted that the intelligence services could be blamed in part. However, we also recognised what was happening in the Department.

[Dr. Hampson]

However, as a result of the way in which the case was handled, changes were made. Alan Clark said that he was most unhappy with the situation that had transpired over the handling of the Astra side of the affair. There are questions about why he did not have his permanent secretary consider other activities in that area and at the contract stage, and therefore possibly stop the case. Nevertheless, such issues will emerge in the Scott inquiry.

At long last, computer systems were installed in the Department of Trade and Industry. The sensitive technologies division and the sensitive areas division were brought together. That had not been possible before. Applications involving Iraq and SRC were brought together so that those rather junior officials could make their judgments. We do not want to hide behind the Scott inquiry, but it is not acceptable for Opposition Members to build a great edifice of conspiracy and distortion.

6.58 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) says that he wants some dates and that the context in relation to dates is important, so let me give him some dates. Let me give him the date of 25 February 1989. That is the date on which steel tubes bound for the supergun were flown from Manchester airport to Mosul, Iraq on an Iraqi plane, flight IA 14707—tubes sent with an export licence from the Government which went to form part of the supergun that was found after Saddam Hussein was defeated.

When I put it to the Prime Minister that that was a breach of the embargo, and I said in my letter to the Prime Minister of 31 January this year that the giant steel tubes intended for the Baby Babylon supergun were on an Iraqi air force Ilyushin 76 cargo plane, the only correction that the Prime Minister made was that it was not an Iraqi air force plance, but an Iraqi Airways plane. The Prime Minister acknowledged that, with the knowledge of the Government, because export licences had had to be granted by the very——

Dr. Hampson: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: I am not giving way immediately to the hon. Gentleman. He spoke for a very long time, and I am now going to make my speech.

Dr. Hampson *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The House knows the rule that, if the person who has the floor does not give way, other hon. Members must resume their seats.

Mr. Kaufman: It is not a reflection on the hon. Gentleman, it is a clear statement of the fact that the Prime Minister acknowledged to me in a letter dated 17 February this year that the Government knew that parts of the supergun were exported from Ringway airport in Manchester on 25 February 1989, and yet the Foreign Secretary has written me a letter only today in which he said that they did not learn of the involvement of British companies in supplying tubes for the Iraqi long-range or supergun project until 30 March 1990; yet a year previously the Government had licensed the export from Manchester of parts of that supergun.

I will give the hon. Gentleman another date. I will give the hon. Gentleman the date of April 1988, on which information was provided by an informant to MI5 of the nature of the supergun. That information was passed from MI5 to MI6, and MI6 circulated that information to the Foreign Secretary, so that the Foreign Secretary had it two years before he says in two letters to me that he first learned about the British participation in the supergun.

The hon. Gentleman has disgracefully traduced Mr. Paul Henderson: Customs and Excise withdrew the prosecution against Mr. Henderson, yet the hon. Gentleman is smearing Mr. Henderson's name on the Floor of the House when he has no defence whatever. Mr. Paul Henderson gave information in October 1989 about the supergun directly to MI6, and MI6 then directly passed that information to the Foreign Secretary, as it was obliged to do, because the Foreign Secretary is the Minister in charge of MI6.

I will give the hon. Gentleman another date, since he wants dates. I will give him August 1988, when the present Prime Minister was Foreign Secretary. Information was given by Mr. Henderson about project 1728, a plant stocked with British machine tools to modify the Scud missiles which, in the Gulf war, were fired at Israel, at Saudi Arabia and at Bahrain as well. That is another date.

Those facts were available to the Government, and they show that the Government were lying to Parliament when they told Parliament that they were not aware of the way in which those matters were being conducted.

Dr. Hampson: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: I will proceed a little further before I do so.

What we heard this afternoon from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was greatly inflated rhetoric, which did not even work with his own side, and a minimum of fact. What was interesting, though, was that, when he was questioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) and others about why he signed the certificates of immunity, he said that he signed them only after he had assured himself that they could nevertheless be available to the court at the discretion of the judge.

By that, the right hon. Gentleman was saying that he had the right to decide whether or not to sign them. He said very honourably—his role in this matter has been far more honourable than that of any other member of the Government—that he would not have signed them if he had believed that the men on trial would not receive a fair trial. Therefore, he was saying that he need not have signed them. Therefore, all the stories that have been put about by the Government that it was Ministers' duty to sign them is nonsense, because Ministers have a right to decide whether to or not, and the Secretary of State, very understandably and creditably, agonised before signing them.

But I go further than that. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry knew, if anybody did, how the advice of the Law Officer could be misused, because the advice of the Law Officer was used against him on the Westland affair. Therefore, he should have been the last person to trust the advice of the Attorney-General. I shall return to that matter.

Although the Secretary of State was the victim of Westland, it has to be said that the Westland scandal, although serious, went no further than the fate of one helicopter company. This scandal is worse than Westland.

This scandal also is worse than Watergate. After all, Watergate was about a cover-up to prevent Nixon, Haldeman and Erlichman from going to gaol. Crooks though they were, they did not try to send innocent men to gaol in their places: they simply tried to avoid incarceration themselves.

The Secretary of State says that he was worried—I accept that he was—about the immunity certificates, and that he took a lot of trouble before he signed them. The Home Secretary said that he did not know what was in the documents, because he did not read them. The Home Secretary did not read those documents, he did not read the Maastricht treaty, and he does not read, so he tells us, the crime reports in the newspapers, which one would have thought would be of great interest to him as Home Secretary. It is difficult to know how the Home Secretary spends his time, since Ronnie Scott's is not open 24 hours a day.

This episode is comparable with the Iran Contra affair in the United States, in terms of arming a dangerous person. Yet, even in the Iran Contra affair, Ronald Reagan could at least offer the excuse that he was trying to secure the release of United States hostages, which is an honourable objective, even if the means employed were far from honourable. But this Government have no excuse at all for a cynical operation aimed at arming a dictator, who, moreover, had British citizens illegally imprisoned in his gaols in Baghdad while the British Government were helping to arm him, and the British taxpayer was making the arms a free gift to him through unrequited export credits.

Dr. Hampson: I am very grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way, because he cited the material which we looked at in the Select Committee, and he got it wrong. There is no evidence that the Government knew about the participation, to use the right hon. Gentleman's word, in project Babylon, even though the Government knew about the existence of the supergun project from intelligence sources in September 1989—not from Mr. Henderson but from other sources, as we said in our report.

Regarding the flight, the reason the tubes flew out from Manchester and from other ports was not because they were given a licence, as the right hon. Gentleman should know; it was determined by the officials concerned that they did not need a licence because they were claiming that they were for the petrochemical industry—they were camouflaging the intent.

Mr. Kaufman: It is curious that the hon. Member should lend his authority to that explanation, as the Prime Minister does not. I wrote to the Prime Minister on 30 January saying:

> "The giant steel tubes intended for the Baby Babylon supergun were flown from Manchester airport to Mosul Iraq on an Iraqi air force Ilyushin 76 cargo plane flight IA14707 on 25th February 1989."

Instead of offering all the complications that the hon. Gentleman offered me, the Prime Minister merely denied that it was an Iraqi air force plane, and said that it was an Iraqi Airways plane. Otherwise, he accepted everything that I had written to him.

The Government are trying to turn Alan Clark into the fall guy for this affair, and he is not the fall guy. They are——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am afraid that the 10-minute rule hits even Privy Councillors.

7.10 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I shall leave issues involved in the Howe guidelines and the sale of dual purpose equipment to the judgment of Justice Scott. I have full confidence in him. Having read his judgments during the Peter Wright affair, no one could accept the view of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who impugned his reputation. I was surprised and disappointed by the hon. Gentleman, because he did not seem to have much grasp of the Official Secrets Act 1911 or the Public Records Acts. If he believes that those documents will ever be released—even after 30 years, as he said—I am afraid that he is in for a disappointment.

Two central issues can be discussed without pre-empting Lord Justice Scott's verdict. The first is the protection of sources. On analysis, the Matrix Churchill fiasco boils down to that issue. The protection of sources is enormously important to the security and intelligence services. It does not exist for the convenience of Ministers and officials—it is to protect people who often risk their lives, and certainly break confidences, by supplying to the appropriate authorities information that they regard as being in the national interest. It is up to the security and intelligence services to make that judgment.

Some agents have been working to their own agenda when supplying information. We know that that was the case with the Littlejohn brothers, for example, because they had been supplying information on the provisional IRA to the secret intelligence services, but those services expressed astonishment when the brothers said that MI6 had allowed them to rob banks. That turned out to be completely bogus.

There is always a danger that security and intelligence sources may not be supervised and that they may be manipulating their case officers. A recent example was Brian Nelson in Northern Ireland, who supplied information which saved many dozens of lives in that troubled Province. However, we also know that he masterminded sectarian murders and took advantage of military intelligence.

With Matrix Churchill, it was not a case of protection of sources, because Paul Henderson was keen to disclose that he had been an informant for the security service and we know from the prosecution case—from witness B, who was an officer of the security service—that he had supplied that information. So the crucial issue of protection of sources is not strictly relevant in that case. The public interest immunity certificates and how they came to be signed—who gave the advice that four certificates should be signed in one criminal prosecution, and the advice given to Ministers at the time—are relevant.

The House is entitled to ask how public interest immunity certificates work. We have heard one version from the Secretary of State, who simply said that he has a duty to decide whether the interests of security or of advice to Ministers are involved. He said that it is a black and white issue: if the documents before him cover those topics, he has a duty to sign. The Secretary of State said that he received that advice from the Attorney-General. We know that the latter has a particular view of public interest immunity certificates, because he wrote a letter to

[Mr. Rupert Allason]

The Times to explain that it was a type of application to the judge, and that it was up to the judge to decide whether to accept the advice given in the certificate.

I am bound to tell the House that that is not my experience of how public interest certificates work. My right hon. Friend the present Foreign Secretary signed such a certificate against me on 10 September 1989, to prevent two important witnesses from giving evidence at an imminent trial. It will help the House if I describe what took place, as it undermines the proposition that a certificate is some sort of application to the judge. In my experience, that simply is not so. Lord Justice Smedley was certainly courageous, but he may well have been unique in challenging such a certificate.

I shall explain briefly what happened in that case. In June 1989 I served a subpoena on two former secret intelligence service officers, whose names are well known and have been published many times. I sought them to give evidence in a case against a proven perjurer. The Foreign Secretary did not sign a public interest immunity certificate to prevent them from giving evidence until September 1989. I have a particular interest in that episode, but the House will be interested to know the judgment in that case because I had the temerity to challenge what the then Home Secretary stated in his certificate.

The judge was not a complete novice in matters of national security. By a strange coincidence—it was no more than that—he is the son of a former Home Secretary and the brother of a Secretary of State then and of one today. The judge said:

> "On the hearing of the summons there were put before me an affidavit by Mrs. Susan Elizabeth Marsh of the Attorney-General's Department, an affidavit by Mr. David Brummell, an Assistant Treasury Solicitor on behalf of the Attorney-General and two affidavits sworn by . . . the Second Defendant's solicitor. Mrs. Marsh's affidavit exhibited a copy of a certificate made by the Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd MP, Secretary of State for the Home Department, on the 10th September, 1989. I was not given a sight of any documents at all relating to this matter before the hearing started on the 13th September and, for very obvious reasons, I am obliged to prepare and deliver this judgment at haste less than 24 hours later after rearranging my vacation list . . . The reasons why the matter had to be brought before the Court in such a rush nearly two-and-a-half months after the subpoenas were served were not explained to me. This is not a very satisfactory way of conducting a judicial hearing and of doing justice in such an important matter".

It seems to me that, on that occasion, the judge was not shown any documents relating to the certificate. He went on to make a few more apposite remarks concerning ministerial certificates, when he said:

> "For the purposes of argument it was accepted by Counsel without overdue citation of authority"—

because there is no overdue authority in these matters—

> "that in a case of this kind the Court has to balance the public interest in the fair administration of justice and the public interest in the effective operation of the security services; and that although the Court should pay very serious regard to the contents of a certificate signed by the responsible Secretary of State, in the last resort, the Court has a residual power to override his objection if satisfied that the grounds relied on by him are insufficient or misconceived or that there are no reasonable grounds for apprehending danger to the public interest"——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

7.20 pm

Dr. John Gilbert (Dudley, East): I shall start by citing a couple of general principles from which the Government might take some comfort, but I do not believe that they will take much comfort from the rest of my speech.

It is clear to me that, where intelligence matters are concerned, it is perfectly natural that Ministers carry out policies and commit actions that they disguise from their own electorate. That has always been the case in this country and in any other democracy, and it always will be. In my judgment, the public fully understand and appreciate the need for that. It follows from that—again in terms of general principle—that when those policies, which are, from time to time, covert, have to be changed, the implementation of those changes will be carried out clandestinely.

It is deplorable, of course, if our troops are killed or wounded by armaments manufactured here. We all know that that is an unpleasant and inevitable consequence of the international arms trade, which has continued over the centuries. It was not so long ago that the Russians were our great allies, but then they became the unspeakable tools of a dictatorship. Precisely the reverse metamorphosis was undergone by the Germans. It is a question of judgment rather than any great matter of principle as to whom countries sell armaments.

The President of the Board of Trade was right to say —it was about the only thing with which I agreed—that the Labour Government tried to sell frigates to Argentina. At that time, I was the Minister responsible and I want that to be put on the public record. We were not very successful in doing so, but it is true that the Foreign Office and other Departments were perfectly agreeable to attempts to sell arms to Argentina. Those attempts were more successful under a successor Government.

I do not happen to believe that the issues to which I have drawn attention are the germ of the accusation against the Government today. On ministerial knowledge, I am perfectly prepared to accept an assurance from the Prime Minister that he did not know of the correspondence between his junior Ministers when he was at the Foreign Office. After all, it is the responsibility of a Minister's private office to decide what gets into a ministerial box. Heads of Department need not, and should not, know about all the correspondence of his or her junior Ministers.

I cannot get very excited about those matters when viewed in terms of general principle, but when it comes to the inquiry, there may well be some matters to which I am not privy that will be damning of the Government.

The nub of the matter is contained in the penultimate sentence of the Opposition motion, which calls on the House to deplore

> "the willingness of Her Majesty's Government to see citizens put on trial for exports at which Ministers had connived and to put their liberty at risk"

Junior Ministers did not initiate the Customs and Excise prosecution, because, as the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) said, it has independent rights in such matters. Junior Ministers would not have known that Customs and Excise was about to initiate a prosecution. They certainly did not authorise any trial and they did not have any power to stop one. But they need not have held their tongues. They knew what was going on when the prosecution process started and the men finally appeared in the dock.

The junior Ministers knew of the initiation of the prosecution, and I want to know which of them, if any, told, their departmental head. Which of them wrote to the Prime Minister? Which of them got in touch with Customs and Excise and said, "You must not do this because we are involved in what these men have been doing"? Did any of them report to their senior political colleagues to tell them what was going on and the extent to which they knew that those men had carried out Government policies?

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): Did they tell the Attorney-General?

Dr. Gilbert: My right hon. and learned Friend makes a helpful addition to my list of questions.

The plain fact is that three men were put at risk, first as to their liberty; secondly, as to their reputation—I wish that the Minister of State for Defence Procurement would wipe the smile off his face; this is not a funny matter—and thirdly, because of the probable great financial cost to themselves, to say nothing of the stress and worry to their families. The trial proceeded unimpeded until the judge learned what some Ministers had known all along. The prosecution then collapsed in ignominy.

In one of the less worthy passages of his speech, the President of the Board of Trade made the jibe that the Labour party had been out of government for a long time. One does not need to have been a Minister to know how a Minister should behave. One does not need to be a Member of this House to know the difference between honourable and dishonourable conduct. The British public are perfectly capable of distinguishing what is honourable conduct. I believe that they are now waiting impatiently for the resignations of the Ministers who connived at and, even worse, were complicitous in the activities of the men put on trial, and remained silent as they went to trial.

7.27 pm

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I recognise the importance of what the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) has said. Few other speeches would make such a contribution, which underlined the need for the full-ranging kind of inquiry to which the Government are now committed.

The fact that the inquiry is under way makes it extraordinarily odd that the Opposition, in the person of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), decided to launch an extraordinary tirade of allegations, theories, fantasies, hypotheses and hyperbole. I do not mind what one calls it; it all adds up to hysteria.

I accept, however, that, as the right hon. Member for Dudley, East has said, there is a need for facts, proof, evidence, analysis and assessment. With any luck, that might lead to a few answers, which might lead to history. There is no great gap between hysteria and history, but it makes all the difference in the world as to how the House should comport itself in the light of current events.

The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) asked a number of questions about the scope of the inquiry. In relation to one part of the speech of the right hon. Member for Dudley, East, I willingly quote from the terms of reference of the Scott inquiry:

"to examine and report on decisions taken by the prosecuting authority and by those signing public interest immunity certificates in Regina v Henderson and any other similar matters he considers relevant to the issues of the inquiry".

The points that the right hon. Gentleman has made are well within that definition of the terms of reference.

On the width of the terms of reference, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will disabuse me if I am wrong in saying that, if Lord Justice Scott finds his powers to be insufficient, he can ask for more and will be granted more or, if he wishes to alter the basis of the inquiry, the Government will agree to that change. That was the inference which the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale sought to draw, and I should be grateful if my right hon. Friend would deal with that when he winds up the debate.

I make those points purely to emphasise the wide-ranging nature of the motion, the inadequacy of seeking to speculate before the inquiry takes place, and the prospect that the inquiry will be the major determinant of the facts—the analysis, assessment and answers to the issues before us.

We are discussing trade, exports and armaments. As the right hon. Member for Dudley, East said, the armaments trade is known to have a difficult character, to put it mildly, but it also has two important features. First, from that trade—from the preparation, research and development of military hardware—comes a huge civilian spin-off that is crucial to many other aspects of modern economic life. It is probably one of the most profound spin-offs, whether it is in radio, communications or other areas.

Secondly, although we have been discussing high-powered weaponry, low-powered defence is also at stake. Some of my constituents grind valves for German companies that may be among those supplying military equipment containing those valves. Others make moulds for various forms of equipment, not knowing where they might ultimately end up, or bend high-tensile wire into certain configurations, not all of which will be intended for the domestic market but may also be exported to other countries. Moreover, many of my constituents who work in the textile industry may have supplied military uniforms for all kinds of regimes.

Those matters are not of the significant character with which the House is concerned today but, nevertheless, they represent huge elements of the defence and armaments industry and much important employment to most of our constituents, wherever we represent. The House should therefore not write short the importance of the defence industry in relation to our constituents and our economy.

Foreign policy and trade policy have nearly always gone hand in hand. There has always been a close association—it has been even closer recently—between foreign policy initiatives and commercial and trade initiatives. It is essential that that happens, because we require an evolutionary economy, access to markets and the development of spin-offs. What may have been a trade mission must be allowed to turn into a mission of wider application for the purchase and sale of equipment and/or services.

As the right hon. Member for Dudley, East said, in all those endeavours one cannot decide that one is picking a friend for life. One has no right to assume that a country to whom one is selling goods this year will still be worth exporting to a year hence, whether it concerns geopolitical movement, collapsing economies or changes of regime. Let

[Sir Giles Shaw]

us face it: we supplied the Shah with virtually his entire army and felt that it was a rational proposition for stability of the middle east. We must never assume that times might change. It is therefore a matter of pertinence and care that trade arrangements must be made.

The role of junior Ministers has to some extent been impugned in the continuing discussions. As someone who has served in the engine room of government in five different Departments, I am glad that some initiative is occasionally allowed to those of lower ranks. It seems right and proper that lower-level Ministers should be able to take decisions. We are not picked to fail to use our own initiative and acumen.

The issue that the hon. Member for Livingston raised was to try to attack and impugn the Prime Minister, but he did not succeed in doing so. Happily, it will not happen when Lord Justice Scott's inquiry reports, which I trust he will do as speedily as possible.

7.34 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): We are discussing whether the House agrees with the policy pursued by the Government. The matter has become so complex that we have forgotten that we are discussing whether the Government were right to have such guidelines on arms to Iraq. Were those guidelines implemented? Did Ministers speak the truth? Was it right to agree to prosecute three people?

The case is straightforward and, as I listen to the debate, what comes out of it is the fact that it is nothing to do with a judge. Lord Justice Scott cannot assess whether it was right to put an embargo on Iraq, to make the embargo flexible or to prosecute three people concerned. The matter is political, not legal.

On whether Ministers spoke the truth, all that I can say is that, having had 11 years of ministerial experience, for many of which I was responsible for supervising the COCOM restrictions as Minister of Technology and as Industry Secretary, I know that Ministers are kept informed. Every incoming Minister is given a thick brief called "a brief for an incoming Minister", which reviews the Department's policy.

Every Minister who meets a Foreign Minister, as the Prime Minister met Tariq Aziz—Tariq Aziz referred to that meeting when I met him in Baghdad—would have a full brief describing every aspect of relations between Britain and that country. Every Minister goes home at night with red boxes full of letters written by every junior Minister to every other junior Minister about everything under the sun, Cabinet Committee minutes, security reports and ambassadors' telegrams. Furthermore, all decisions about the supply of arms are taken at the highest level by Cabinet Ministers.

Therefore, given the importance of Iraq, which was, after all, of major strategic importance, having always been in the British sphere of influence as one of the world's great oil suppliers, I find it hard to believe that a Minister who held any of those offices, let alone the Prime Minister, did not know, did not bother to ask, was not told and was not interested enough to ask. It is a matter not of honour but of policy.

To have a judge look at that matter is absolutely improper because it takes away Ministers' accountability to the House of Commons and hands it to a judge whom we cannot allow the House to see. That is why I made an issue of the fact that, when a Minister quotes from a Government document, that document should be laid in the House. The Deputy Speaker said that Cabinet papers were not state papers. They are state papers, and if the House gives up its right to hold Ministers accountable, we might as well go home.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Would it help my right hon. Friend if I tell him exactly what the Speaker said, because I took note of it at the time? She did not refer to state papers but said that when an Opposition Member or any Back-Bench Member refers to an official document, they do not have to lay it on the Table as a Minister must.

Mr. Benn: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, but I recall the words that were used and shall return to the matter.

I noticed that the President of the Board of Trade was shielding himself behind three lawyers. He said that he had to sign the certificate of public immunity because the Attorney-General told him to do so. He said that he knew that it would have no effect because the judge would have to decide and that, in any case, the whole matter would be decided by Lord Justice Scott.

This is an evasion of ministerial responsibility on a matter of public policy. We have discussed the conduct of Ministers so much that we have forgotten that the story is part of an unhappy record of British relations in the middle east, which my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) will raise again on Friday. Iraq was part of the world which we took over when the Ottoman empire disappeared. Britain bombed Iraq with chemical weapons in the 1920s and a few months ago the Queen Mother unveiled a statue to the man who did it —Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, known as Bomber Harris. He was the squadron leader who used chemical weapons against Iraq.

We planned to occupy Kuwait in 1958—it all came out in the official papers—when Selwyn Lloyd wrote to Foster Dulles stating that we might take over Kuwait as a Crown colony. The double standards of British policy in the middle east will be noticed by anyone in the Arab world who reads the report of today's debate. We did not take the same view as we took about Kuwait when Turkey invaded Cyprus or when the occupied territories were taken over by Israel.

Considered in the light of what we now know, the Gulf war is seen to be a war for profit, oil and control of the region. Now we are suddenly told that the Ministers, who so vigorously protested their defence of democracy and human rights, were selling weapons to Sadam Hussein who was represssing Kurds and Shi'ites before and after the war. Those Ministers then said that it was merely a matter of flexible guidelines.

Some 200,000 Iraqis were killed last year by forces including our own. Some 150,000 Iraqi children aged under five were expected to die by the Harvard medical team who studied the bombing of the water supply by British, American and French bombers. It is an act of odious hypocrisy then to say, as hon. Members have said, that our industry needs the orders and people want the jobs. The House may remember the joke about the town producing nuclear weapons in America. Somebody asked him, "How can you do it?" He replied, "A man has got to live." That is the argument being used to justify the supply of weapons.

I am glad that the former leader of the Liberal party the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) mentioned the arms trade, which is what matters for the future. I am grateful to the Committee Against the Arms Trade, of which I have long been a supporter, for providing me with information, some of which has been quoted.

The international arms trade is a greater threat to world peace than the AIDS epidemic or the drugs trade, because it is supported by Governments. It props up dictators such as the Shah, Batista, Marcos, Papa Doc and Pinochet, who received the weapons to crush their own people. They did so in the interests of keeping down their people so that multinationals could make a profit for the super-powers that sold them the weapons. The fact that such people have bought those weapons then leads them into trouble with the International Monetary Fund, which tells them to cut their social budget as they must pay the debt owed on the arms that were bought to keep down their own people.

There is a tremendous waste of skill. Some of the most brilliant scientists and engineers in the world are working on methods of death instead of means of life. Billions of pounds are wasted on weapons, when they could have been used to save life. A heavy responsibility rests on everyone who promotes the international arms trade—I know that all Governments have done so to some extent. There have been 134 wars since 1945, in which millions of people have died and in which the weapons used were often supplied by the super-powers. Millions more people died because they were denied the resources that were wasted in the arms programme. Every arms programme and every arms sale plants the seeds of a new war.

What should the House do about the problem? Ministers will not tell the House the truth about the matter. Everyone knows—it has been mentioned—that Ministers use secret intelligence. Ministers are prepared to sacrifice intelligence agents to conceal the truth. I wonder whether Farzad Bazoft was such a victim, as it is not all certain that he would not have been repudiated, like the man who was recently put on trial.

The House should deal with the issue by Select Committee. Oliver North was sent before a congressional committee and grilled for weeks about Watergate. When Peter Wright wrote a book saying that he had committed treason, millions of pounds were spent by the Government to prevent the book from getting into the hands of the British people.

We are discussing the capitulation of the legislature as it fails even to want to make the Executive accountable and is happy to pass the matter to a judge. We shall all have to wait two years, by which time the people will have forgotten what the inquiry was about and the Ministers responsible will have gone to the House of Lords, and that will be the end of the matter.

We should not pass the matter over to Lord Justice Scott. I have no knowledge of his work and he may be a distinguished man, but the House should take responsibility. The House would do well to get away from trying to find scapegoats. The central questions are: who should be allowed to buy weapons? Who controls them? Who knows what happens? Who tells the truth? Does the House take responsibility for holding the Government accountable or does it shuffle off the responsibility as it has on so many other issues, to a commission, an agency or a High Court judge? If we take the latter course, we shall be burying the House as an historic defender of the rights of those we represent, some of whom were sent to fight in Iraq against an army that we had armed.

7.45 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): I am interested in the remarks of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), if only because I am not sure that I share his conclusion on the nature of the inquiry. I agree with the Prime Minister and with every hon. Member who believes that we are discussing a fundamental issue which goes to the heart of our liberty. Three business men were put on trial, and there remains a suspicion in people's minds that those men were on trial while Ministers—who knew facts which were not readily available to the court and who tried to prevent the defence from knowing—were in some way conspiratorial.

Those events beg a question which I cannot get out of my mind. I asked my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) whether he thought that the trial had been capricious, and whether the Customs and Excise had brought it casually. I do not believe that the Customs and Excise did so. I think that it had reasons to suppose that the defendants had committed an offence.

The defence maintained that their clients acted in collusion with Ministers of the Crown, albeit junior ones. If the conviction had been successful, would Ministers and civil servants who were party to the attempt have been standing trial? I agree with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that it is essential that the matter is disposed of properly, effectively and with the widest possible remit. The judge will consider all the issues. I noticed that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that he will agree to further and wider terms if necessary. I shall let the matter rest there, as I believe that the House and the nation will make a judgment and we shall learn the truth. The displays earlier today demonstrated some of the reasons for my belief.

I am deeply worried about one aspect of the affair, and I agree with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield that there is a suggestion that Ministers are not accountable for the certificates that they sign. It is interesting to look at the certificates. I raised the matter with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—the President of the Board of Trade—who had carefully crafted his certificate. His words make it clear that he was advised to take certain action. His certificate is undoubtedly the most carefully crafted of them all. It states:

> "it is my duty to assert the public interest grounds why such documents ought to be immune from production".

The Attorney-General saw in that the lacework of the judgments of judges, and captured a little of what is at the heart of the matter: Crown or royal prerogative and the assertion that Government business is secret from the House and from the courts of law. Until 23 years ago, that claim was absolute. I cheer the judges for having diminished the absoluteness of what was an almost imperial claim on behalf of royal prerogative.

I shall go further and state that I accept what the court has done and understand the reasoning of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. However,

[Mr. Richard Shepherd]

Ministers are not the plaything of the court, but responsible and accountable to the House of Commons. It is not a question of whether

"it is my duty to assert the public interest".

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has a little expertise in such matters—it was his Department which mounted the prosecution against Clive Ponting. In pursuit of the prosecution there was released into the public domain what were then referred to as the Crown jewels. That raises the suspicion that the documents were available to that court without exercising the terms of the certificate—the

"duty to assert the public interest grounds."

There is a contradiction already. No wonder the certificate is crafted.

One claim that is made in the certificate of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office is based on national security. It is a solemn claim to make to any judge. We know that from experience with the "Spycatcher" case and experience in the United States. No judge in our sort of common law society will act casually in response to a claim for Crown immunity. It is something that is treated with the utmost seriousness. In some instances, it is treated so seriously that there is not even a preparedness to examine the facts behind the claim. It is the duty of the Minister to accept accountability. I am returning all the time to the fact that no Minister can escape responsibility for his or her assertion that information or material should not come before the courts.

We are talking about the most solemn duties of the House and of Ministers who are Members of it, which are to protect the freedom and reputation of our fellow citizens. If, following an assertion by Ministers—one so blanket and so grand—the courts decide in deference to them not to examine documents properly, our freedom is lost. We are talking of Ministers who are charged by the House and the nation to have a regard for the national interest. Against that background, we must insist that my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, while engaging in the necessary lacework and intricate judgments and the cautious edging forward of the courts to try to redress the claims of past years of absolute duty, must focus on the first line of the defence of our liberties, which is that Ministers should exercise these responsibilities correctly.

That is why we must challenge the advice of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. We must challenge the way in which Ministers sign as a matter of duty. After all, duty does not permit of discretion. That is wrong. That is wrong for Ministers who are elected Members of the House. They are responsible, and when they sign they must assert that responsibility.

Secrecy has been claimed by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It seems to be said that every detail of government bears upon government and therefore must lead to a certificate of immunity. We are told that that amounts to duty, but it is a corruption of our process. Ours is a free and open system of government and the case that is before us provides the most powerful argument that we have had in years for freedom of information. The presumption must be that the business of government is available to the people of the United Kingdom and their representatives on the Floor of the House.

If we do not know what the Government are doing, we cannot defend our liberties and those of our constituents. That is absolute. Judge Brandeis of the United States once said that sunshine is the greatest antiseptic. I say that because there is a great scab somewhere that we know smells wrong. I argue that it is in the interests of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that we start opening up our processes.

It is in the interests of the Government that they examine what went wrong. There are Ministers who are still in office—some at high level—who were aware of the circumstances. They knew and know how men came to be led into the dock while they were party to the relevant judgments. Their conscience and duty to the House dictates a course of action. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister should insist that it be followed. That applies also to their official advisers who were prepared to connive with them, if that is the charge and it is proven—that of trying to pervert this country's declared policy.

7.54 pm

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): It is significant that we are debating these matters on an Opposition Supply day and not on the initiative of the Government, who must have felt that by setting up a judicial inquiry under Lord Justice Scott they would avoid the full scrutiny of the House. I endorse the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn).

I believe that the debate would not have taken place had it not been for the persistence of some investigative journalists, of newspapers and of other sections of the media in constantly highlighting various aspects of the sordid detail which lies behind the matters that we are discussing. On this occasion they deserve the gratitude of the House and of the British public.

I wish to raise the involvement of Allivane International and Allivane International Group Ltd. in the export of arms to both Iraq and Iran. There is an important distinction in the names of the two companies which will become obvious. I wish to highlight the case of one of my constituents, Mr. Frank Machon, and his company, Polmadie Storage and Packaging Ltd. of Glasgow.

Mr. Machon is not some fly-by-night, get-rich-quick person seeking to make a fast buck at someone else's expense. He is extremely hard-working. In 1988, he was contracted by Allivane to move 1,000 tonnes of fuses and high explosives between Allivane's factories in Glenrothes and Cumbernauld and the royal ordnance factory at Bishopton, and even to the Brocks factory at Sanquhar, Dumfrieshire. The final destination of those lethal weapons of war was supposed to be Saudi Arabia. The job took 17 weeks, and Mr. Machon's lorries were running 24 hours a day.

Allivane's contract was worth $17 million, but it could not cope with it. The Ministry of Defence was involved in looking after everything and it was desperate not to upset the Saudis. This led to several matters of great public concern taking place involving the police, the special branch and Army logistics.

For example, I understand that the first loads were 5·3 tonnes per lorry, which was the legal maximum. The Ministry ordered that they carry 15 tonnes, nearly three times the legal limit. On one occasion the M8 was closed in the early hours of the morning to allow seven lorries to speed through. As Allivane had not paid its bills to the royal ordnance factory, Mr. Machon's lorries were kept out of Bishopton. On one occasion he had seven fully loaded lorries containing over 100 tonnes of explosives in his warehouse overnight. They were guarded by armed police.

How can such things be allowed to happen? Think of the appalling carnage in the centre of Glasgow if something had gone wrong. Such events must not be allowed to happen again, and the matters to which I am referring must be thoroughly investigated.

During the period of the contract, Mr. Machon became concerned about receiving payment as a result of Allivane's apparent insolvencies. He states that he received a verbal guarantee from the Ministry of Defence that he would be paid even if Allivane went bust. He states also that the then Secretary of State, Lord Younger, was the person responsible for the guarantee, and that he had no reason to doubt that he would be paid if he completed the contract.

By June 1988, Mr. Machon had transported all the explosives and he thought that his troubles were over. Far from it, however—they were only just beginning. He was owed £68,000 in the form of the invoices that he had issued to Allivane. He had to pay value added tax on the invoices although he never received one brown penny of the £68,000. Needless to say, Allivane never paid him. In passing, it is interesting to note that Allivane received at least £147,000 in grants from the Scottish Development Agency to locate in Scotland.

Mr. Machon is a persistent, stubborn and resourceful person, and he has spent the past four years trying to get paid and to get justice. He has yet to get either. His efforts have cost him over £200,000 in legal costs alone. They have taken him to several countries and have led him to piece together the jigsaw that was Allivane and its role in the international arms trade. He has unravelled a great deal about the operations of the trade and the lengths to which Governments and Government agencies will go to cover up their actions and prevent the truth from coming out.

In November 1988, Mr. Machon went before the Queen's Bench of the High Court in London—the case was heard by Mr. Justice Otton—where he took an injunction against Aerotechnologies, Allivane's successor company. The company paid £150,000 into court, and the court later allowed the money to be withdrawn. I believe that that decision was taken on the basis that it was shareholders' money. I understand also that the judge was changed before the case was finished. In the event, Mr. Machon did not get anything.

This year, in Glasgow sheriff court, Mr. Machon was awarded £68,825·48 plus interest at 15 per cent. from September 1990, plus expenses against Aerotechnologies. It is a worthless award, because he was told that he would have to get the money from Lagan Investments, which is the parent company of Aerotechnologies and registered in Panama. What hope has he of getting any money from Panama?

During Mr. Machon's investigations, he discovered, and alleges, that Allivane International Group was the name used, with the Government's knowledge, to ship arms to both sides in the Iran-Iraq war, in clear breach of the embargo on the sale of arms to Iran since 1983 and to Iraq since 1985. He has many documents which detail everything, including letters from the Registrar of Companies failing to reveal any trace of a company called Allivane International Group.

However, Mr. Machon has letters from that company and from BCCI referring to that company. He has copies of DTI export licences issued to Allivane International Group—the ghost company—from the Registrar of Companies about the change of names between Allivane International Group and Aerotechnologies Limited and also from Allivane International to the DTI, and so on. It is all very complicated—probably deliberately so.

It is interesting to note that Customs and Excise and the police twice raided the Scottish offices of Allivane, but the Crown office in Edinburgh took no action. Nor did it give any reason for its decision, which some Customs officers allege followed interference from Whitehall.

Mr. Machon wrote to the then Prime Minister, now Lady Thatcher, but received a brush-off from Mr. Charles Powell, her private secretary. Mr. Machon tried again with the present Prime Minister. In a letter on 29 January 1991, he said:

> "What does alarm me most of all is that Britain has been supplying Iraq and creating a funnel through which every arms manufacturing country, even Eastern Bloc countries, have had the facility made 'available' to them to complete the shipment to the Gulf through Britain since 1983 up to 1990 . . . Since 1988 I have amassed thousands of documents, many in original form, which in the eyes of my Legal Counsel prove that we were to be sacrificed financially to safeguard the British secret . . . I appeal to you . . . to offer me the opportunity of discussing those papers in detail with you."

On 26 February, Mr. Charles Powell replied:

> "The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letters of 29 January and 21 February. He has asked me to pass on to you his regrets that his diary commitments are such that he is unable to accept your invitation to meet."

By coincidence—I assume that it could not possibly be anything else—Customs and Excise also wrote to Mr. Machon on 26 February threatening to proceed with the liquidation of his company. So much for writing to the Prime Minister.

It is still not too late for the Prime Minister to take up Mr. Machon's invitation to discuss the whole business with him, and I hope that he will do so. I also hope that Lord Justice Scott will invite Mr. Machon to give evidence to his inquiry. I know that Mr. Machon is anxious to do so.

Is it not strange that the Ministry of Defence should work closely with Allivane—a company set up by Terry Byrne Junior, who had worked for James Guerin, an arms dealer and founder of International Signal and Control, the company which tricked Ferranti in a £400 million arms contract scam? Mr. Guerin, now in gaol, also had links with Carlos Cardoen, a Chilean arms dealer who controls Lagan Investments of Panama. Allivane also supplied SRC, the space research company headed by Gerald Bull, which was involved in the Iraqi supergun affair.

Is it not also strange that the ghost company, Allivane International Group, should have used the failed BCCI as one of its bankers? Or perhaps it is not so strange—perhaps that is how the MOD and the DTI do business.

[Mr. David Marshall]

Is it not strange, too, that on 6 February 1990, immediately after the end of the hostilities, the Lloyds Bank International operations centre in Birmingham wrote to a technological corporation in America:

"We are requested to advise you that Central Bank of Iraq, Baghdad, Iraq, have opened their Documentary Credit Number"—

it gives various details—

"in favour of S.R.C Engineering S.A. who have lodged a transfer in your favour in accordance with the following details".

It then gives the account, the amount—just under $3 million—and the expiry date of 14 April 1990 in Birmingham, England. It states:

"This credit is available by payment of your draft(s) at sight on Central Bank of Iraq, Baghdad, Iraq".

Perhaps some Minister will tell us how it was possible, at that moment in time, for that to happen. Did it need Government approval? Was it approved, and if so, by whom?

It is my opinion that there are few people in this country who do not believe that the British Government supplied arms to both Iran and Iraq between 1983 and 1990, because the Government are now wholly bereft of any moral standards. They have forfeited the respect of the great British electorate, and the sooner they go, the better for everyone.

8.4 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I hope that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) will understand if I do not follow him. I did not quite understand the complexities of all he said. No doubt he will have an answer later. However, I listened closely to his final comments. He said that the majority of British people would believe that between 1983 and 1990 the Government were culpable by sending vast quantities of equipment to Iran and Iraq.

That sort of remark is one of the problems of debating such an issue in the House. Although it is useful to have a debate, I am glad that the whole matter will be thrashed out in greater detail through a wide-ranging judicial inquiry. I suspect that after the facts are revealed, shorn of the sort of pejorative comments made by the hon. Gentleman at the end of his speech, we will be in a better position to make up our minds about where the truth lies.

I want to say something about the sale of arms. I have always taken a great interest in defence. There are certain matters that we should tolerate in this country, and we should try to get rid of a great deal of the hypocrisy. On the question of support in the middle east during that turbulent time, of course I remember that we were trying to arrange a sales deal with the Shah and that his overthrow led to cancellation. I do not attack Britain for what it did during the Iran-Iraq war. Compared with other countries, the British were knights in shining armour. The main contributors to the conflict were France and the Soviet Union, with the Federal Republic of Germany playing its part in gas warfare. Those countries sent death-dealing equipment—anti-tank guided missiles, SAMs, combat aircraft and a whole list of other equipment that we would regard as helping to sustain a war. We did not supply those.

Hon. Members may think that the guidelines were drawn too broadly. They stated:

"We should maintain our consistent refusal to supply any lethal equipment to either side".

That is fairly clear. They also state that, subject—this is where the vagueness begins to creep in—

"to that overriding consideration, we should attempt to fulfil existing contracts and obligations".

As my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) said, one of the most confusing aspects of the debate is not the selectivity of quotations, but the selectivity of dates. Some companies had contracts before the embargo was introduced. They had to be fulfilled, so it appears that the sales of certain equipment occurred after the embargo.

The third condition in the guidelines is:

"We should not, in future, approve orders for any defence equipment which, in our view, would significantly enhance the capability of either side to prolong or exacerbate the conflict".

We all know how to interpret that. It is a broad guideline. I believe that we came out of the whole business a darn sight better than any other western European country. The guidelines also stated:

"In line with this policy, we should continue to scrutinise regorously all applications for export licences for the supply of defence equipement to Iran and Iraq."

Behind the debate is the feeling not just that we consistently broke our rules with death-dealing equipment —which we did not—but that somehow the whole concept of arms sales is wrong. We all know that there is a murky side to that, but it was not long ago in this House when anxious voices on both sides questioned whether we could develop, produce and sell the European fighter aircraft. The great argument on both sides was that jobs were at stake. However, it was not the compelling argument, which must be whether the manufacture of a particular piece of defence equipment will sustain our security. That is the important factor. If we correctly understood the argument of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), he would have none of it.

I do not believe that arms cause wars. Most of us have learnt the lesson that the nation that thinks that is a nation that puts itself in peril.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that, when we were dealing with Iraq, we were dealing with a murderous dictatorship which carried out continuous oppression of its own people? The gassing of the Kurds in March 1988 illustrated the point. Moreover, from 1988 onwards it was obvious that Saddam Hussein had territorial ambitions. Although no one could say for certain that he would invade Kuwait, it was obvious that he was a dictator who could be irrational and might invade one of the neighbouring countries. Surely that should have been a prime consideration, in addition to the nature of the dictatorship.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: That is one of the reasons why the hon. Gentleman should look at the records. He should not lay the blame at the door of the British Government. Iraq was not equipped with British tanks or guided missiles. My point is that when we consider the supply of arms, another side needs to be put. Otherwise, there is a danger that those who read the debate will believe that we should never make any arms and, least of all, that we should sell those that we have produced.

Arms help to sustain our security. The sale of arms to our allies and those whom we think may be threatened helps not only to sustain our arms industry and enable us to be more effective in the use of our productive skills but to provide employment and defend countries which we suspect might be in turn attacked.

Ms. Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: No, I wish to continue. We have heard so much from the Opposition today. I wish to give the obvious reasons why, when in office, the Labour party believes on the whole that it is right to have and sustain our defence industry and not deprive it of the opportunity to sell the equipment that we make to those whom we believe we should sustain for our own security reasons and for reasons of international security.

It is true that throughout history countries have not developed policies that would preserve the peace. However, countries change, just as Britain has changed. Alliances change from one decade to another. There is no reason why we should cease the sale of arms abroad.

I move on to the matter of the arms embargo from 1985. I said earlier that it was clear that the Government had drawn the guidelines broadly. They said that we could embrace but not sell lethal equipment that would significantly enhance military capability. Having listened to the speeches from the Front Bench and other hon. Members, I cannot conclude, with the degree of certainty that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) seems to have concluded, that the Government are guilty of not merely laxity but a grave injustice to those from Matrix Churchill who sold the machinery. I cannot come to that conclusion yet, and I hope that I will not have to come to that conclusion. That is why I welcome the judicial inquiry.

We know that the company was bought by the Iraqis in 1987. I understand that it wished to sell machine tools. Machine tools do not automatically create lethal equipment. They are not described as lethal equipment. Such tools can make pots and pans just as much as they can help to produce missiles. According to the record, an assurance was given that the machine tools would be sold to Iraq for peaceful purposes.

Mr. Henderson, who was the managing director, said that he believed, or it was suggested to him, that it was to the advantage of not simply his company but to the country to know if the arms went into the wrong hands for the wrong purposes. The intelligence of our country would be enhanced. We would have a better idea of what was happening in Iraq. That sort of thing has happened before, and it has been done by other countries. There is nothing intrinsically evil in it. One turns a blind eye because one believes that it is in the interest of the country to know through intelligence where a piece of equipment goes.

Two of my hon. Friends have suggested that the motives of Mr. Henderson originally were not as pure as they might have been. I do not know about that. All I know is that he had to go through the awful process of a trial. I must sympathise with someone who is put in that position.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but the time limit has fallen.

8.14 pm

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): I am particularly taken with the statement in the Government's amendment that their overriding consideration was not to supply any lethal equipment and to restrict the supply of any defence equipment. There is an impression abroad that one or two companies are involved in this scandal of trading with Iraq despite the guidelines. We have all heard the names of companies such as Learfan and Matrix Churchill, but many other companies are involved in a similar cover-up.

Earlier the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) made the point that Opposition Members should be able to give dates which fit into the context of their argument. I certainly intend to do that. The conclusion that I draw from the dates and information that I have about a company in my constituency is that there was either acquiescence or incompetence of a gross order at a high level in the Department of Trade and Industry. I am also mindful of the characterisation of Conservative government by Disraeli as organised hypocrisy. That has certainly entered into my thinking.

I draw attention to a company in my constituency called Microwave Modules. Certainly as early as July 1988, Customs and Excise investigated the company. It drew the conclusion by September that the company had been illegally involved in supplying intelligence surveillance equipment to the Iraqis. The company had dealt with two agents. One of the agents was a major in the Iraqi army, Mr. Lathe Al Rawa, and the other was a procurement agent for the Iraqi Government in the United Kingdom, a man named Mr. Gadhir.

Information was available at the time which showed that the company was deeply suspect in a variety of ways. It was dealing with several other companies at the time. The names of those companies will ring a bell. For example, Microwave Modules was shipping through Reynolds and Wilson in Surbiton equipment which was designated for agricultural use. The former director of the company became concerned when he discovered that his original company, Microwave Modules, had purchased shares in a company called RPV Ltd.—a company which designed and manufactured pilotless aircraft for crop spraying.

Sky News carried an item at the outset of Desert Storm which suggested that RPV aircraft were deployed on the Iraqi front line against allied troops. A Conservative Member mentioned hindsight. With hindsight, we can all make many assumptions. The company Reynolds and Wilson had an Iraqi director who was shown in customs investigations to be involved in the importation of krytrons, nuclear triggers and capacitors which were seized at Heathrow. That discovery figured largely in the investigation of a later application to the DTI by Microwave Modules for an export licence.

There is a sensitive technology section at Kingsgate house which deals with this type of technology. We should bear it in mind that Microwave Modules was already being investigated heavily at the time. Letters from Ministers acknowledged that that was the case.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Kilfoyle: No. I shall come back to the hon. Gentleman later.

Microwave Modules applied for an export licence and was told that it did not require one for the equipment that it wanted to export to Iraq. The equipment was described in the application as a special power supply to the Iraq state electricity board. Without being too technical, the

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equipment has a specified duty cycle with an on-time of 45 or 50 minutes, but no specified off-time. That suggests a one-time use. Similar technology, developed by Paige Aerospace in Sunbury and seen by the DTI, suggests the accuracy of the definition that I supplied earlier to the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West of a power control system used in missiles fired by an explosive charge—that is, a supergun.

That went before the DTI, but, to all intents and purposes, the Department did not spot anything. That equipment included radiation-hardened and other components to a military specification. That company was obviously suspect and was investigated by Customs and Excise, but submitted a specification very similar to a military specification that included parts specifically designed for apparent use in a power control system for a supergun, for example. Nevertheless, it was deemed unnecessary to provide that company with an export licence.

That information was made available to Ministers. Earlier this year, a private secretary at 10 Downing street, in a letter dated 10 March, referred all that information from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) to the Department of Trade and Industry. There followed a letter from a Minister of State at the DTI, pointing out that it was a matter for Customs and Excise.

The company's founding director resigned when he discovered the way in which the firm was operating and that products that he thought had been developed in good faith for harmless purposes were being traded with the Iraqi Government. Ever since, he has been attempting to persuade someone in authority to take his charges seriously. He has been frustrated at every turn and still has received no answer. I await an explanation from the Government of why no inquiries were made in respect of a company manufacturing an item which, in the circumstances, can only be seen as a vital component of the infamous supergun.

8.21 pm

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): It is not often that I find myself mentioned in a motion, albeit not by name but as one of the British service men who

> "may have been exposed to fire from shells and rockets made in munitions factories equipped by Britain".

I am grateful to members of the Labour Front Bench for their concern about my welfare. I was not in the front line so I did not encounter many shells—and the only rocket to which I was exposed was an ancient Soviet one. Luckily, it did no more than disturb one's sleep—shaking the earth with a tremendous explosion. Others were not so lucky, when they were targeted by Scuds.

It is true that ploughshares can be turned into swords. Screwdrivers and spanners are necessary in munitions factories. The machine tools in question could be used—and perhaps they were—in the Iraqi armaments industry. However, which Member of Parliament representing a Coventry constituency—perhaps excluding the former Member of Parliament for Coventry, North-East, who took a rather unconventional view of life—would not protest to the House if Matrix Churchill had been forced out of business because no export licences were available to the company?

There was a need for balance. Viewing a situation with the benefit of hindsight is not always wise. At the time of which we speak, the west was buying oil from Iraq. Some friendly countries, including Japan relied on it. We were not at war at the time.

Ministers were motivated by an attempt to help British industry, not Iraqi munitions factories. At that time, there were dealings between Iraq and Saudi Arabia and between Jordan and Iraq, and even Kuwait itself was assisting Iraq. In the eyes of those involved in such dealings, they were necessary because of the strength of their neighbour—and at that time there was a fear of Iran.

The European position then was most regrettable. Those of us in the Gulf were most frightened of Iraq's chemical and biological warfare capabilities. It may not generally be known that we were all given inoculations against anthrax because of fears of Iraq's potential for delivering anthrax against us. We also had to take extremely unpleasant pills to resist nerve agents, which were a very real threat.

It appears that most of that capability came from Germany, which was the top western exporter of arms to Iraq. The United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee listed 87 companies exporting to Iraq. Defence products worth billions of deutschmarks were legally exported to Iraq in the 1980s. As my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade pointed out, besides constructing Sadam Hussein's bunker, the Germans supplied chemical warfare technology and substances to Iraq and upgraded the Scud missiles for delivering them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) made mention of France, which exported Puma helicopters, Mirage and Etendard aircraft, and Exocets. We remember the damage the Exocets did in the Falklands in 1982. Most worrying of all, the French were instrumental, at the beginning of the 1980s, in helping with the construction of a nuclear plant at Osirak which, fortuitously, was destroyed by Israel in 1981. Even now, I remember the howls of outrage from Labour Members when Israel destroyed that plant. Thank goodness it did so. I suggest that Labour Members concentrate on raising with the European Parliament the issue of those exports by our European partners. That should be done especially by Liberal Democrat Members—conspicuous by their absence from the Chamber—who would have had us in a federal Europe long before the Gulf war.

Sadam Hussein's armaments were mostly Soviet and east European—T62s, T54s, Scuds, and AK47s. The debris on the battlefield was like that of the old Soviet army. Luckilly, the tactics that the Iraqis employed were as usless as those of the Soviet army turned out to be.

The Matrix Churchill affair shows that, if allegations and complete nonsense are repeated often enough, the public will start to believe them. A Gallup poll in *The Sunday Telegraph* yesterday showed that 83 per cent. of the public believe that Ministers are not telling the truth, yet nothing could be clearer than the remark of the defence counsel in the Matrix Churchill trial that there was no question of anyone attempting to suppress evidence.

I suspect that Lord Justice Scott will find that mistakes were made; that there was some naivety, as the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said, and that there was inefficiency in bringing the case in the first place. The greatest mistake that Lord Justice Scott could uncover is that we failed to finish the job on 28 February last year, though I imagine that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) would not have been keen on us marching on Baghdad.

Whatever mistakes Lord Justice Scott finds, I am sure that he will not discover a conspiracy, yet Labour Members continue to claim that one existed. In *The Sunday Telegraph* yesterday, the hon. Member for Livingston is quoted as saying:

> "The Conservatives not only ensured that Britain provided the machines that made the weapons that were ultimately turned against British troops. They also saw to it that Britain paid for that equipment."

Britain did not provide machines to make weapons that were turned against British troops. That is complete nonsense.

Those who see conspiracies everywhere tend to be either deranged or dictators. Sometimes they are both. Hitler firmly believed in a worldwide conspiracy of international Jewry and of freemasons to boot—a curious combination. Saddam Hussein, rightly, suspects a conspiracy behind every door. I do not suggest that the hon. Member for Livingston is deranged, or that the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has delusions of authoritarian grandeur. But nor can I believe, and nor can the House believe, that these Minsiters conspired and connived—as the motion suggests—to send innocent men to gaol.

Mr. Winnick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robathan: I fear that I cannot do so at this stage.

We must judge the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Livingston for our service men—and his concern for me, for which I have expressed my gratitude —in the light of his past position in regard to defence. We must bear in mind his determination to do away with our nuclear weapons: only last year he described himself as a unilateral nuclear disarmer, not nine months after we had needed our deterrent to keep Saddam Hussein and his potential nuclear weapons from us. *[Laughter.]* Hon. Members may laugh. Let me also remind the House that, in early-day motion 948, the hon. Gentleman called on the Government to cancel last year's Gulf victory parade. Neither position would have found favour with our service men.

Talk of connivance and conspiracy stretches our credulity to breaking point. Lord Justice Scott will find that most of it is much ado about nothing. The motion is unworthy of Opposition Members, and the House will rightly reject it.

8.30 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): First, I declare an interest: a public company of which I am chairman recently bought from the receiver the remains of the Matrix company, and the spare parts rights for Churchill. Needless to say, no exports have been made in the period concerned accruing to any overseas country requiring a licence.

Sadly, the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) seems blindly ignorant of all the information that has appeared in the press in recent weeks. I shall go straight to the heart of the matter and say that it is obvious from all the documents which have come to my notice—I intend to quote from them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, mindful of Madam Speaker's ruling—that before the granting of the first export licence in December 1987, the whole Government were aware of exactly what was going on.

I quote a paragraph from an MI6 contact report. It states:

> "I had hoped to use most of this session to photograph drawings of sheets obtained from TI company files."

That is a reference to the previous parent company of Matrix Churchill.

> "Unfortunately, (or fortunately, depending on viewpoint)"—

having read "Spycatcher", I am amused to see that reports such as this can have their ludicrous aspects—

> "my A4 sized photographic equipment was not man-enough to cope with 100 sheets of 3′ × 2′ drawings. If a photographer was available, we agreed to repeat the session on Friday 30 October."

Many Conservative Members talked about context and dates, but it is impossible to be clearer than that: the licence was not issued until December. There was then something of a debate within the Government about whether it should have happened.

Lest there is any question about who knew at that stage of the extent of the intelligence department's involvement, I will quote from a confidential minute circulated in January 1988. I shall not quote what was said by civil servants—a good lead was given in that connection by the former leader of the Liberal party, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel). Having read all this, however, I am dismayed at the extent of the compliance and the lack of moral fibre and resistance were eroded by the bullying tactics of the former Prime Minister, Baroness Thatcher. It is a great pity, and a disservice to the civil servants of this country. The document states:

> "The intelligence community recommends against revoking the licences as they fear for the safety of their source, and they also believe that far more important information could cease to become available as a result."

It could not be clearer than that.

The document went to 17 people, and must have reached the Foreign Office and the Department of Trade and Industry. If the President of the Board of Trade cannot tell us today whether he knew or not, that is the clearest possible proof that he did know. I only regret that he would not give way to me so that I could make the position clear to him and the House.

It is clear from the confidential briefings of those who attended the meetings in January that the Government were in on the matter. The advice was that

> "the application should be supported by voluminous material —the application should be biased technically—the application should be made as soon as possible."

It was also stated that the application should stress the peaceful use of material.

I agree that all Governments should promote exports. I was vociferous in defending the European fighter programme. There is, however, a difference between co-operating with regimes which have some semblance of democratic processes and a tradition of friendship with this country, and co-operating with a regime such as Saddam Hussein's. I could quote many other interesting documents, but the rigidly imposed 10-minute rule forces me to skip them. I hoped to be called earlier.

I come now to the link between the Government and Customs and Excise in this sad affair. I have a letter from

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the principal private secretary, Department of Trade and Industry, to the chairman of Customs and Excise allowing him to go ahead and start the investigation, but adding:

> "You assured me that the visit"

to the Matrix Churchill premises

> "would be used for fact finding only, and no action would be taken as a result without consulting Ministers."

It is pretty clear that the Government had a strong handle on the way in which, and the extent to which, Customs and Excise was to conduct its investigation. However, it went ahead, and the rest took place after the ceasefire and the easing up of policy, with the continuing connivance and co-operation of Ministers. One man—Gore-Booth—stood out against it. I think that he should be complimented, and I name him for that reason.

I will not be drawn into saying whether the affair had any electoral significance. The period that it covered made it sub judice. After the election, however, it came to trial. What I find most puzzling is how it was ever allowed to come to trial. It is clear that the public interest immunity certificates were rushed through. Some, like the Home Secretary, may have acted in ignorance of what was in them; some may have read them but not understood their significance; some, like the President of the Board of Trade—and many have complimented him on his approach—may have acted with great reluctance. But that sort of Pontius Pilate attitude—"We will leave it to the good judge to decide; that is his job, is it not?"—is not good enough.

In the 1950s, it was ruled that such certificates should not be used in criminal cases. It is clear from a case in Reading, which has not been mentioned so far, that the mere threat of such a document being issued is sometimes sufficient for a judge to back off, a plea of guilty to be entered and a suspended sentence to be imposed. I think that that should be looked at.

What have the Government achieved? Ministers have behaved with cowardice and irresponsibility; at best, they have hidden behind a judge. The evidence came out in court only because—against the advice of counsel for the other two defendants——Geoffrey Robertson sued to have it brought out. He was able to obtain it only by waiving his right to be silent during the defence's case. That is how difficult it was—and now Ministers are saying that they were happy to sign a statement that the judge would be willing to bring them out if he thought it relevant. That meant that Paul Henderson had to reveal in court the full extent of his links with MI6. Had that not happened, the public interest immunity notices would have been conducive to the perversion of the normal course of justice. That is how severe the charge was, and there is no way in which anyone involved can dodge it.

There is now a complete lack of trust between civil servants and Ministers, and between MI6 and industry. Above all, several crucial issues have to be faced, especially with regard to the three defendants. One of them, and somebody else who is not a co-defendant but who has been named, have had their livelihoods severely prejudiced. Moreover, their very security has been put at risk.

The Government say that the judge obtained the information, but how did he obtain it? He obtained it only by the Government having revealed the full extent, in advance of the defence's case, of the MI6 links. Therefore, we have to ask the Government what they intend to do to protect those gentlemen whose lives as well as livelihoods they have so wantonly exposed. In addition, how do the Government intend to restore the basis upon which they can regain their livelihoods?

It is sad for me to have to make these charges in the House. I did not think that members of this Government, some of whom we had respected, would stoop so low to protect their own necks. I do not believe that there is any solution other than their resignation, to clear the good name of the House and of British justice.

8.40 pm

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): I intend to refer to the international context of the issue—the worldwide desire to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Since the second world war, one of the greatest dangers of world peace has been the very real risk that certain third-world countries would acquire nuclear technology and develop nuclear weapons. Most recently, the Gulf war reminded us that nuclear weapons in the wrong hands might have led to a global disaster. The successful prosecution of that war by conventional means alone was also a timely reminder of the importance of monitoring closely attempts by third-world countries to become nuclear powers, in contravention of the non-proliferation treaty.

Almost invariably, the countries that have been most active in attempting to acquire a nuclear capability have been countries in the world's political hot spots. Some of their leaders have been, at best, aggressive; sometimes they have been unstable and likely to use nuclear weapons pre-emptively.

Under successive British Governments during the past 20 to 30 years, the intelligence community has pursued a consistent policy of monitoring attempts by third-world countries to develop and produce a nuclear capability. Under successive British Governments, the intelligence community, whenever and wherever possible, has sought also to frustrate attempts by non-nuclear powers to become nuclear.

In order to be in a position to arrest the progress of nuclear aspirants, it is surely necessary to gain intelligence access to the procurement process of the countries involved. One of the means by which such access might be achieved is in the grey area on the fringes of official guidelines where there is some flexibility in interpretation, particularly when certain types of components, or tools, or equipment have peaceful nuclear uses, or non-nuclear uses.

The practice for many years has been to exploit, where feasible and where Government policy allows, some of the opportunities that arise when British companies, and companies in other countries, are in a position to export goods that are readily available in many parts of the world but which have dual use. There are foreign powers that have set up front companies in many parts of the world, whose sole purpose has been to acquire components and equipment to enhance their nuclear weapons programme.

There are those, I am sure, on the Opposition Benches who would say that if such companies are discovered in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, they should be exposed and closed. That is a naive view of the world. Were such action to be standard procedure, the offending Government would merely set up new front organisations. The intelligence community would then have the additional task of locating and penetrating them anew. In the meantime, our ability to monitor and frustrate the activities of which I speak would be correspondingly diminished and the threat to world peace correspondingly increased.

In my experience under both the last Labour Administration and the first Administration of this Conservative Government, the intelligence community of this country, together with its intelligence allies, worked diligently in pursuit of what must be a worthwhile goal —the prevention of local nuclear conflict. They achieved that with great skill. Such preventive action was possible only because the intelligence community under Governments of both political persuasions were able to penetrate authorised trade to certain foreign countries and exercise thereby some control over their activities and progress. Had the practice been discontinued, many countries that do not now have a nuclear capability would probably have become nuclear powers, with possibly catastrophic consequences.

In my view, the Labour party's actions in recent weeks have damaged significantly the prospects for future success in that area. The most spectacular operation to stifle nuclear proliferation was undertaken by the Israeli air force in 1981, as my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) mentioned, when it destroyed Iraq's experimental nuclear reactor at Osirak, which was almost certainly intended as a nuclear fuel reprocessing plant.

Early attempts by Iraq and others to develop a nuclear capability were closely monitored by intelligence communities in all parts of the world during the 1970s and 1980s. We now hear, however, from the Labour party that such activity in recent years is tantamount to connivance by Ministers in this Government—connivance by Ministers in the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of Trade and Industry. I do not accept that for one moment; nor should the Labour party insist upon pursuing it, because these activities also took place in 1978 and 1979.

At that time, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) was the Secretary of State for Trade in the then Labour Government. If the Labour party believes that what Ministers on the Treasury Bench have done is wrong, according to their logic so too were the actions of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East. We have heard nothing but sanctimonious cant from the Labour party during the debate. While it is universally recognised and accepted that the Labour party has a duty to oppose the Government, what it is doing today and what it has been doing during the last few weeks amounts to opposing and undermining this country and its attempts to maintain world peace.

8.48 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I listened with interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards). I wondered for a moment, however, what it had to do with the subject matter of the debate. I thought that the debate was about a simple issue, and it must be about a simple issue. It is not about whether arms were sold. We all know that they were. It is about the rights of the individual as against the rights of the state. We lose sight of that fact at our peril in a democracy.

We have to remember what has happened in the case of Matrix Churchill. I declare an interest as a practising barrister and as the senior partner for many years in Mr. Henderson's defence firm. Three men went on trial. The state held certain papers that were germane and material to their defence. Ministers were asked to sign a public interest immunity certificate, and they did so.

It is not for me to say who knew what, because that does not concern me and it will come out during the inquiry of Lord Justice Scott, a man of immense integrity; what is important is the risk that society ran, because this was not the first trial. A judge at Reading—His Honour Judge Spence—was served with a similar certificate in February, when four men went on trial. I do not know the details of the case, but, interestingly, the certificate was upheld. The then Attorney-General, who is now Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, must presumably have given some advice either to Ministers or the court and counsel in the case.

Did that judge have the same papers as His Honour Judge Smedley when he reviewed the certificates? His Honour Judge Smedley struck a blow for freedom because he began to tear back the veil of secrecy, and justice was done. I appreciate that sometimes the public interest must be taken into account.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Is my hon. Friend aware that the case that he mentioned at Reading was not the first step along a sordid route, because three gentleman from Forgemasters were taken to a police station in my constituency on the day that the Select Committee was due to commence its investigation? Does he agree that Lord Justice Scott may consider the supergun aspects of the affair?

Mr. Bermingham: My hon. Friend is perfectly correct. It was interesting that no prosecution was brought over the Rawmarsh incident.

I do not know what happened at Reading, but three men received prison sentences, albeit suspended, and, as is said in the trade, certain matters were raised between the parties.

Is it right in a democracy that a man should go on trial when documents are available that may lead to his acquittal? The answer is no. In the Court of Appeal recently, the Lord Chief Justice, sitting with other judges, ruled in the Ward case on the question of disclosure. Under English law, public interest immunity certificates were not meant to be involved in criminal trials: civil trials involving property, yes, but criminal trials, no. Why have they suddenly begun to emerge in criminal trials?

If the Attorney-General and the Government believe that allowing a man a fair trial with full disclosure will be harmful to the public interest and a document is held that could lead to this acquittal but which in their considered opinion should not be disclosed, a simple step is available: the Attorney-General intervenes and issues a nolle prosequi. I agree with the Attorney-General's interpretation of his role, but his proper role is to ask for the certificate and to deliver the documents to the judge. If the judge concludes that the documents should be disclosed, they are disclosed; otherwise he issues nolle prosequi; in other words, stop the prosecution.

That is how the judge protects the rights of the individual, and it is the right of the individual in a criminal trial to expect that any document or matter germane and

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material to his defence to be disclosed. If that is swept away, justice is destroyed and no democracy is entitled to send a single innocent man or woman knowingly to prison.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that, when the President of the Board of Trade said that he was not entitled to waive his signature on the certificate of public interest immunity, he was being somewhat disingenuous, because in 1989 Lord Bingham said that in exceptional circumstances Ministers could refuse to sign such certificates and allow documents to be produced? Surely in a case where someone was innocent that would be exceptional. In addition, because there is no statutory form of public interest immunity certificate, the Secretary of State could have included a clause in the form alerting the judge to the fact that these men were innocent.

Mr. Bermingham: My hon. Friend makes the point that I was going to make.

There are three lessons to be learned: first, that the individual is paramount in our consideration; secondly, that the issue of disclosure in criminal trials must be considered, particularly for sensitive matters; and, thirdly, that the Attorney-General must lay down proper guidelines or indicate to the judiciary that a judge must examine the document and that, having done so, it is for him to decide whether to disclose. Above all, the Attorney-General must remember that when an individual is at risk but documents are available to clear him or her, the Attorney-General must issue a nolle prosequi.

I thought that the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 centralised the prosecution service—in other words, one Attorney-General, one Director of Public Prosecutions and the Crown prosecution service. I have been in the trade long enough to know about prosecutions brought by the Inland Revenue, the Department of Trade and Industry and Customs and Excise, but this case must tell us that when other bodies prosecute the Attorney-General and the Director must exercise the same degree of control over their prosecutions as they do over the Crown prosecution service. It seems ludicrous that the Commissioners for Customs and Excise can go their own way.

Let us learn some lessons from this, but let us never forget that the individual is more important than the state.

8.57 pm

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): the Matrix Churchill company is in the centre of my constituency. One of its directors, Mr. Paul Henderson, is my constituent. So the House would expect me to speak for those who have not been mentioned today, the truly forgotten people in this debate: the 600 highly skilled men who used to work for Matrix Churchill and who now contemplate the shell of a building and a company, the rump of which now manufactures only a fraction of the output which Matrix Churchill produced so successfully in recent years.

I should like my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to answer a question for me. As the Scott inquiry can be given "further and wider terms" if need be, can it be widened to include compensation, not just for the directors but for the work force, if it can be shown that the actions of Government agencies contributed to the downfall of the company? I do not suggest that I will judge the answer to that question today, but before I conclude I should like to give my right hon. and learned Friend some information which may help him to decide whether he can undertake to widen the inquiry to include aspects of compensation.

It may help the House if I provide a potted history of the company. Those of us who take an interest in the health of manufacturing industry, and in the machine tool industry in particular, should be aware that the company's past reads like a roll call of the very best of British machine-tool-making companies. TI Churchill took over Alfred Herbert in 1983. If ever there was an aristocracy among skilled workers in this country, and in Coventry, it was to be found at Alfred Herbert, a company which produced generations of bright, gifted engineers whose skills were the envy of the world. The company was brigaded in with Matrix and Coventry Tool and Gauge to complete the amalgamation of a prodigious and prestigious portfolio of famous machine tool manufacturers' names.

Matrix Churchill was formed in 1987 when TMG, with its Iraqi shareholding, bought the company for £6·5 million. Many hon. Members today have spoken of the "crown jewels" in the context of a legal case. I say that when TMG bought the company for £6·5 million it bought the crown jewels of the British machine tool industry. All that has been thrown away in the course of the past 12 months.

From the mid-1950s onwards, the company developed CNC lathes, which benefited from an enlightened development policy on the part of a management team, including some who have been mentioned today, led by Paul Henderson. They were popular on the shop floor, they had the respect of their work force, and they invested blood, sweat, tears and money in the company. They produced a range of automated machining centres for CNC lathes, manufacturing systems and engineering products which boded well for the future.

Even without an Iraqi order book, the company would have been likely to have a good future. Some of my hon. Friends and some Opposition Members have asserted that there may have been collusion between the security services, the DTI, other Whitehall agencies and Customs and Excise. If the results of the work of various Government agencies are to be objectively assessed, the chaos produced by the lack of interaction between them certainly contributed to the redundancies of up to 600 people who once had jobs in my constituency and other parts of Coventry.

I should like to draw to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the details of one period in the company's history. In the autumn of 1990 the management, together with British financial backers, attempted to buy out the Iraqi shareholding. On 21 September 1990, the directors of the company cleared a statement with the DTI which read as follows:

> "The directors are more confident that the deal to buy out the Iraqi financial interest will succeed . . . At a meeting this week, the Department of Trade and Industry recognised our efforts and indicated that a speedy resolution of our plans to acquire 100 per cent. equity in the business would be welcomed."

Within days of the statement, the directors were arrested as a result of Customs and Excise investigations and detained in custody—an overnight experience that none of them will forget. The deal of which the DTI had been advised—the DTI had helped them to clear their press statement—was aborted almost immediately. Financial backers will always run when something like this comes to light, and that is just what they did: the financial institutions ran away.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence consider the length and manner of the Customs and Excise inquiry to assess whether it may have been a contributory factor to the demise of the company as we knew it at that time? To give my right hon. and learned Friend a flavour of what happened, when the investigators went in in September 1990—a very sensitive time, given the state of the negotiations on the buy-out—they left the premises, waved airily and said, "See you in December." That does not strike me as a vigorous, clinical and urgent investigation. That length of time and the overlap with the negotiations on the buy-out may have caused the company insuperable problems.

Customs and Excise have their own rules and they are objective and impartial. They must work to rules of evidence. But they also have draconian powers, some of which would be envied by the fraud squad. Can the terms of reference of the inquiry be widened to assess whether the investigations—albeit by an independent agency, but none the less a Government agency—prejudiced the successful rescue of that company? If they did, does the question of compensation arise not just for my constituent, Paul Henderson, but also for the 600 men who were pushed on to the scrap heap after having been the aristocrats of the machine tool industry?

We have not heard enough today about the Opposition's much-vaunted concern for the manufacturing sector. Opposition Members have been hunting for a scalp, but they may not get one. The inquiry will look into all that. However, someone somewhere must remember those 600 forgotten people in the aftermath of this sad and sorry affair.

9.6 pm

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): I am most grateful to be called to speak in this debate, because I possess some detailed information about secret armament deals by British companies, and I will refer to those documents in my speech. Since May, I have tried to establish the accuracy of some of the documents by tabling a series of parliamentary questions. About 30 of them have been blocked by the Table Office for a variety of reasons, including the fact that they are repetitious or that I was fishing for facts.

I plead guilty to both charges, because I believe that fishing for facts is a right and proper role for hon. Members. Indeed, that is what the debate is about. I do not complain about the Table Office, but about the rules under which it is expected to operate. Surely it is not in the interests of Parliament that hon. Members are unable to establish the facts.

British nuclear assistance to Iraq has a long vintage. For example, in May 1957 the House was told that the United Kingdom had contributed £30,000 to the Baghdad pact nuclear centre. The Prime Minister and other Ministers have been at pains to tell the House that the 1985 embargo assistance to Iraq was upheld. At the same time, Ministers have consistently refused to answer to the House about specifics of military equipment sales and arms deals with Iraq or other military dictatorships, such as Indonesia.

Of the many instances of ministerial shyness in respect of telling Parliament the full facts about defence exports—as Ministers call them—let me just cite two. On 21 November 1986, the year after the guidelines on exports to Iraq were announced to the House, when asked about specific sales of military, industrial and chemical equipment to Iraq and Iran since 1981, the Ministry of Defence, through the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, stated:

> "It has been the consistent policy of this and previous Administrations not to reveal details of specific defence exports to other countries."—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1986; Vol. 105, c. *355*.]

In April 1989, on the eve of the evil Baghdad arms fair which was bloated with British companies, the former Prime Minister, Baroness Thatcher, told my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), when asked if there had been any change in the current policy of prohibiting the export to Iraq of weapons that could enhance its offensive capability:

> "The Government have not changed their policy on defence sales to Iraq. Applications for export licences continue to be considered on a case-by-case basis, according to the guidelines.—[*Official Report*, 21 April 1989; Vol. 151, c. *311*.]

Baroness Thatcher may have been disingenuous in that reply, in the light of the revelations now made in public about the Matrix Churchill affair, yet the matter is graver still. Not only were Government Departments conniving in secret to circumvent their own export guidelines, but, according to information brought to my attention and mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall), Mr. Frank Machon strongly suggests that the MOD in particular knowingly dealt with a front company to ensure that ammunition, military fuses, shells and other armaments were exported to Iraq and Iran, notwithstanding successive assurances by Ministers in the House that no such sales were happening.

I know that the charges that I am about to place on the record are grave, but I believe them to be true and accurate. I want to add to and support the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Shettleston. The case involves a company called Allivane International Ltd. which became Aerotechnologies before it went bust in 1988. It involves another apparent company called Allivane International Group.

I say "apparent company" advisedly, because the letter from Companies house in Cardiff, dated 19 August 1991, stated that no such company is registered. Information given to me by Mr. Frank Machon indicates that Allivane International Group was created with the knowledge and probable connivance of the MOD as the shadow company for Allivane International Ltd.

Is it not fair to say that, if someone wanted secretly to import arms from this country using a company such as Allivane International Group, which does not need to be registered at Companies house, that would be an obvious method, because its activities are difficult to trace? Allivane International Group and Allivane International Ltd. have the same company number. According to BCCI, their affairs were dealt with by the very same receiver.

In October, I asked the MOD what it knew about Allivane. I was given four addresses in a letter dated 27 October, and the Minister added an interesting disclaimer.

[Mr. Llew Smith]

I want to demonstrate to the House that, setting aside the clear-cut case of Matrix Churchill, there is now ample evidence against what the Prime Minister told the House last Tuesday when he said:

> "The suggestion that Ministers misled the House"—

over arms deals to Iraq, Iran and elsewhere—

> "is a serious and scurrilous charge and has no basis whatsoever in fact."—[*Official Report*, 17 November 1992; Vol. 214, c. 136.]

In fact, last Thursday, the Prime Minister suggested also that previous charges laid upon the Government over their conduct regarding BCCI were also "utterly unfounded".

Using documents provided to me by Mr. Frank Machon on the Allivane affair—documents also forwarded to 10 Downing street over the past few years by Mr. Machon—I want to show the House not only that arms and other military equipment were exported to Iraq and Iran since the mid-1980s, despite the export ban, but that those arrangements were undertaken with the financial backing of the BCCI, in conjunction with the discredited Space Research Corporation, run in Belgium by Dr. Gerald Bull, builder of the supergun.

One document, for example, in my possession shows that, on 20 May 1987, BCCI was prepared to ensure the sale of 50,000 sets of fuses by Allivane International Group. The fuses for artillery shells were bound for the middle east, to be shipped via dealers in Portugal. Evidence suggests that Royal Ordnance was also involved, within months of its sale to British Aerospace early in 1987. *The Independent* further claims that Allivane held several accounts with BCCI. What do the Government know of that?

Documents in my possession also show the Allivane International Group's connection with the Space Research Corporation. A letter from Stuart Blackledge of SRC to Allivane's company chairman, Terry Byrnes Junior, on 3 August 1987, shows an order for mark 3 155 mm Elite shells by SRC to Allivane International Ltd. The contract was worth in the region of £965 million, according to another informant of mine.

In a written reply, I was told by the Minister of State for Defence Procurement that the Ministry had no record of any contract between the Army's logistic executive and Allivane for the export of military equipment since 1987.

One contract was signed in 1988 for short-term storage of ammunition in Ministry of Defence facilities, which was subsequently exported for the company. On 7 September, *The Independent* gave details of how those exports were being used as a cover for an illegal consignment of arms, which was ultimately destined for Iran.

I have given the House merely a fraction of the information that I and my hon. Friend the Member for Shettleston have been sent on breaches of military sales embargos to Iraq and Iran.

Mr. Machon wrote to the Prime Minister in January 1991 with information, and on 31 January 1991 the Prime Minister told Parliament:

> "for some considerable time we have not supplied arms to Iraq".—[*Official Report*, 31 January 1991; Vol. 184, c. 1102]

Two days before that, Machon had written to the Prime Minister:

> "I have read and listened to many statements made in newspapers and by politicians of all parties regarding the supply of armaments and ammunitions to Iraq being carried out by every country except Great Britain.
>
> What does alarm me most of all is that Britain has been supplying Iraq and creating a funnel through which every arms manufacturing country, even Eastern bloc countries, has had the facility made 'available' to them to complete the shipment to the Gulf through Britain since 1983 to 1990."

That should have concerned every one of us and our Prime Minister, who should have acted on that and other information which was sent to 10 Downing street during the past few years.

Mr. Bean: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During the speech by the President of the Board of Trade, I raised a point of order with you that he was quoting from official papers, and you said that they were not state papers. I have secured the words of the Speaker when she ruled on the matter. She said:

> "Where a Member of the Opposition or any Back Bench Member refers to an official document, they do not have to lay it on the Table as a Minister has."

I think that I am right in saying that that requires further consideration. Can you assure me that the Speaker will look into the matter, in the light of my point of order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I understand that Madam Speaker has indicated her readiness to investigate the precise nature of the document that has been quoted.

9.17 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): It is a legitimate subject for political argument whether or not this country should trade with tyrants, whether we should do away with our arms industry or our machine tools industry when they could be used to make armaments, whether we should put thousands of people out of work, and whether we should let our competitors take all our markets. Those subjects have been argued from Government to Government for many years, and they will continue.

It is also a legitimate matter for political discussion whether those hon. Members who seek to criticise a policy when they are in opposition upheld the same policy when they were in power, whether they objected to the policy that the Government are pursuing in the years that mattered and whether they are making mischief because they have no sensible policies of their own and are merely being hypocritical, as they were over their arms trade with Argentina and other unpleasant regimes. Those are double standards, and they are a legitimate subject for political debate.

However, in one of the great Parliaments of the world, it ought not to be legitimate political debate to talk nonsense, in ignorance of the facts, and to persist in talking nonsense when those facts are explained.

First, it is nonsense to say that public interest certificates were used as a cover-up in an attempt to stop the truth being used to acquit innocent men, as the hon. Member for Livingstone (Mr. Cook) has said repeatedly. The fact is that public interest certificates have, and had in this case, precisely the opposite effect. They brought to the notice of the defence and of the judge the existence of documents which might have helped the defence, and which it could not have known about. The prosecution, when it knew of the relevance of the documents to the defence case, brought them to its attention and that of the court. The court then ruled that the documents should be revealed, and the trial continued.

The documents were not the end of the matter; rather it was Alan Clark's evidence which, as I understand it, was considered capable of leaving the defence with the belief that it had his support in breaking the regulations. That is why the defence barristers have said in their letter to *The Times*:

> "We must have been present in an altogether different court . . . There was no question of anyone attempting to suppress evidence."

That is game, set and match so far as the cover-up allegation is concerned, yet the hon. Member for Livingston and his supporters have no compunction in continuing to talk nonsense.

Secondly, it is utter nonsense to say that Ministers connived at a trial and the risk of imprisonment to the defendants, knowing that the allegation that Matrix Churchill broke the regulations was false. It will be for Lord Justice Scott to decide whether the argument between the Foreign Office and the DTI about the future of the guidelines should have prevented a prosecution, but two facts are beyond argument: first, that the Ministers have to sign—it is their duty under common law—a public interest certificate if security and confidentiality between civil servants and Ministers are involved; secondly, that Foreign Office Ministers and DTI Ministers have no power or control over prosecutions.

The strength of our reputation as a decent society is precisely based on the fact that the prosecuting authorities and the judicial authorities are not influenced by political convenience. Customs and Excise was the prosecution; it saw all the relevant documents and statements. *[Interruption.]* I notice that Opposition Members are not even bothering to listen.

Customs and Excise could have said no to a prosecution if it had known that the Minister had been economical with the actualité. There was a case against Matrix Churchill until Alan Clark's evidence was heard. That is the fact of the matter, and allegations that Ministers launched, or could have stopped, the prosecution, in the knowledge that what Alan Clark had said to them was false, is nonsense peddled by the hon. Member for Livingston and his supporters.

As Simon Jenkins said in *The Times* of last week of the hon. Member for Livingston:

> "I have watched him in the past week hyper-ventilating."

For my part, I would rather have these matters sorted out by common sense, by the integrity of my right hon. Friends and by the independence of Lord Justice Scott than leave it to the hyper-ventilating activity of the hon. Member for Livingston.

9.22 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): As I waded through 500-odd pages of evidence submitted to the court and I read the interactions between various Departments and the explanations of Ministers and civil servants, a couplet by Sir Walter Scott kept coming back to me,

> "O what a tangled web we weave,
> When first we practise to deceive!"

I came to the firm conclusion that that would be a suitable epitaph for the Government.

For many, the debate merely represents the culmination of two weeks' intense activity following the collapse of the Matrix Churchill court case. As we know, however, the Government's involvement in the sale of defence equipment to Iraq has been of concern to Opposition Members for more than five years. Literally question upon question has been tabled to Ministers, only to be met, time and time again, with evasive and misleading answers. Colleagues such as my hon. Friends the Members for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) and for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) have sought, time and again, to bring out the truth.

My predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), has repeatedly tried to ascertain what was going on, but to no avail. We now know why. What is so tragic is that, while those hon. Members were plying Ministers with questions and trying to get to the truth of the matter, the Government were conspiring to allow the export of machinery to be used to build up the military arsenal of the dictator, Saddam Hussein, some of which would be used against British service men fighting to liberate Kuwait. For many of us, such duplicity is unforgiveable.

Mr. Robathan: Exactly what equipment made by Matrix Churchill machine tools was used against British servicemen in the Gulf last year?

Dr. Clark: That is an interesting question and I thank the hon. Gentleman, who I know was in the Gulf. As he knows, we still have no explanation about how certain Tornados were shot down. It was certainly done with anti-aircraft fire. We do not know where shells from tanks used against British service men came from. They probably came from equipment provided by Matrix Churchill. I shall pursue that matter later.

It is interesting that, time and again, Ministers have professed their innocence and the President of the Board of Trade has done so again today. The tragedy is that hardly anyone believes it. The President will have seen the publication in yesterday's *Sunday Telegraph* showing that 83 per cent. of people questioned did not believe that the Government were telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

We do not make those serious allegations against the Government lightly. We feel fully justified in doing so on account of the Government's behaviour in the sale of that arms-making equipment to Iraq in recent years. This afternoon we have repeatedly heard from hon. Members who felt that they had been misled by Ministers over the years. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), at his most clinical this afternoon, provided forensic analysis proving the allegation beyond all doubt.

The Labour party is still dissatisfied with the President's explanation about the public interest immunity certificates. Although Ministers may have been advised that they had to sign them, that is not the whole picture. As the Secretary of State for Defence is winding up the debate tonight, I put the same question to him as was put to the President. Did he know that one of the three defendants had helped the Government? If he had known, would he have signed the document? I doubt whether he would have signed it. I think that he would have gone to the Attorney-General and explained the position. Will he tell the House whether he knew of the involvement of one of the defendants in the case?

To compound those two charges, we question the morality of Ministers who ordered British troops into action in Desert Storm to face an Iraqi army that was partly equipped through the Government's policy. We regard that as a hypocritical policy, which is why we felt fully justified in tabling our strong motion.

Now that the Government's facade has been peeled away with the publication of those documents in the past

[Dr. Clark]

two weeks, we can see that the inside is rotting. The rot concerns not merely one Government Department but affects the whole machinery of government, and we look forward to Lord Justice Scott's report.

Mr. Richards: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: No, because I gave away much of my time to the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence).

We were surprised to hear the President of the Board of Trade say that, if Lord Justice Scott felt it appropriate, a tribunal could be held under the 1921 Act, as the Opposition requested. If that is so, why did not the Government come clean at the beginning? Why did not they offer us that at the beginning and why were not the terms of reference drawn up in consultation with the leaders of the Opposition? That would have given extra credibility to the inquiry. What we do not want is a ministerial inquiry headed by a judicial figure. We want a tribunal, and we hope that that will be the outcome, as the President this afternoon intimated would be possible. Perhaps we can be given a further assurance on that.

One of the arguments that has appeared in the documents and the debate has involved the issue of guidelines. We are all agreed that there were guidelines in 1985, announced by the then Foreign Secretary, Lord Howe. I had assumed that everyone also accepted that those guidelines were amended following the cessation of hostilities between Iraq and Iran. I was completely surprised to hear the President say today that that was not the case. What was said today flies in the face of the evidence in the documents.

Everyone accepts that there were changes made at the beginning of 1990, but they were not admitted to Parliament. Why the Government misled hon. Members is beyond me. We wonder what they are ashamed about. I find it incredible that the previous Prime Minister, on 21 April 1989, said that the Government had not changed their policy. That was repeated as recently as 17 February this year, when the current Prime Minister wrote to my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) pretending that the 1988 changes had not been made and the 1985 guidelines were "enforced carefully and strictly."

When we start delving into the matter and trying to discover which Ministers knew what, we come up with incredible answers. Perhaps the most incredible of them was the statement made by the Secretary of State for Defence in an answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who asked when it was first brought to the Secretary of State's attention that Matrix Churchill goods were used for military purposes in Iraq. The Secretary of State replied that it came to his attention in September 1992. Where has the Secretary of State been all these years? I know that he is only following the lead of the Prime Minister, who goes one better.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) tabled a question asking the Prime Minister when he was first informed that Matrix Churchill was involved in the export of machine tools to Iraq. The Prime Minister replied today that he would reply to my hon. Friend shortly. When did the Prime Minister know? Surely the Prime Minister knows when he was first involved—why cannot he give an answer to hon. Members?

The truth is that the Government are all over the place on the guidelines. It has become clear that they changed the guidelines, breached them and, on occasion, ignored them. A Foreign Office memo of 5 January 1988 provides evidence of that. It states that, towards the end of 1987, the Government

> "obtained intelligence, thought by the DIS to be reliable, that the lathes are to go to set up munitions factories to produce missiles and shells in large quantities."

Therefore, the Government are saying that licences had been given for equipment to go to Iraq that they knew was to be used to make munitions. They then said that

> "had this information been available at the time",

they

> "would have advised the IDC that the military assessment was that the use of the lathes for this purpose would constitute a significant enhancement in Iraq's capability to prolong the conflict with Iran."

In spite of knowing all that, the Government continued to allow licences to be granted to the company to export the same lathes to Iraq.

Mr. Richards *rose*——

Dr. Clark: I shall not give way.

We argue that the House has been misled by the Government in that respect. We also feel, as my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston said, that Ministers have been naive in the extreme. I was staggered to see that on 12 March 1991 the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said, in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan:

> "It is extremely unlikely that any United Kingdom defence equipment could have enhanced the capability of the Iraqi arms industry to any significant degree."—[*Official Report*, 12 March 1991; Vol. 187, c. *440*.]

I ask the question again: where have Ministers been? What have they been reading? Do they not read the reports of their officials, who have been telling them time and again that such equipment can and did enhance the strength of the Iraqi army?

We know that the lathes were not sent for general commercial purposes. Instead, they were set up and established to manufacture shells and fuses. We know that there were trial runs at Coventry to ensure that they would do the job. Yet Ministers have repeatedly assumed that there was no threat to the United Kingdom military by rearming Saddam Hussein's army.

The Government ignored and changed their guidelines as they saw fit. Things come to a head, however, when we move to the weeks leading up to the Gulf war. During those weeks, the Government were considering amending the regulations yet again. The Foreign Secretary chaired a Cabinet Committee that considered the matter. We find it unforgivable that, while the intelligence services were advising the Government that there was a build-up of Iraqi troops on the border with Kuwait and drawing attention to what Saddam Hussein was saying about the oilfields to the north of Kuwait—they were reporting loyally that there was a likelihood of a military invasion by Iraq of Kuwait and saying at the same time that British troops might have to go and fight for the liberation of Kuwait—the Government were involved throughout in actively promoting sales of arms-making equipment to Iraq. We find such duplicity unforgivable.

I move on to the Scud missiles. It was only in New York this week that the right hon. Member for Tweedale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) and my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) heard the Swedish ambassador say that it was eastern hardware that was delivered to Iraq but western technology that allowed the Iraqis to deliver that hardware. As we watched television and saw Scud missiles killing innocent people in the middle east, I do not think that any of us thought that the missiles had had their delivery enhanced by the work of lathes that had been produced in the United Kingdom. We should be ashamed of that. We should be even more ashamed of the way in which this country encouraged Saddam Hussein to develop his nuclear capability.

In February 1989, a Foreign Office memo stated that Iraq was attempting to

> "obtain equipment for the development of gas centrifuge technology for uranium enrichment. This is a serious development which confirms our long-held suspicion that Iraq, although a party to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, has ambitions to develop a programme for itself."

In March 1989, three export licences were granted by the Government to Matrix Churchill to supply machine tools to Iraq. Despite public approval, there was concern behind the scenes that the machines could be used

> "for the development of nuclear weapons munitions manufacture or even uranium enrichment."

Those words appeared in the Foreign Office memorandum. Part of the justification for the approval was the famous quote from the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who said that screwdrivers were also required to produce hydrogen bombs. How facile, yet how revealing in many ways.

Since the United Nations has been in Iraq and carrying out investigations, the organisation says that we were involved. In its 11th report, it said:

> "the Iraqi side stated that the small components for the centrifuge prototype were manufactured outside Iraq by three companies"—

one of which was Matrix Churchill. Therefore, we have the proof. In its 12th report, the United Nations again refers to the high precision milling and turning machines supplied by Matrix Churchill.

Not only was Britain supplying conventional machinery to the Iraqis, it was supplying machinery that would allow them to develop their nuclear capability. I wonder whether that fits in with the Government policy on nuclear non-proliferation.

The whole sorry fiasco shows that the Government knowingly and, at times, positively encouraged the export of equipment that could be used to improve Iraq's military capability—and it was used for just that. When talking about how the Government have got the signals wrong in relation to other countries, we can even ask what signal was given to the Iraqis and how much we contributed to their confidence when they decided to invade Kuwait. They received covert assistance from the British Government.

Conservative Members may not appreciate how deeply the country feels about the matter. I shall quote a letter from a young boy—Marcus Roberts, aged 11, from Edinburgh—who won the best contribution for the "Children In Need" appeal last Friday on the "PM" radio programme. He wrote:

> "Just before armistice day this year it was disclosed that Matrix Churchill and other companies had been supplying Saddam Hussein with machine tools. These were used to construct weapons including shells and missiles right up to two weeks before the invasion of Kuwait."

He continued with a sentence that I shall not repeat in the House because I do not think it called for. However, I make the point that that is the view of a young boy. It is also the view of the majority of people in this country. It is certainly the view of the Opposition.

The President of the Board of Trade said today that the trouble with the Labour party was that it had been out of office for too long. The trouble with the Government is that they have been in office for too long—and that is why they are morally corrupt.

9.42 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): In view of all the sanctimonious polemic that we have heard in the debate, I wish to comment on the careful and constructive speeches made by some of my hon. Friends. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) pointed out the dangers of taking isolated remarks and drawing general conclusions. My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) pointed to the Opposition's double standards—they oppose arms sales generally while lobbying Ministers for arms sales if they think that they will benefit employment in their constituencies.

I compliment my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) on his remarks about the dangers of nuclear proliferation. To my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher), I say that the terms of reference of the inquiry are a matter for Lord Justice Scott who, if he wants them extended, will put that request to the Government.

The Opposition Front Bench spokesmen would have us believe that they are simple seekers after the truth, merely concerned with high principle and integrity in government. The truth is that they are an aspirant kangaroo court. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has all the charity of a Robespierre and all the objectivity of a Senator McCarthy. I concede that he is not a muckraker; he is a muckmaker, because that is the ingredient that he puts before the House.

The Government are content to allow Lord Justice Scott to investigate all the allegations. Unlike the Opposition, we do not jump to conclusions. However, as the Opposition have made certain charges against the Government, we have to say to them, "This animal is vicious: if attacked, it defends itself." That is what we intend to do.

The first charge that the hon. Member for Livingston made was that the Government had broken their guidelines by selling arms to Iraq. The Opposition have clearly not paid attention to the fact that the United Kingdom, probably over the past 10 years, has had the most stringent controls over arms sales to Iraq of almost any country, east or west. One need only examine the arms sales that were made to Iraq over those years—not just $8 billion from the former Soviet Union and $579 million from the United States, but almost $3 billion from France. France sold Mirage aircraft, Exocet missiles and weapons which by any stretch of the imagination were lethal weapons, made and designed to kill.

[Mr. Malcolm Rifkind]

The issue that we have been asked to consider is whether the British Government, who almost alone among western powers refused to sell any lethal offensive weapons, was in breach of guidelines on equipment which could have a dual use.

So passionate are Opposition Members in their attempts to smear anyone in sight that not only the Government have been attacked. The hon Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), who is an Opposition defence spokesman, last week published a list of 36 British companies, including eminent ones such as Rolls-Royce, British Aerospace, Thorn EMI, and many others. The hon. Member maintained that he sought only to assist Lord Justice Scott in his inquiry. He said that it was not meant to be a criticism of the companies. However, the press release that he published is headed

"Labour list shows full extent of embargo breaches."

It says:

"Matrix Churchill represents the tip of the iceberg".

So no fewer than 36 British companies, including some of the finest companies in the land, are smeared by the Opposition as part of their campaign.

When the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley was asked to say where he obtained his information, he claimed, according to the *Financial Times*, that the Labour party had gone out of its way to be as rigorous as possible in checking the information used. That sounds impressive until one finds that among the sources were anonymous informants. Those are the tactics of the spiv and the trickster over the ages. It sums up the behaviour of Opposition Members. We refute the charge. We are prepared to allow Lord Justice Scott to inquire into the matter with all the objectivity that is required.

The second claim in the Opposition's motion is that the Government have misled Parliament and not properly informed Parliament of their policy. Once again, Opposition Members have failed to substantiate their case. They talk about the guidelines, the announcement of guidelines, and whether there where changes in the guidelines. Questions about which statements may or may not have been made, or should have been made, are good debating points, but the fundamental issue is whether there was a sinister motive in any attempt by the Government to withold their policy from Parliament.

We have been told by the hon. Member for Livingston that Lord Howe initially announced the guidelines, as indeed he did, in October 1985. I do not recall the Opposition suggesting at that time, or at any time since, that there was something sinister in the guidelines being decided within Government in December 1984—10 months earlier. The gap that elapsed between the fixing of the guidelines and the announcement by Lord Howe was not seen as sinister, but Opposition Members are so desperate that they grasp at any straw to substantiate their accusations.

Perhaps one of the most pernicious accusations that Opposition Members have made is that the Government, by their policy of promoting certain sales of defence equipment to Iraq, contributed to the loss of life or injury of our troops in the Gulf. The Opposition have not provided a scintilla of evidence to support that accusation. I warn them that they are treading on dangerous ground. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) said, the Labour Government did not hesitate to sell arms to Argentina.

The Leader of the Opposition was a senior member of that Government. Does he accept responsibility for the fact that the Labour Government of which he was a member sold eight ex-RAF Canberras to Argentina? Does he accept responsibility for the Labour Government's approval of the sale of two type 42 destroyers in May 1970? Does he accept responsibility for the sale of two Lynx helicopters in January 1976 or of 42 Sea Dart surface-to-air missiles in November 1969 and August 1978? Does he accept responsibility for the sale of 120 Blowpipe surface-to-air missiles to the Argentines in 1978?

Is the Leader of the Opposition prepared to accept responsibility for any danger to which our troops in the Falklands were exposed having been a direct consequence of the arms sales policy of the Labour Government? If he maintains that it was all right for the Labour Government to sell arms to Argentina without responsibility for the effect that that might have on our troops, how does he justify the double standard that he displays in conection with the Gulf conflict? It is simply an example of the double standard of which the House and the country are thoroughly sick.

Mr. Churchill: Will my right hon. and learned Friend remind the House that the Labour Government did not sell arms only to Argentina? They also sold British-built Puma counter-insurgency helicopters to South Africa at a critical moment, in defiance of a mandatory United Nations ban on such sales. Perhaps the Opposition would like to explain that.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is entitled to draw attention to such matters because they are typical of Labour Governments throughout the ages. We remember clearly the busting of oil sanctions on Rhodesia by Labour Ministers which led to the Bingham inquiry. The Opposition prefer to forget that, too. We have had enough double standards from the Labour party.

One of the most serious charges that the Opposition have chosen to include in their motion is that members of the Government connived at an unjust prosecution, and that four Ministers signed public interest immunity certificates to allow innocent men to go to prison. As one of the four Ministers, I find that accusation deeply offensive, deeply insulting and entirely without foundation. I put one fundamental point to the Opposition and, in particular, to the Leader of the Opposition: it has been implied that public interest immunity certificates were invented by the present Government, but the Leader of the Opposition knows perfectly well that they have been used for the past 50 years and that members of the Government of which he was a prominent member were not slow to use them.

I will share with the House one excellent example of that. A case in 1977 of Burmah Oil Company *v.* the Bank of England—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. We will not have running commentaries from hon. Members, particularly Front-Bench Members. *[Interruption.]* Order. I call the House to order. The Minister will be heard in the House.

Mr. Rifkind: The case occurred during the period of office of the last Labour Government—[HON. MEMBERS:

"It was a civil case."] Whether it was a civil or a criminal case is beside the point. It is well established that the difference between civil and criminal cases is the onus that the judge will use, when the matter comes before him, in deciding where the balance of the public interest lies.

A report of the case to which I refer states that the Bank of England

> "disclosed quantities of material relevant to the issues, but on government instructions resisted production of 62 documents in its possession and control . . . Objection to production was taken by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury in a certificate stating that he had personally read and considered each of the 62 documents listed in the schedule and had formed the opinion that their production would be injurious to the public interest."

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury in the last Labour Cabinet said:

> "the certificate claimed that the preservation of confidence was in the public interest since if it became known that what was imparted in confidence might be revealed publicly, such information, necessary to policy decisions, would cease to be so readily forthcoming."

That was an example of a Labour Government using something that Labour now condemns others for using.

Mr. Kaufman: The Secretary of State quoted at length a case that he regards as relevant. Will he tell the House how many people in that case were in danger of going to gaol as a consequence of the use of public interest certificates?

Mr. Rifkind: The right hon. Gentleman appears to imply—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I will come to that point, but I must tell the right hon. Gentleman that the idea that public interest certificates are totally unacceptable in criminal cases but totally acceptable when the civil rights of citizens are being determined by a court of law is an example of the absurd absence of logic on the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Kaufman *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: I will answer the right hon. Gentleman's other point. There is no way that a Cabinet Minister who has no idea what the defence in a criminal trial might be can come to any judgment as to whether the papers before him are likely to be helpful or harmful to the defence or to the prosecution.

The judge in the Matrix Churchill case decided to disclose the papers after—not before—he had been told what was the defence case. On that basis, he was able to come to a judgment as to whether they were relevant to the matter in question.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) fails to take into account another point. The judge decided that the papers should be disclosed on 5 October. If those papers made the difference between innocent men going to prison or being released, it is of great significance that, despite the papers being released to the defence on 5 October, the prosecution—far from deciding that the case could not continue—began the case a week later, on 12 October, and continued uninterrupted until 9 November. Only after the evidence of Mr. Alan Clark did the prosecution decide that, because of the nature of his evidence, it would be unreasonable to continue the prosecution.

There is no substance, directly or indirectly, in implying that Ministers, by doing their duty and signing the public interest certificates, should be held accountable in the way suggested.

As my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade indicated this afternoon, it is significant that not only Her Majesty's Government but counsel for the defence believe that there was no conflict injurious to the defence. They wrote to *The Times* to say so. Their remarks are worth repeating to any who did not hear them earlier. In their letter published on 13 November, counsel for the defence wrote that reporting elsewhere

> "has caused us to think that we must have been present in an altogether different court."

They went on:

> "Public interest immunity cannot be waived by either the prosecution or the ministers . . . There was no question of anyone attempting to suppress evidence."

The spurious attempts of Opposition Members of various parties to smear the Government and others involved does not bear consideration.

Over the past few months, and particularly over the past few days, Opposition Members have continued to suggest that any arms sales policy is somehow reprehensible. I recall with irony how, week after week, I have been lobbied by Labour Members trying to ensure that the European fighter aircraft goes ahead in the interests of their constituents. When it looked as though the Kuwaitis were going to sell a tank to the Americans rather than the British, the Opposition spokesman attacked the Government for failing to ensure that it was sold in the right direction. There is humbug; there are double standards; there is an attempt to save face. The Opposition should be hounded for the way in which they have behaved.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 265, Noes 310.

Division No. 91] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam

Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*

Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted

Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*

Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul

Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George

Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith

Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan

Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William

Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MADAM SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House notes that up to August 1990 Her Majesty's Government granted export licences for the supply of goods to Iraq in accordance with guidelines which had as their overriding consideration not to supply any lethal equipment and which also restricted the supply of any defence equipment; recognises that it will be for Lord Justice Scott, under the terms of his inquiry, to consider whether these guidelines were followed; welcomes the Government's decision to give the inquiry wide terms of reference which will enable Lord Justice Scott to examine all of the facts, including the decisions taken by those signing public interest immunity certificates in the Matrix Churchill case; and deplores the sensationalised attempts of Her Majesty's Opposition to anticipate the inquiry's findings.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

LEGAL ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

That the draft Legal Advice and Assistance (Scope) (Amendment) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 28th October, be approved.

FOOD PROTECTION

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Lead in Ducks and Geese) (England) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 2726), dated 30th October 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 2nd November, be aproved.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

European Community Documents

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to European Community documents.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees.).

COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 10229/91, relating to the Commons Fisheries Policy, 5337/92, relating to discard practice in Community fisheries, 9019/92, relating to establishment of a control system applicable to the Common Fisheries Policy, and 9135/92, relating to establishment of a Community system for fisheries and aquaculture; supports the Government's aim to contribute actively to the mid-term review of the Common Fisheries Policy; and endorses its aim of upholding relative stability and pressing for improvements to the Common Fisheries Policy within the framework established by the 1983 Common Fisheries Policy settlement, particularly in reducing discards and strengthening effective enforcement in order to secure a healthy future for the fishing industry.

SHIPBUILDING (EAST GERMANY)

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 6818/92, relating to aid for former East German shipyards; supports the Government's view that the economic and social difficulties in East Germany merited the additional assistance made available to their shipbuilding industry; and notes that the adopted Directive requires the Commission to ensure that the aid shall not affect trading conditions to an extent contrary to the common interest.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

That Mr. Patrick Cormack be discharged from the National Heritage Committee and Mr. Toby Jessel be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Student Housing

Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]

10.15 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): I should declare an interest and a history at the outset. The history is that I was a student, and for several years I lived in rented houses. I do not claim that my life style was significantly different from or more neighbour-friendly than that of today's students. My interest is in the Outer avenue residents association, a city centre residents association in Southampton, whose members are most concerned about the sudden surge of student housing into their community.

The recent and rapid expansion of higher education has been matched by a dramatic increase in the number of houses, most of them former family houses, which have become student lets. Between the last academic year and this the number of full-time students in Southampton grew by 1,676. In the same time, the number of purpose-built student places rose by only 283. Even allowing for the fact that some of these full-time students may be living at home, it is likely that more than 200 family houses in Southampton have been lost to student lets since last July.

Two years ago, the city council estimated that the three-year growth projected in student numbers would cost the city about 750 family homes. That represents a dramatic impact on the housing market of a city such as Southampton. The explosion in student housing is pushing local people out of the housing market and undermining the health and vitality of inner-city communities.

In my constituency, areas such as Nicholstown, Tennyson road, the Inner avenue area and the Outer avenue area and the Polygon and Fitzhugh areas are all suffering from these extreme pressures. Most of this pressure is felt in the city centre, but there is also significant pressure in a number of suburbs.

In representing my constituents' interests and those of local residents in the city centre, I do not believe that I am speaking up for a "not in my backyard" attitude. The truth is that, in most of the areas of student housing which are now coming under pressure, there has been student housing for at least 25 years, and no one moving in to those areas in that period would have believed that they were moving in to a socially exclusive part of the city.

Many of the people who moved in to the inner-city communities, including my family and myself, have positively chosen to live in a part of the city centre which is socially and ethnically diverse. We wanted to live there to benefit from the community life and the educational opportunities that inner-city diversity brings. Many of my constituents and I believe, however, that the balance between sections of the inner-city community is being tipped too far in favour of student accommodation.

In raising this subject for debate and with regard to a university city which has other higher education institutions, I want to make it quite clear that I am not setting out to be a student basher. I do not intend to blame individual students for the problems facing inner-city areas.

Individually, the behaviour of those students is typical of the behaviour of young people. However, I must say that I have always been surprised that some of the most intelligent and expensively educated young people find it

so difficult to remember to put out their rubbish sacks on the correct day, but prefer to leave them out all week in case they miss the refuse collection. Similarly, I admit that there are limits to the spectator interest in the sport of kicking a drink can all the way home from the pub.

In truth, the problem is not the behaviour of individual students or individual student households. The problem is one of sheer numbers. Large numbers of young people who live for only a short time in an area undermine the cohesiveness of that local community. In a street quite close to my home, about one third of the houses are occupied by students, compared with only two or three just three years ago. There are four or five students in each house.

We must recognise that in such a street, nearly half the adult population will change every year. Quite simply, if one lives in such a street, one can no longer expect to know one's neighbour. Networks of friendship, co-operation and security, and a common involvement in schools and community and religious organisations, become hard to maintain.

We cannot overlook the fact that change is taking place very rapidly. In a street in the Fitzhugh area of Southampton, 18 family houses were converted from family homes into student lets between July and October of this year. With that level of concentration of student housing, aspects of behaviour that can be ignored in small doses can become major problems. If one student house in a street has one noisy party a year, that is not a problem. However, if 30 student houses each have one noisy party a year, that is a noisy party every weekend of the academic year, and it is a big problem for neighbours.

Most students do not have cars, but more of them do. Local people suddenly find in October that they can no longer park outside or near their homes. They have to leave their cars in insecure locations away from their homes, where they are prone to theft and vandalism. They cannot use their pull-ins, often constructed at their own expense, because the entrances are blocked.

The powers that local authorities have under environmental health legislation do not help. The powers are quite useful to tackle genuinely anti-social tenants and neglectful landlords. However, when people are acting quite reasonably, as in a sense students are by parking their cars, the problem stems from the fact that too many people carry out that activity at the same time in the same place. Environmental health powers are of very limited use in tackling such problems.

I accept that, individually, many of those problems may seem trivial. However, taken together, they create a deeply damaging loss of confidence and identity in inner-city areas. Quite simply, local people no longer feel that they own or belong to the areas in which they live and in which they have bought their homes.

The incentive to invest in their homes diminishes. Many of my neighbours and constituents know that the most likely purchaser of their home will be a student landlord —someone who is interested only in the most basic fabric of the building. The purchaser is unlikely to be another family. In the current housing market, the purchaser is almost inevitably going to be a student landlord in such areas.

Rapidly, and remarkably rapidly in many cases, whole streets become marked by properties that are neglected by landlords or where private owners no longer feel willing to invest in them. That means another turn in the screw of decline in inner-city areas. Ultimately, that can and will become a pressure on the public purse. When the decline goes too far, it is back to the local authority for home improvement grants and possibly neighbourhood renewal areas for public money to invest, because private individuals lack the confidence to maintain the standards of their properties. It would be a social tragedy if people who can afford to move out of those communities do so, leaving behind only those who cannot afford to move.

Before I outline exactly what needs to be done, the question of student housing needs to be linked to HMOs —housing in multiple occupation. They are typically bedsits or converted flatlets let on single tenancies. In a city like Southampton, HMOs house many local young people, and increasingly—and regrettably, because they are quite unsuitable for the purpose—they also house many local young families. The use of HMOs by local people is regrettably an essential feature of the local housing market. The city council has to rely heavily on such properties for housing priority and non-priority homeless families and individuals.

To some extent, although to a lesser extent at the current time, the spread of HMOs in an inner-city area also gives rise to the type of concerns that I have been talking about. It is obvious to me that no responsible local authority could or should want to obliterate the use of properties for HMOs in the current demand for housing, but it is equally obvious to me that councils need to be able to balance the needs of residential communities—the needs of settled communities—against the different uses of housing. That is difficult enough at the moment, but it is particularly difficult because of the pressures and distortions that are created by the student housing market.

The only way to deal with that issue is through the planning process, and a sensible planning policy which the city council in Southampton would like to pursue would do several things. It would seek to limit the impact of HMOs and student lets in any one area. It would put a limit of, say, 10 per cent. or perhaps 20 per cent., depending on the nature of the area and local demand, on the maximum number of such conversions and such a loss of use as family houses.

At the same time, local authorities should be obliged to ensure that within their entire area they were still allowing sufficient HMOs to meet local needs—in other words, spreading the load from high-concentration areas to other areas of the city. Of course, they should use, as Southampton does with its HMO team, their full environmental powers to bring HMOs up to high standards. Within the rented sector, the balance should be shifted towards local people. In part, that should be done by planning controls on properties, and in part by requiring institutes of higher education to provide sufficient housing for their new students.

The problem, and the reason for requesting this debate, is that, under current planning laws, local authorities cannot pursue such a sensible planning policy. Any attempt to limit the loss of family housing is likely to produce the perverse result of increasing the number of student lets and decreasing the availability of rented housing for local people. Under the Use Classes Order 1987, a group of up to six people living together as one household are classified in exactly the same way as a family residence—as a dwelling house. That order was brought in

[Mr. John Denham]

for an entirely different reason. It was about sheltered housing and problems of that sort, but it has had the effect of removing student housing from planning control.

A property let to six students who share one rent book and share the occasional meal will not require planning permission. Ironically, the same property let to six local young people each with an individual rent book will require planning permission. Of course, landlords know that, so any council that tries to limit the spread of HMOs by planning permissions and planning consents will encourage the same landlords to turn houses into student lets which do not require planning permission—the very reverse of what a sensible local authority would try to achieve.

Southampton city council has explored those issues in great detail with the regional office of the Department of the Environment, and the advice that it has received backs up my comments. In principle, one could control HMOs. It would cost one a lot; one would have to door-to-door surveys and so on. One would be able to control their spread, but one would have no control over student housing.

Other factors are pressing in the same direction. Student letting is already easier for landlords. In a sense, one is more or less guaranteed vacant possession from time to time if one lets to students and there are no complications with housing benefit. But from April next year, student landlords will be exempt from council tax on those properties. If they let their properties to local people, the local people and the landlord will have to pay council tax, but not if they let their properties to students.

That relief will not benefit students, because the rented market will charge as much as the students' purses can pay, but many landlords who run those properties purely as a private business will gain hundreds of pounds per property at the taxpayer's expense—a strong fiscal incentive to switch their properties from local people to students. Local people in Southampton are outraged that many of those properties which are adding to the decline of their area will make no financial contribution to running environmental and other services in inner-city communities.

The final problem is that local authorities lack the powers to require higher education institutions to provide purpose-built accommodation. Both Southampton university and the institutions of higher education are now —if somewhat belatedly—making significant efforts to provide new student halls of residence, but their plans imply the loss of many more family homes in the city.

Nationally, it is recognised that a shortfall of about 200,000 student places is forecast during the next few years, which implies the loss of about 40,000 or 50,000 family homes to student accommodation. Students are actively campaigning for better purpose-built accommodation, because they know how vulnerable they are to exploitative and neglectful landlords. Rents of up to £60 a week are being charged in Southampton for single rooms. The institutions of higher education face great problems in financing new student housing, but this issue would be dealt with elsewhere.

I have set out the problems and the difficulties facing local authorities in exercising proper planning controls over the spread of student housing. I invite the Minister to make a number of responses implying a different level of commitment. At the very least, I hope that he will recognise the seriousness of the problems that I have outlined and the extent to which they are shared by other university towns and cities. I hope that he will pledge to study with local authorities the impact of student housing on residential areas and of students on housing supply and the housing market.

Secondly, I hope that the Minister will consider consulting with local authorities on changes to the Use Classes Order, which would enable local authorities to treat houses occupied by full-time students as HMOs. When the change was made, the Association of District Councils considered objecting to it. It did not do so, because it thought that the change would lead to a restriction of HMOs. As I said, the result is the reverse; it allows local authorities to restrict HMOs but not student housing, and I am sure that that was never the intention of the order when it was introduced.

Thirdly, I urge the Minister to discuss with his colleagues a review of the council tax regulations, to ensure that, while maintaining relief for students, landlords running businesses should pay fair taxes and contribute towards the local services that tenants use, and to remove the fiscal bias from renting property to students rather than to local people.

Fourthly, I hope that the Minister will review strategic planning powers to enable local authorities to make proper strategic provision for renting housing to local people and to require higher education institutions to house the projected increase in student numbers.

We have heard a lot in recent years about the enabling role of local authorities in housing provision. This is an area in which that role should be played in full, in planning the availability of housing for local people throughout the city, in working with institutions of higher education to ensure that they exercise their responsibility and in using their powers to bring existing rented property up to a reasonable standard. If local authorities were enabled to do so, it would allow inner-city communities such as the area that I represent to maintain their vitality, health, vigour and confidence—which I hope is the aim of all of us.

10.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): This debate focuses on the impact of the expansion of student numbers in residential areas.

The hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) has expressed concern that the expansion of higher education in Southampton has resulted in a marked rise in conversions of larger houses for students, which has had housing and planning consequences.

The hon. Member makes three suggestions: that student housing should be separated from other residential housing for the purposes of the Use Classes Order 1987, which would mean that converting homes to student use would require specific planning permission; that higher education establishments should be encouraged to provide more purpose-built student housing; and that local authorities should be enabled to make provision for more rented housing locally.

First, I shall deal with the planning considerations. As the hon. Member has rightly said, properties may change from family homes to student houses without the need for specific planning permission. Family houses and student housing fall within the same class—C3—of the Use Classes Order, because their impact in terms of land use, and their effect on the locality in terms of, for example, noise, traffic, and visual appearance are reckoned to be generally comparable. Class C3 comprises use as a dwelling house, either by a single person or by people living together as a family; or by not more than six residents living together as a single household.

In contrast to its predecessors order of 1972, class C3 aims to provide more certainty about the planning position of multiple occupancy and other cases where houses are occupied by groups of unrelated people, such as students, nurses or professional people. Another advantage of class C3 is the flexibility it gives to property owners and landlords who wish to respond to changing patterns of the local demand for accommodation, without the burden of making planning applications.

But the essential point is that the Use Classes Order is concerned only with considerations material to planning. It is the nature of the use of the land which is relevant. Land use is not about social, ethical or moral issues: the age, occupation or social background of residents whether they be students or anyone else, are not material planning considerations.

The hon. Gentleman also spoke of his concerns about the increase in various kinds of nuisance perceived to be associated with student life, such as neighbourhood noise. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 gives local authorities a duty to take reasonable steps to investigate all complaints about noise. The Act also provides environmental health officers with extensive powers to control noise by serving abatement notices which, if ignored, could result in a considerable fine. Where the threat of prosecution is not enough to bring the disturbance of, say, a noisy party to an end, local authorities may need to take immediate action so that people can enjoy their right to peace and quiet.

In mention those sanctions not because I believe that students in general are inconsiderate—usually quite the reverse—but to emphasise the fact that where isolated instances of anti-social behaviour occur, local authorities already have more than adequate powers to deal with them.

The hon. Gentleman is also concerned that there might be a decline of established communities, as a result of concentrations of a particular kind of resident in this case, students. I appreciate his concern about eroding the character of established residential areas, but changing patterns of housing demand inevitably lead to changes in the type of housing required. In some circumstances, they can best be met either by a simple change of use, needing no planning application, or by the adaptation and conversion of buildings, which will probably require the grant of planning permission.

Where local authorities consider that the pressure for development is so serious as to threaten an established residential area whose character warrants protection, they may include policies on density of development in their local plans to protect that area—although they must take care to avoid undue rigidity. In general, the Government believe in the desirability of a reasonable housing mix, and a balance of house types and sizes, to cater for a range of housing need.

Mr. Denham: Does the Minister accept my basic point that the powers of local authorities to control density of development or conversions do not apply when a house changes from a family home to a student house? If a local authority finds that the impact of student housing is fundamentally changing the character of an area, it is unable to use any of the existing planning mechanisms to limit that change in character.

Mr. Baldry: As I have explained to the House, the Use Classes Order considerations are planning considerations; they do not have regard to the nature of the occupants living in the home whether they be students, nurses or anyone else. That provision was introduced after consultation with local authority associations and others. Where local authorities are concerned about the change in the character of an area, due to the increased density of development, they have powers through their local plan to take action.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to houses in multiple occupation, HMOs. An HMO is defined as a house which is occupied by persons who do not form a single household—and it thereby falls outside the scope of the dwelling-house use class. That broad definition can cover a wide range of properties such as hostels, bedsitters, and bed-and-breakfast establishments. Of course, students, too, can live in HMOs. A change of use from an ordinary dwelling-house to an HMO will require planning permission and the planning authority will have an opportunity—indeed, a duty—to consider such applications on their planning merits.

The hon. Member was also worried that the expansion of student housing could operate as a disincentive for private landlords to invest in the maintenance of their properties. The responsibility for repairs and maintenance is, of course, normally set out in a lease or tenancy agreement. For those tenancies granted since 1961 the landlord is, by law, responsible for the repair of the structure and exterior of the dwelling and, in most cases, for keeping in repair and proper working order sanitary, water-heating, and space-heating installations. For new tenancies granted for less than seven years since January 1989, the landlord is also responsible for the repair of most common parts of the building, and installations if they are owned or controlled by him.

This brings me to consideration of the institutions of higher education themselves—in this case, the university and other higher education institutions in Southampton. Universities are autonomous bodies and, as such, are responsible for deciding their own funding priorities within the total resources at their disposal. Southampton university in particular has ambitious plans for growth. I fully appreciate the concerns expressed by the hon. Member and local residents about the potential impact of expansion of student numbers on residential communities and the effect that that has on availability of stock to local residents.

I remind the House that Government grant to higher education institutions is provided through the funding councils, which distribute grant to institutions on the basis of criteria for teaching and research rather than for the provision of student residential accommodation. Where institutions decide to make such provision, they are expected to finance it from borrowing, rental income or other sources of funds at their disposal, taking account of their students' needs. However, the higher education

[Mr. Baldry]

institutions in this country accommodate a larger proportion of students in their own accommodation than do those of our European partners.

The hon. Member spoke of his concern and that of his constituents that students displace local people from the rented market. That is the crux of the matter. In any area, there will be X number of units of accommodation and Y number of people—students and non-students—wanting to occupy that accommodation. The House will know that the Government are committed to achieving a situation where those wanting accommodation and the accommodation that can be provided can come together, and the steps that we have taken to increase the supply of rented housing will greatly advance the cause.

A fortnight ago, the Chancellor of the Exchequer confirmed the Government's plans to allocate some £6 billion to the Housing Corporation over three years. In addition, this year's allocation is being increased by £600 million to enable housing associations to purchase new, empty and repossessed properties for rent and to allow housing association tenants to buy homes in the private sector. In the three years to the end of 1994-95, housing associations will be able to provide considerably more than the 153,000 new social homes forecast in our election manifesto.

In addition, the House will recall that local authorities are also being allowed to spend all their capital receipts accrued between now and the end of 1993, releasing a considerable sum for increased housing provision—we estimate, over £1 billion for housing in the next year.

Mr. Denham: If a local authority were to get its capital receipts—I do not wish to debate tonight whether local authorities will get as much as the Government say—would the Minister be willing to allow it much more flexibility to purchase properties, for example in the type of areas that I mentioned, to secure those properties for family use?

Mr. Baldry: We see local authorities as enablers, working together with housing associations, the private sector and the Government to provide housing. Having been chairman of the housing committee in Southampton, the hon. Gentleman will know that we see new social housing as being provided by housing associations. Because we are keen to see local authorities working together with housing associations and others, we have also set up capital partnerships worth some £600 million to local authorities this coming year, which local authorities can use in partnership with the Government.

Under the business expansion scheme, many universities and other institutions have managed to devise schemes to provide housing specifically for students in their area.

We are also keen to revive investment in private letting and to encourage landlords to make more accommodation available for rent. That will help residents in Southampton and elsewhere. The signs are that deregulation of rents for new lettings from 1989 is having an encouraging effect on supply, so that, for the first time in many years, the number of new lettings under the assured tenancy regime is beginning to overtake those coming to an end.

We should not, of course, overlook existing resources and I should mention three initiatives we have launched to make better use of existing housing. First, we have introduced a scheme to allow housing associations to act as intermediaries between potential private landlords and tenants, in order to encourage more empty property to be let.

Secondly, we have introduced a flats-over-shops scheme, designed to bring back into use the many properties in our high streets currently lying idle. Thirdly, we have introduced a new tax relief, the rent-a-room scheme, to give incentives to owner-occupiers and tenants to let rooms to lodgers. I suspect that there are many students in Southampton and elsewhere who start their student life as a tenant in a house with a resident landlord or landlady. No tax will be payable on the first £3,250 of rent received.

I have listened carefully to the concerns that the hon. Member raised in the context of Southampton's——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at fifteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 24 November 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF BRISTOL (PORTISHEAD DOCKS) BILL *[Lords]*
Order for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time tomorrow.

DURHAM MARKETS COMPANY BILL *[Lords]*
Order for Third Reading read.
Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Support Services

1. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what support services of the Royal Navy and Army are due for relocation; and what locations are being considered.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): The support services of the Royal Navy and the Army are being rationalised to reflect the restructuring of the front line. That will involve the concentration of that activity to fewer locations.

Mr. Devlin: Why, when considering new locations for the rationalisations, is there an extraordinary tendency for them to be in the south and west of the country, whereas Scotland and the north-east of England, which have traditionally provided the best recruiting areas and the highest levels of staff retention, and which are also the areas with higher than average unemployment, are the very areas that always seem to face the brunt of the cuts first?

Mr. Hamilton: When we rationalise activities we have to take into account where those activities are already taking place. If we did not do that and relocated concentrations of work forces in different places, we would have to make all the employees involved redundant. If we locate them where there is an existing facility, people working there provide a useful core for the new headquarters and it is then not necessary to make them all redundant.

Ms. Rachel Squire: Will the Minister confirm that for the past seven years Rosyth royal dockyard has been given repeated and specific assurances that it would obtain the future submarine refitting work? Will he give his promise that that will in fact happen?

Mr. Hamilton: No; but I can promise that the position on the dockyards and the naval bases is being reviewed, and we hope to have a decision by the end of the year.

"Options for Change"

2. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the state of implementation of "Options for Change".

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): Our proposals to move to smaller, but more flexible, more mobile and better equipped armed forces continue to be implemented. Progress was reported in this year's Statement on the Defence Estimates and further announcements have been made since then. I shall continue to keep the House fully informed of progress.

Mr. Thompson: While paying tribute to the professionalism of the Royal Anglian regiment, will my right hon. and learned Friend comment on the problem of tour intervals for Northern Ireland? Will he also take the opportunity to emphasise the importance in future policy of the armed forces reserves, who need our strongest support?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, I am happy to pay tribute to the Royal Anglian regiment, which has performed valiantly in Northern Ireland. As I am sure my hon. Friend is aware, an exceptional problem has arisen: although 2 Battalion, which is due to deploy in Northern Ireland in December, will not have been in Northern Ireland for some two and a half years, there are, I think, 153 members of the former 3 Battalion who, because of the amalgamation in August this year, will return to Northern Ireland far sooner than would normally be expected. That exceptional problem has arisen because of the amalgamation, and I pay tribute to the professionalism of those who have been asked to serve in that way.

Mr. Trimble: As the Secretary of State knows, there has been considerable concern about whether, with the reduction in the number of infantry units under "Options for Change", the Army will be able to meet its committments. Notwithstanding the point made in reply to the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), is it not the case that the average gap between tours in Northern Ireland is down from the promised 24 months to nearer 15 months? Does that not show that the proposed rundown in infantry units is unrealistic?

Mr. Rifkind: No, it does not. It was explained at the time of "Options for Change" that, because of the number of amalgamations taking place, it would not be possible to meet the 24 months target until the end of the rundown period—but it is still our intention to achieve that target. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I keep the question of force levels very much under review, as it is important to ensure, for the reasons to which the hon. Gentleman rightly drew attention, that the Army is not overstretched.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the regiment with which I had the honour to serve, the 14/20 King's Hussars, ceases to exist on Friday this week, when it is to merge with the Royal Hussars to become the King's Royal Hussars? I hope that the whole House welcomes and supports that new premier cavalry regiment. Will my right hon. and learned Friend give an assurance that the new regiment will have a regimental band? That is vital for the regiment. In particular, the new regiment feels that it will have no medical cover if it goes into combat without such a band because, as many right hon. and hon. Members know, bandsmen double up as medics.

Mr. Rifkind: I am sure that the new regiment being formed this week will inherit all the finest traditions of its two illustrious predecessors. As to regimental bands, the Army Board has been considering proposals, but no decision has yet been reached. I am fully conscious of the importance of regimental bands to the morale and tradition of individual regiments, and we shall ensure that all factors are taken into account before any decision is reached.

Dr. David Clark: Does not the Secretary of State realise that it is impossible fully to implement "Options for Change" without an amphibious aircraft carrier? Will he give the House a categorical assurance this afternoon that he will place an order for such a vessel? If he feels able to do so, will he also bring forward that order by six months, to cope with the labour demands of the two competing yards?

Mr. Rifkind: That particular order is currently out to tender. Obviously, those matters must be considered very carefully. It would not be proper to reach a hasty conclusion without due consideration, using the normal procedures applied to such projects.

Western European Union

3. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the reasons for the proposal under the Maastricht treaty that the Western European Union should discuss or consult upon defence and security matters with the European union.

Mr. Rifkind: In line with the views expressed at the NATO summit in Rome in November 1991, it was agreed at Maastricht that the Western European Union would be developed as the defence component of the European union, and as a means to strengthen the European pillar of NATO. The WEU's relationship with the European union will be limited to the elaboration and implementation of the decisions and actions of the union that have defence implications.

Mr. Jessel: As defence—to keep our people safe and free—is the first duty of any Government and is not merely some facet of foreign policy, will my right hon. and learned Friend explain how it will strengthen our defences and security to make the Western European Union discuss defence matters with the European union, most of whose members showed themselves to be vacillating, craven and supine when Saddam Hussein attacked Kuwait?

Mr. Rifkind: I assure my hon. Friend that responsibility for defence policy will remain firmly with the north Atlantic alliance and the Western European Union. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was very successful in ensuring that the European union would not have defence responsibilities of the kind suggested by others. In the Maastricht treaty, the Western European Union has some responsibilities for security matters; because some of them might have defence implications, it will occasionally be appropriate for discussions to take place with the WEU.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Will the Secretary of State emphasise the need for absolute transparency between the WEU and NATO? What will be the relationship between the WEU and the Community if the Twelve fail to ratify the Maastricht treaty?

Mr. Rifkind: The decision to develop the WEU as the European pillar of the north Atlantic alliance was not simply a matter referred to at Maastricht but was commended at the NATO summit some months preceding Maastricht. NATO itself believes that, on purely European matters, it is useful that the WEU, which has existed for more than 40 years, should be the means of ensuring European co-operation in a form that strengthens rather than weakens the north Atlantic alliance.

Mr. Viggers: Although it is appropriate to investigate ways in which we can shape our defence effort through the European Community and the WEU, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the defence threat that NATO was created to resist has not completely gone away and that we must not in any way weaken our contribution to NATO, which has served us so well over the past 40 years?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is entirely correct. It is a sad but inescapable fact that although the cold war has ended, it has been followed, for the first time since 1945, by several hot wars in various parts of Europe. It is significant that the new democracies in eastern Europe—in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary—proclaim as loudly as anyone the importance of NATO as a beacon of stability and security in a shaken Europe.

Helicopter Coverage Group

4. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions his Department has had with the Helicopter Coverage Group since October 1986.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The group has met twice since October 1986, in February and June 1987. My Department was represented on both occasions.

Mr. Ainger: Will the Minister accept that in the 1986 report on helicopter coverage minimum criteria were set for response times as well as for the number of search and rescue helicopters and the number of search and rescue bases? Does he accept that his announcement on 21 October, to close Brawdy, Coltishall, Leuchars and Manston, means that there is a reduction in the number of search and rescue helicopters available, a reduction in the number of search and rescue bases and an increase in response times? Will he ask the Helicopter Coverage Group to re-examine its announcement of 21 October and make a recommendation?

Mr. Hamilton: No; that will not be necessary because, although it is clear that the announced changes mean that there will be a reduction in the number of helicopters, there will be no reduction in the civil criteria which we were asked to meet by the Helicopter Coverage Group. We are abiding by those criteria, which mean that helicopters will be able to get to any incident within 40 nautical miles of the coast within an hour during daylight hours. Those are the criteria that were laid down, and we are maintaining them.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman's argument is about the criteria. If we were to have double the number of helicopter bases, I have no doubt that we could shorten the time to half an hour. But the criteria laid down is 40 nautical miles, and we are abiding by that.

Mr. Ian Bruce: My right hon. Friend will know that the current proposals being examined by the Ministry of Defence to move flag officer sea training will have implications for the placing of two Sea King helicopters on constant alert during daylight hours at Portland. When those helicopters are based at Plymouth rather than Portland, what will happen to the 100 or so people a year who are rescued by the facility?

Mr. Hamilton: As I have already said, we are fulfilling the civil criteria on coverage around the whole coast. We are continuing to meet the criteria with the changes that we have made. Therefore, as with any of the rescues that were carried out from Portland, I do not believe that there will be any risk that rescues from Plymouth will not be covered by the existing civil criteria.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: If the helicopters referred to in the question are to play their full part in NATO's rapid response force, they will need a landing platform helicopter vessel from which to fly. Why are the Government so tardy about making an announcement on the procurement of that landing platform helicopter? The Public Accounts Committee has already condemned the Minister's Department for not bringing its procurement programme into line with the needs of its major suppliers. When will the Minister address that issue and make an announcement about the procurement of the LPH?

Mr. Hamilton: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows, the LPH has nothing to do with search and rescue helicopters, which are covered by the Helicopter Coverage Group. If the hon. Gentleman is asking about the order for the LPH, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has already explained that we have called for tenders. We expect to be able to make a decision shortly.

Mr. Bill Walker: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the popularity of the search and rescue unit at Leuchars in Fife, especially among the four regional councils that are affected by the rescues. The majority of the rescues that are carried out are civilian rescues and it seems odd that those councils were unwilling to meet my right hon. and learned Friend to discuss ways for them to find finance to retain that popular search and rescue unit.

Mr. Hamilton: As we made clear in the document, RAF Lossiemouth gives adequate cover under the civil requirements for search and rescue which cover the Leuchars area. If any local authority regards it as a good way of spending charge payers' money to pay for the civil requirements, it is more than entitled to do so.

Autumn Statement

5. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement in the light of the defence expenditure plans announced in the autumn statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The expenditure plans in the autumn statement allow us to maintain the direction for defence, set out last year, in "Britain's Defence for the 90s". The new force structure and lower pay and inflation will provide significant savings over the period.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Secretary of State agree that one of the most important aims of the autumn statement is for the Government to obtain value for money? Is he aware that the National Audit Office produced a critical report on the handling of defence lands by the Ministry of Defence? The public feel that if there are to be fewer soldiers, less defence land will be needed for training. Against that background, why have the Government suddenly decided to take over the Cnewr estate on the Brecon Beacons, ending the possibility of public access to the area, agreement on which has taken almost 10 years to negotiate? Should not the Ministry of Defence stop taking over new land until there has been a full review of the use of the countryside by defence forces?

Mr. Rifkind: I must remind the hon. Gentleman that, although the size of the armed forces is being reduced, large numbers of Army personnel are returning to the United Kingdom from Germany, where they will no longer be required. They will not be able to undergo training in Germany, so there is a continuing need for adequate training sites in the United Kingdom. The proper procedures are followed before a conclusion is reached on the suitability of any individual site for training.

Mr. Ward: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the £500 million programme for re-equipping amphibious forces announced by the Minister of State in the previous Parliament will still go ahead?

Mr. Rifkind: Obviously, we attach importance to ensuring that the commitments of the Ministry of Defence are properly resourced and resolved. We are examining the precise details of the implications of the autumn statement for several matters. I am conscious of the importance of amphibious work and it will be fully taken into account.

Mr. Hutton: I wish to point out that the tender deadline for landing platform helicopter vessels passed six or seven weeks ago and that it is fundamental to the survival of many of our warship yards that the Government make a firm announcement of their intention to place an order for the LPH. Will the Secretary of State make it clear to the House and to our shipbuilding community that the Government remain committed to placing an order for the LPH and, in addition, they intend to place a firm order for the landing platforms dock? That is also extremely important for the future of our industry.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman must appreciate that for six weeks to elapse after a tender deadline is by no means unusual. Several tenders for that order have been received. It always takes a proper period to evaluate all the tenders so that a proper conclusion is reached. I assure the hon. Gentleman that there has been no delay with the project.

Mr. Streeter: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that one way in which the Minister of Defence can make substantial savings is to award the vital contract for the maintenance of the Trident boats to Devonport dockyard? That would save £400 million of taxpayers' money over 10 years.

Mr. Rifkind: Significant representations have been made by both Plymouth Devonport and Rosyth about that contract. All the matters are being properly evaluated at present. When we have reached a conclusion, we shall not only announce it but explain the reasons for it to the House.

Mr. Martlew: Does the Secretary of State not understand that the announcement in the autumn statement that increases in forces pay would be restricted to 1·5 per cent. has dealt a devastating blow to the morale of our forces, which is already at a low ebb? Does he agree that it is not good enough to tell our troops, whether on the streets of Belfast or in the Bosnian mountains with the United Nations, that the nation is grateful, but, by the way, we are cutting their wages by 2·5 per cent. next year? Will the Secretary of State review that disgraceful policy?

Mr. Rifkind: Members of the armed forces, as well as others in the public sector who are employed, understand the importance of ensuring that resources can be released to help provide employment in other areas. The hon. Gentleman—who, no doubt, is anxious for the problems of unemployment to be dealt with—should be more sensitive to the realistic ways in which that can be achieved.

Defence Industries

6. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the future prospects for the British defence industries; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): We receive a variety of representations about the prospects for British defence industries from many sources. Despite the downturn in defence spending, our industry is both efficient and internationally competitive, and is well placed to meet the challenges of the future.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my hon. Friend agree that the European fighter aircraft project is an example of this country's ability to lead Europe, in regard to both the strength of our defence policies and the capability of our manufacturing industry? Should not all parties unite to support British industry, rather than engaging in the sickening display of humbug that we witnessed last night?

Mr. Aitken: Now that the political temperature may have returned to normal, the political co-operation that has characterised the attitude of hon. Members on both sides of the House towards the EFA project will continue to be very welcome. Prospects for a new EFA have brightened considerably in the light of Chancellor Kohl's positive statements at the Anglo-German summit on 11 November, and the industry has identified considerable cost reductions in its survey. In view of those factors, we hope that positive progress can be made towards the fulfilment of the production phase of this four-nation project.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Minister aware that the defence industry also includes the royal ordnance factories, which the Government sold off? Does he realise that there is a large and continuing haemorrhage of jobs away from the industries concerned—on a so-called voluntary basis—and no clear planning about which of those important factories are to be retained? Will the Minister instigate an immediate investigation into how the units are to remain viable?

Mr. Aitken: I have some sympathy with the point that the hon. Lady has rightly made. We are now discussing with Royal Ordnance and others the placing of longer-term contracts, which will ensure a longer-term future for manufacturers of that type.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Does my hon. Friend accept that the prospects of small-arms manufacturers in this country—and, in particular, at Radway Green in my constituency—depend greatly on the Ministry of Defence not opening its order books to bids from other European countries that do not reciprocate? Furthermore, does he accept that it is vital to maintain our manufacturing capacity, for strategic reasons?

Mr. Aitken: As I am sure that my hon. Friend recognises, we already place approximately 90 per cent. of the equipment budget, in terms of orders, with British companies. That is a record of which we can be rightly proud, as can the industries concerned.

I know about the difficulties experienced by the Royal Ordnance factory at Radway Green. I assure my hon. Friend—as I have just assured the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody)—that we are considering the possibility of offering longer-term contracts, which should allow longer-term security for those organisations.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to the Minister for the helpful comments that he made earlier about the European fighter aircraft. Is he aware, however, that the important all-party consensus on EFA was endangered last night by the Secretary of State's intemperate reply to yesterday's debate? Is the Minister aware that our support for EFA is aimed not just at the jobs of our constituents, but at securing the best possible fighter aircraft for the Royal Air Force, and for the air forces of our partners and of all other democracies?

Our arms sales policy, however, excludes the sale of arms to military dictatorships. Will the Government—*[Interruption.]* The other Minister of State will find himself in the "Guinness Book of Records" for other reasons if he is not careful.

Will the Government state clearly whether they share the view that there must be no arms sales to any military dictatorship?

Mr. Aitken: I understand why the Opposition are feeling a little bruised, if not carved up, after last night's superb winding-up speech by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. The hon. Gentleman is obviously still suffering from the morning-after feeling. He has enunciated an extraordinary new Opposition policy: that we should sell arms equipment only to democracies. That might be all very well in an ideal world, but on 13 October the hon. Gentleman advocated that the Government should make much more vigorous efforts to sell the Challenger tank to Kuwait, which is not yet a democracy. We constantly receive letters from Opposition Members regarding arms sales to all sorts of countries which are not democracies. I do not believe, therefore, that the Opposition have yet come down from their double-standards perch.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend accept that the observation that the prospects for the European fighter aircraft have brightened will be very much welcomed in my constituency? Will he congratulate those who made such a wonderful effort to bring down the cost of EFA to suit the pockets of all those concerned?

Mr. Aitken: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's point. The aerospace industries of this country responded superbly to the challenge that they were set to bring down the costs. Their surveys reveal that there is a maximum cost-saving potential of 30 per cent. which, as my hon. Friend said, will bring EFA's cost well within the target mentioned by the German Defence Minister some months ago.

Nuclear Weapons (Testing)

7. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to announce changes to Government policy on testing nuclear weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government continue to believe that a minimal testing programme remains the best means of ensuring the safety and credibility of our deterrent.

Mr. Jones: As President-elect Clinton has said that he intends to go ahead with a comprehensive test ban treaty and as France and Russia have intimated that they are happy about going ahead with a comprehensive test ban treaty, can the Minister first tell the House where we shall be able to test our nuclear weapons? We do so in America at present. Secondly, does the Minister not feel embarrassed—I certainly would if I were he—that we are making common cause with the likes of Iraq and China in going ahead with the testing of nuclear weapons?

Mr. Hamilton: It is surely the problems in Iraq, China and other countries where proliferation is taking place that make it so important that we maintain a deterrent. If we are to have a nuclear deterrent, it is important that it should be both safe and effective. For that reason, we believe that a limited amount of testing is important.

Mrs. Gorman: While discussing weapons testing, will my hon. Friend assure the House, and also our good friends in Australia, that the rehabilitation of the Maralinga site remains of great importance to the Government?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes. That Australian Government have had talks with my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement on the rehabilitation of the Maralinga site. Those discussions continue and the question of compensation is being raised.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Perhaps I may put a direct quotation to the Minister:

> "The reliability, effectiveness, safety and security of our nuclear arsenal can be maintained without nuclear tests."

Those are not my words, but the words of Carson Mark, the former head of the theoretical division of the Los Alamos laboratory in the United States. Why will the Government not accept his advice and throw their weight behind a comprehensive test ban treaty?

Mr. Hamilton: We do not believe that we have yet reached the stage where we can carry out the effective testing of nuclear warheads in other ways. The view of that man may be as the hon. and learned Gentleman states, but it is not shared by our experts who deal with nuclear warheads.

Mr. Day: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, despite the so-called peace dividend, the world is in its most precarious state, certainly in my lifetime? There is an air of unpredictability and therefore danger, so it is essential that the Government do all in their power to maintain the credibility of our nuclear force, including continuing with testing.

Mr. Hamilton: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support. We hope that the Trident system will run for another 30 years, and it is difficult to foresee what development will take place in the world over such a long period. The proliferation of nuclear weapons seems to be a continuing trend, despite the great international efforts that have been made to constrain it.

Dr. Reid: Why are the Government so obstinate on this point? Why do they think that everyone is out of step except them? Is the Minister aware that in another place the Under-Secretary of State, Viscount Cranborne, said that the United States congressional legislation which restricts nuclear testing is "unwise and misguided"——

Madam Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman recalls, I said yesterday that there should be no quotations during Question Time. Will he paraphrase, please?

Dr. Reid *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: The Liberal just quoted.

Madam Speaker: Order. I make it clear to the entire House—there seems to be some confusion—that there is no quoting whatsoever in Question Time.

Dr. Reid: I defer to your guidance, Madam Speaker. The Under-Secretary of State is reported to have said that the United States congressional legislation, which restricts nuclear testing, is unwise and misguided. As one of the co-sponsors of the legislation is the new Vice-President elect of the United States, do the Government still agree with that view? Do they wish to revise it, or do they believe that the new Vice-President is following an unwise and misguided course?

Mr. Hamilton: We have always made our position clear: we think that a limited testing programme is important, and we shall be unhappy if the United States does not decide to continue with one. The hon. Gentleman suggests that we are alone on this, but that is not so. The French are considering their policy on tests, and it is not guaranteed that all nations with nuclear weapons will give up testing.

Arms Sales (Saudi Arabia)

8. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Aitken: We welcome the recent reaffirmation of Saudi Arabia's commitment to the Al-Yamamah project, which remains as strong as ever. Discussions are continuing on the range of defence equipment required by Saudi Arabia in the future.

Mr. Denham: Is the Minister aware that in 1988 Vosper Thornycroft shipyard in Southampton was promised six orders for minesweepers? To date, funds for three have been committed and for the first time the yard has an empty glass reinforced plastic berth. In the absence of an effective defence diversification programme, the orders are vital to maintain the viability of the company and future employment. What prospects does the Minister hold out that those extra orders will be forthcoming?

Mr. Aitken: The speed and nature of Saudi Arabian defence orders are a matter for the Saudi Arabian Government. I can understand the hon. Gentleman's impatience on behalf of his constituents, but I remind him of the legendary gravestone which is said to lie somewhere near Riyadh: "Here lies the European who tried to hurry the Saudi Arabians." They must move at their own pace. I know that the hon. Gentleman will wish to congratulate Vosper on the sale not only of three minehunters to Saudi Arabia but of two Corvettes to Oman and four strike craft to Qatar. I was interested in the recent policy announcement by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), as none of those countries appear to be democracies. Should the orders be sent back, I wonder?

Mr. Mans: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Al-Yamamah programme is of especial interest to the north-west because of the number of jobs there and because of the effect that it has on the economy of the north-west? Bearing that in mind, will my hon. Friend give me some ides of the prospect of Saudi Arabia ordering further Tornados?

Mr. Aitken: As I said, what Saudi Arabia orders in the way of Tornados or of any other defence equipment must be a matter for the Saudi Arabian Government. The Tornados and the orders have already represented 33,000 jobs for the north-west. It is a major project and I am glad that there is bipartisan support in the House for it.

Arms Sales (Iran and Iraq)

9. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about his Ministry's policy towards the export of military equipment and technology to Iran and Iraq.

Mr. Aitken: Our policy is to support the United Nations embargo on exports to Iraq, and to permit exports to Iran only within the policy announced by the then

Mr. Janner: What assurances can the Minister give that unlawful exports of military equipment and technology will not recur, or are not continuing now? Have the Government put in place any procedures—and, if so, what procedures—to prevent unlawful exports to Iraq after the recent revelations of disgraceful exports?

Mr. Aitken: We debated these matters at great length yesterday. A little humility from the Opposition would not come amiss. After all, theirs is the party which authorised massive arms sales to Argentina when it was in government. It needs to be said that all Ministers who have been trying to exercise their judgment in a difficult area in which the conflicts are often different have been motivated by only one wish—certainly to keep within the law and certainly to act in Britain's best national interests.

Mr. John Marshall: In considering arms exports to the middle east, will my hon. Friend consider allowing exports to the only democracy in the middle east?

Mr. Aitken: Sales of defence equipment to Israel have been restricted since 1982 in response to the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon. The restriction will remain in place until Israel withdraws completely in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolution 425.

Dr. David Clark: In view of the well-founded evidence that there was a lucrative, illegal arms trade from this country to Iran and that that trade was headed by a British company, Allivane, is the Minister prepared to give the House a categorical assurance that the illegal trade to Iran, which breached the Government's own guidelines, will fall within the purview of Lord Justice Scott?

Mr. Aitken: Lord Justice Scott is perfectly entitled to inquire into that matter should he wish to do so. The Allivane allegations, which have been made in correspondence and in a speech by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) last night, have not been substantiated by the inquiries that my Department has been able to make so far. We await further evidence on the matter which has so far not been forthcoming, despite requests, from the principal figure concerned, Mr. Machon.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will my hon. Friend tell us about the considerable number of Opposition Members who have been queuing up to press the case for arms and weapons companies in their constituencies——

Madam Speaker: Order. That is scarcely the Minister's responsibility. If the hon. Lady can rephrase her question, I will accept it.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will my hon. Friend detail to us the companies situated in constituencies represented by Opposition Members which have been lining up to press their case for selling weapons to other countries? Does my hon. Friend agree that that is disgraceful in the light of the Opposition's comments in yesterday's debate?

Mr. Aitken: I think that I have got the gist of my hon. Friend's question. She is right that hon. Members have written constantly to Ministers in my Department urging us to take more and more vigorous steps to support defence exports to all sorts of countries, by no means all of which are democracies. To illustrate and amplify my hon. Friend's point, I can do no better than to quote from the distinguished commentator Hugo Young in today's edition of *The Guardian*——

Hon. Members: No!

Madam Speaker: Order. The Minister is perfectly correct in his quotation if he is not quoting from *Hansard* in the House of Lords.

Mr. Aitken: I am glad that it is all right to quote from *The Guardian*. I do so now with relish. Mr. Young wrote:

> "There is a fair amount of humbug in the case against the Government."

That is the position.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is attending a lunch—*[Interruption.]* given by the Lord Mayor and the Corporation of the City of London to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the accession to the throne of Her Majesty the Queen—*[Interruption.]* I understand that the Leader of the Opposition is also there.

Mr. Amess: Basildon now being regarded as the barometer for national and international opinion, is my right hon. Friend aware that there is a most favourable reading following the excellent autumn statement and the outcome of the settlement of the GATT round? Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to appeal to politicians of all parties to talk up this wonderful country of ours rather than so treacherously talking it down, safe in the knowledge that he bats for Braintree as I bat for Basildon?

Mr. Newton: I agree that, throughout the county that my hon. Friend and I have in common, the measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and the achievement of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in relation to GATT have received a great welcome. I am tempted to extend my hon. Friend's alliteration by saying that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is batting for Britain, but in fact he is batting for the whole world economic community and it is time he was given credit for his success.

Mrs. Beckett: Is the Lord President aware that while the Prime Minister, desperate to have something to show for a lacklustre British presidency, has been scurrying around Europe talking up the prospects of a European growth package, in Brussels today the Chancellor has been steadily talking it down? Which of them speaks for the Government?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has been doing no such thing. ECOFIN, in which he participated, had a very important discussion yesterday directed to the growing concern about the recession in the Community and considered how, individually and collectively, the countries of the Community could work to improve the prospects of recovery on lines very similar to those adopted for this country in the autumn statement.

Mrs. Beckett: But are not the chaos and confusion arising because, even though 1,000 British jobs have been lost in every day of the United Kingdom presidency, the growth package, instead of being at the top of the presidency agenda where it should have been, is a half-hearted afterthought?

Mr. Newton: If there is any chaos and confusion, it is with Her Majesty's Opposition, who fought the election campaign on a programme which they have since acknowledged would have made the recession significantly worse, and who continue to advance measures—a minimum wage, a payroll tax, the social charter—which would end all prospects of recovery.

Mr. Bates: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the employees of Nissan UK, who have achieved the European car of the year award for the British-built Micra? Does he also agree that that further demonstrates a transformation of the British car industry from one renowned for poor quality and militancy under a Labour Government to one renowned for high quality and high achievement, of which we can all be proud, under this Government?

Mr. Newton: Yes, indeed, and it is an achievement that I view with particular pleasure in view of the connection that I had with the economic problems in and around Sunderland some years ago. It is a major achievement for the new industries that we have brought to that area that Nissan has won the award for its car. It will form part of an achievement to which I look forward—that of this country becoming a net exporter of cars for the first time in many years.

Q2. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Raynsford: Is the Minister aware of the report published yesterday by the Engineering Employers Federation, which highlights the urgent need for a strategy to regenerate Britain's industrial and manufacturing base, and its conclusion that the Department of Trade and Industry lacks both the competence and the commitment to achieve that? If the President of the Board of Trade is not going to intervene before breakfast, before lunch and before tea, will the Leader of the House urge the Prime Minister to do so when he gets back from lunch?

Mr. Newton: I have just referred to the achievements of an important part of British manufacturing industry, which is significantly more successful than it has been for many years and certainly more than it was under the administration of Opposition Members. If I ask anyone to read anything, I shall invite them to read the hon. Gentleman's recent article, in this month's *Fabian Review* about the Opposition, entitled, "Sleepwalking Into Oblivion?"

Dr. Liam Fox: Does my right hon. Friend welcome reports that the Germans will, after all, play a full role in the European fighter aircraft project, with all the implications that that has for British jobs? Does not that and the GATT round negotiations imply a triumph for the Prime Minister's quiet style of international diplomacy?

Mr. Newton: I believe that it does and, referring back to a previous question, it shows the efforts made by my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the President of the Board of Trade and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to advance the interests of British manufacturing industry.

Q3. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winnick: Does the Leader of the House accept that it shows no lack of respect to the Queen to suggest that the full cost of restoring Windsor castle should not fall entirely on public funds? Will that be considered by the Cabinet, and can the Leader of the House tell us whether the Cabinet have ruled out entirely the possibility of the Queen paying at least some income tax on her vast investment income?

Mr. Newton: On the latter part of the question, I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) on 3 November. On the first part of the question, the position is well known. The fabric of Windsor castle is state property and has long been recognised as such. All that my right hon. Friend the Heritage Secretary said yesterday was in acknowledgement of that simple fact.

Q4. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the measures contained in the autumn statement to help industry, along with the recent reductions in interest rates, are beginning to provide that vital ingredient—confidence—among industrialists? Does he share my pleasure at the somewhat unexpected support for the autumn statement last Thursday evening—either out of incompetence, which seems likely, or out of conviction, which seems less likely—from Her Majesty's loyal Opposition?

Mr. Newton: I share my hon. Friend's view of the autumn statement's reception—not least its emphasis on capital programmes and the measures directed towards the housing market, to the release of local authority receipts, to capital allowances and to export credits. There is a long list of comments from people in British industry supporting those measures. I am bound to wonder whether the occupants of the Opposition Front Bench could produce a list of any length in support of what they have put forward.

Sheffield

Q5. **Mr. Michie:** To ask the Prime Minister when he next plans to visit Sheffield.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is making plans for a series of visits to all parts of the country—*[Interruption.]* Wait for it! He hopes to include Sheffield among them.

Mr. Michie: I am sure that we can cope with that threat. Indeed, we look forward to the right hon. Gentleman's visit. Is the Leader of the House aware that we hope that, during that visit, the Prime Minister will go around Sheffield's housing stock in the public sector, which is in need of repair, rebuilding and refurbishment? Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that it is to be hoped that, during that visit, the Prime Minister will display the same generosity in the provision of money to pay for repairing those houses as he has displayed towards Windsor castle, bearing in mind the fact that the tenants of those houses actually pay rent and taxes and that everyone's home is their castle?

Mr. Newton: I have already commented on the indirect thrust of the hon. Gentleman's question. With regard to help for Sheffield, the Government provided £26 million of assistance for projects associated with the student games.

Engagements

Q6. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Will my right hon. Friend send a message to the Prime Minister saying that we on the Conservative Benches have total loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen—*[Intervention.]* and her Prime Minister?

When will the Asylum Bill become law? Is my right hon. Friend aware that 28 people were arrested for having 70 false identity cards? We know that the lot opposite could not care less whether the number was 700, 7,000 or 70,000—"Let them all in," they say—but the British people and I want to know when the Bill will be on the statute book.

Mr. Newton: The answer to the first part of my hon. Friend's supplementary question is that I shall take the greatest possible pleasure in communicating to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister my hon. Friend's great declaration of loyalty and the support that it drew, I judged, from both sides of the House.

The answer to the second part is that while I cannot give my hon. Friend an exact date, his question contained a message that I can also communicate to the Home Secretary, to urge him on in his efforts, and perhaps a message for Her Majesty's Opposition in terms of the importance that is attached to the passage of that measure.

Ms. Corston: Why has the Prime Minister, as President of the European Community, put Tory party unity before the needs of the EC in such a way that it has caused the French Trade Minister to describe the British presidency as the "most calamitous" that he had ever seen?

Mr. Newton: It is clear that, as a result of his presidency of the European Community in the past few months, my right hon. Friend has played a crucial part in achieving the GATT settlement that is now in prospect.

Q7. **Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Anthony Durant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister deserves our support and congratulations for what he has done on the GATT round and that that has been an important achievement for most of the world, including the underdeveloped territories? Does he further agree that it would be wrong for a small group of French farmers to hold up that vital agreement?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend makes an important point. In congratulating my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, perhaps we should also recognise the contribution made by Mr. Andriessen, Mr. MacSharry from the Community, Mrs. Hills—*[Interruption.]* It is right that we should recognise that the part played by my right hon. Friend has contributed to the efforts of others in an important way, including those whom I mentioned and Mr. Madigan from the United States. We have ensured that that negotiation now has a chance to reach a conclusion. I share the hope that my hon. Friend has expressed that it will not be frustrated by people in whose overall interests that agreement is.

Q8. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Michael: Is the Lord President aware that the reply given to me yesterday shows that the level of aid to Somalia was less than during the years of bloody dictatorship under Siad Barré? Will he undertake that the Government will at least restore total aid to the level of 1987 and meet Britain's historical responsibility to the people of Somaliland in the north?

Mr. Newton: I understand that the principal problem in Somalia is not the shortage of funds but the difficulty in distributing the aid that we are keen to provide. As the hon. Gentleman well knows, the aid budget for next year was effectively projected in the autumn statement.

Madam Speaker: Time's up. We must now move on to the statement. Mr. Secretary Brooke.

British Broadcasting Corporation

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Would Members who are leaving the Chamber please do so quietly and quickly, so that we may proceed with our business?

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that I do not take points of order until the end of questions and statements.

Mr. Brooke: With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the future of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

The BBC's present royal charter, granted in 1981, expires at the end of 1996. We now have an important, and rare, opportunity to consider the role, objectives, organisation and funding of the BBC in the years ahead. Earlier this year, in our general election manifesto, we said that we would issue a discussion document about the future of the BBC taking account of its special responsibilities for providing public service broadcasting.

I am publishing that discussion document today. It is right that I should acknowledge the work done by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) in taking the preparation of this document to an advanced stage.

I should like to take this opportunity to say something about the context of this debate on the future of the BBC. Broadcasting is changing rapidly and radically both in this country and throughout the world. Everywhere, the number of services is increasing, as new television channels and new radio stations open, using cable and satellites as well as conventional methods of transmission. Increasingly, programmes and services are being designed for audiences in more than one country and some services can be received in millions of homes throughout Europe.

The position is unrecognisable from that which existed a few years ago, and has altered even within the last year. In the foreseeable future there will be opportunities for even more services, on satellite and cable systems. Looking further ahead, the introduction of digital transmission may ultimately increase the number of channels which can be provided, first from satellite and eventually on the terrestrial network. We expect digital audio broadcasting to provide more radio services in this country in the next three or four years.

Since broadcasting began some 70 years ago, and until quite recently, there have been few outlets and little difficulty in finding programme material to broadcast. In this country we devised a framework which enabled broadcasters to achieve diversity and quality in their programmes. Now, the number of outlets is increasing and all the outlets are looking for material to broadcast.

This opens up new prospects for United Kingdom broadcasters both in this country and throughout the world. In this country the BBC's services are popular and widely used. Over 90 per cent. of the population use the BBC's television services every week; about 60 per cent. use its radio services. The BBC's services are part of the daily life of the majority of people in this country. As I know from the letters I receive, and as all hon. Members will know, our constituents often care deeply about the programmes it broadcasts.

Externally, the BBC's World Service Radio, which this year celebrates its 60th year of broadcasting, is highly respected, particularly for the reliability of its news. The service is estimated to have 120 million regular listeners. BBC World Service Television, which is a commercial venture, is already providing news and current affairs programmes throughout most of the world. Internationally, there are new opportunities for the BBC and for other British broadcasting organisations and programme-makers.

The Government believe that the BBC should continue as a major public service broadcasting organisation, but that is not to say that there is no need for changes. Change there has to be if the BBC is to meet the new challenges that are being created by changing circumstances.

However, there are a number of possible ways forward. In the discussion document, we have tried to set out some of the advantages and disadvantages of a variety of options. We now wish to listen to the arguments and to weigh them, before deciding on the proposals to bring before the House.

The essential issues in the debate are likely to be the future objectives of public service broadcasting; the range of the BBC's programmes, services and functions; how the BBC should be financed; how it should be organised to provide its services more efficiently; and the ways of making the BBC responsive to its audiences and accountable for its services. All those issues are linked and need to be seen as part of a coherent policy for the future.

I hope that there will be a well-informed, considered and constructive debate. The BBC will shortly publish its own proposals for its future. I would like to encourage other major organisations to publish their responses to the discussion document and the BBC's proposals. In that way, we should all have a better understanding of the issues and that should help us to reach sensible decisions.

I am particularly anxious to hear the views of the public about the BBC's services. I would like to hear what audiences want from the BBC. I am therefore publishing a short popular version of the discussion document, which I plan to make available in public libraries and citizens advice bureaux.

The BBC has its supporters and its critics on both sides of the House, but I hope that, in pursuing an informed debate with a degree of passionate interest, we shall not forget that the BBC has informed, educated and entertained most people in this country for most of their lives.

The BBC has both embodied and communicated our national heritage. There are fundamental questions to be asked about the future of public service broadcasting and the role of the BBC in providing it. The Government believe that the public service broadcasting organisations exist to serve their audiences, and it is the wishes, interests and needs of audiences that we should keep at the forefront of our minds as we consider the BBC's future after 1996.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): The Minister delivered his speech as quickly as he apparently expected me to read the document. It is insulting to the House to deliver a 43-page document half an hour before it is due to be discussed.

I begin by welcoming the publication of the Green Paper. At least we now know where the Government stand and what we have to oppose. The Minister has assured the House that the next five months will be a period of widespread consultation. We trust that will be so. The Labour party will wish to make its own significant contribution to that debate.

Labour's media policy will be based on the principles of freedom; the absence of censorship; the ability of broadcasting authorities to present alternative views of the world; choice; access; quality; and accountability. On public service broadcasting, accountability should be not to the Government but to the public.

The Minister made it clear that for no broadcasting organisation, including the BBC, is the status quo an option. The need to sharpen efficiency is clear to all. No one would disagree about the need for increased efficiency and accountability. We also want an expansion of the excellent and respected BBC World Service, both radio and television.

The Labour party remains completely committed to the concept of public service broadcasting. We are concerned about certain elements of the Minister's statement. Naturally, we all favour wide consultation, but we want to see a reassertion of the value of public service broadcasting at the forefront of the Government's proposals in five months' time.

The Labour party will oppose any attempt to privatise the BBC, even at its edges. Privatisation of the BBC will face a united Opposition in the House, and the opposition of millions of people up and down the country. Will the Minister take into account the views of people such as Sir David Attenborough, the distinguished natural history programme maker, who has warned against the "castration" of the BBC by the Government, and voiced the fear that, under the Government, the BBC is being

> "gravely eroded, the morale of its staff seriously damaged and the very things that gave it its unique stature and strength destroyed."

We shall guarantee the funding of public service broadcasting by the BBC, and believe that the licence fee should continue as the basis for financing the BBC. Will the right hon. Gentleman join us today in making that commitment? Will he support index-linking the licence fee for at least 10 years—the same period as the BBC's charter? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Obviously, Conservative Members have made up their minds even before the consultation process has started. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that index-linking the fee would ensure stability for the BBC and enable it to be free of any attempt at editorial control, by the Government or anyone else?

In a lecture to the Royal Television Society a few weeks ago, the right hon. Gentleman spoke about editorial independence, and said that it was his intention to uphold the tradition that Ministers responsible for broadcasting policy do not interfere in the content of individual programmes. That may be his personal preference, but what about the rest of his colleagues? How does the right hon. Gentleman explain "Tumbledown", "Death on the Rock", "Real Lives" and the Zircon programme? Does he agree that the Government have debased democracy by their handling of such programmes?

Is the right hon. Gentleman conscious of the fact that the BBC board of governors has come in for many legitimate attacks from various quarters? It has too often rolled over at the whim of politicians and retreated at the first whiff of displeasure from the Government. *[Interruption.]* The very gentlemen who have put pressure on the BBC are making the loudest noises this afternoon. The board of governors has been discouraged from making the sort of programmes that embarrass and infuriate Governments.

Will the Minister assure us today that the misuse of patronage—a feature of the Government's years of office —will now be coming to an end? Will he in future appoint people who have the bottle to defend the BBC, assert its rights and create a public row when it comes under threat? One of the options in the document is a Public Service Broadcasting Council. In our view, that is little more than the machinery that the Government and their supporters would use to undermine the principle of public service broadcasting—death by a thousand cuts.

I shall ask the Minister three questions. Is not the Public Service Broadcasting Council to be used as a Trojan horse by the supporters of a completely free market in television—a back-door method of privatising the BBC? Does he agree with his predecessor, the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), who said today on television that such a suggestion would mean dismembering and driving a stake through the heart of the BBC?

Does the Minister accept that, if the proceeds of the licence fee are to be open to commercial broadcasters to make the sort of programmes that the Government refused to oblige them to make under the Broadcasting Act 1990, that will mean less cash for the BBC to make programmes? Will he understand that, if this were to provoke the BBC to seek to maintain revenue by taking limited TV advertising, that would compromise the editorial independence of the BBC and imperil the financial base of the new Channel 3?

If the BBC is to get less of the licence money through the PSBC, is it then expected to sustain programme quality and diversity at regional and national level, and its paramount contribution to live music and the arts? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): The hon. Lady would do credit to the BBC drama department.

Mrs. Clwyd: I am amazed that hon. Members are so dismissive of very important principles on public service broadcasting.

Does the Minister understand that, even before the debate starts, the loss of 7,000 jobs in the BBC by the end of the year threatens its long-term programme-making ability at a time when many of the commercial channels have opted out of production? How can the Minister defend that, when it has all been done without the knowledge of viewers and listeners, and before the shape of the BBC into and beyond the next century has been decided?

The BBC used to pride itself on being a centre of excellence. Is the Minister aware that the morale of those working for it has been severely undermined, because they feel that the values that gave it its strength and stature are under challenge?

Does the Minister acknowledge that the debate over the future of the BBC has added importance because of the botched fiasco of the blind bid auction of commercial TV licences carried out by his Government, which put cash before quality and which will restrict the range and variety

[Mrs. Clwyd]

of programmes before the end of the year? What proposals does he have to take action against commercial television which does not live up to the promises about quality?

Finally, we are not alone in having no faith in the Government's willingness to restore and sustain the independence and integrity of the BBC, given their constant attacks upon it and the expensive mess they have created in commercial television and within ITN. It is to Labour that viewers and listeners must look to promote the unique role in broadcasting which the BBC has earned and which the Labour party wants to encourage in the years ahead.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Lady's observations, at least in their early stages, were stronger on asseveration than on interrogation. She enunciated the significant contribution that the Labour party would make, and then read out a considerable agenda. In the process, she clearly showed that she had read the discussion document, because those subjects are all contained within it.

She indicated that her test of the conclusions of the Government at the end of the consultation period would be the assertion of the importance of public service broadcasting. That assertion has been made at the beginning of the consultation process, and I would be astonished if it was not made at the end.

The hon. Lady quoted Sir David Attenborough, and I am delighted that he is making his contribution to the debate. I hope that many other distinguished contributions will be made too.

As to the licence fee, on which the hon. Lady gave us the Opposition's view, we shall want to consider all the options for financing the BBC. That is the process of consultation, but so far none looks obviously better than the licence fee.

The hon. Lady attacked the board of governors. I have no hesitation in defending it, just as it defends the BBC itself.

The hon. Lady made a lengthy contribution, including questions, on the Public Service Broadcasting Council. I made it clear in advance of publication of the document that my attitude towards the consultation process is open-minded. Clearly, it would have been less than open-minded if that element had not been part of the agenda of the exercise.

The hon. Lady made some observations about the management of the BBC at present. Although we are looking to the renewal of the charter in 1996, the BBC has to continue to manage itself during the interim period, and I am not in the least surprised that it is taking steps under current circumstances.

The hon. Lady said that the morale of the BBC was in severe straits because it was under challenge. I have to ask her what Lord Reith would have said if anyone had told him that the BBC's morale was affected because it was under challenge. Lord Reith would have given a dismissive response to that observation.

The hon. Lady made proper reference to quality. In the context of the ITV transactions, the quality threshold came before the cash bid.

The hon. Lady ended as she began, with asseveration rather than interrogation.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, when a multiplicity of commercial outlets leaves the BBC in a somewhat unique position, the definition of the phrase "public service broadcasting" should be revised, so that there is one for the BBC and a different one for all the other interests that are providing television programmes?

Mr. Brooke: On pages 16 and 17, the discussion document deals with the question of how public service broadcasting should be defined, and its particular component parts are specifically identified. The question which my hon. Friend asks may well emerge out of the consultation process.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Secretary of State accept that, when the charter is renewed, the House and the Government will be judged not just by the dangers that we have circumvented but also by the opportunities that we have grasped; and that the major danger, which is inherent in the Government's Green Paper and was explicit in the debates on the Broadcasting Act 1990, is that the BBC will be put on starvation rations and its public service role attenuated by a concept that embraces the idea that individual programmes are public service programmes rather than a totality of the service—which appeals some of the time to all of the people, but not all the time to everyone? The discussion paper allows the Minister a far-ranging debate, but will he acknowledge that the firm financial independence of the BBC is the basis of its role as a defender of free speech and of the nation speaking unto itself?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments. He is aware of the scale of the BBC's present resources and revenues, although I recognise that some sub-division was implicit in his question. I acknowledge that firm financial independence is critical to the future of the BBC. I am also clear, although the hon. Gentleman did not allude to it himself, that, given the contribution which Britain makes through its various broadcasting organisations to the quality of broadcasting throughout the world, it is extremely important that we maintain a solid production base in Britain.

Mr. David Mellor (Putney): I thank my right hon. Friend for his Green Paper and the manner in which he has made his statement to the House today. As I understand it, he is asking the public to join in a full-hearted debate about the future of the BBC, and I congratulate him on that. There have been occasions when broadcasting policy has emerged after more cloistered consideration than that, and I am not sure that it was always to its benefit that it did so. Is it not right that the public, who after all watch hours and hours of television, as we all do, and listen to the radio every week, should have a view on the matter? It is their BBC, they pay for it, and it is right for the Government to ask their opinion before making up their mind.

Does my right hon. Friend also agree that the fact that the BBC has recently been able to announce a further £120 million out of existing resources for programming as a result of savings on its bureaucracy is a sign of the great advantages to everyone, not least the BBC, of having a BBC that is a modern organisation, not one structured as of yesterday? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be most regrettable if the debate that he has opened by full-heartedly asking for opinions in a non-dogmatic way were to degenerate into a narrow partisan squabble? That would be to fall below the level of events, and I hope that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House will take note of that.

Mr. Brooke: I am particularly grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend, and genuinely pay tribute to his contribution to the Green Paper's evolution. I absolutely endorse his remark that this is an invitation to public contributions to the consultation process. The BBC is a national institution that belongs to the public in the fullest possible sense. I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend that the savings that the BBC has been able to effect have the capacity to be ploughed back into extra quality.

I also endorse my right hon. and learned Friend's observation that, if we can make sure that the debate does not become partisan but is directed at the good of the BBC, we will have a better BBC at the end of it.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): Will the Secretary of State specifically reject the notion that the BBC, domestically at least, might be limited to a narrow range of programmes—many of which, if broadcast, might prove unattractive to private companies? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, without variety, public service broadcasting cannot succeed and might not survive—and that, were it not to survive, broadcasting in general would rapidly deteriorate?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his question. In its specific context, I will not precisely prejudge the debate and the consultation that is to take place, but I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to what I told the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan)—that an important feature of the whole process is that we should emerge with a major production base in this country that can give quality to the world.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, if we are to pay attention to the interests as well as the voices of listeners and viewers, we must maintain in the public service sector a variety of services, and let the BBC make an input into the various systems by which they will be transmitted?

I put one particular cash point to my right hon. Friend. Compared with the cost of satellite and cable subscriptions, less than £2 a week for the BBC is a boon to lower-income families and to pensioners, and they have a strong interest in maintaining the full BBC services.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for again emphasising the public's position. All of us taking part in the debate are conscious that the massive changes in technology that are occurring are becoming more available at economical prices. That not only enormously increases range and choice but makes more important the debate that we are to have on the BBC.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Will the right hon. Gentleman clarify the consultation period, as apparently stated on page 11 of the Green Paper, under which his Department asks for comments and replies before 30 April 1993? Such a time scale could preclude proper and appropriate inquiry by the Select Committee on National Heritage. I hope that whatever time scale the hon. Gentleman lays down will not preclude the Select Committee conducting an appropriate inquiry.

Mr. Brooke: The Government and the right hon. Gentleman, as the Chairman of that Select Committee, were able to reach a concordat on a previous item of business that the Select Committee discharged, which enabled it to deliver its report in the time frame that it wished. I have every confidence that we will be able to effect a similar pattern of co-operation in future. Equally, I hope that the right hon. Gentleman feels that five months at least gives us a good start.

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement, in which he mentioned a wide open debate. How specifically will he incorporate discussion and debate on the BBC's future into the public domain?

Mr. Brooke: We specifically published the popular version of the Green Paper to which I referred in my statement, and which we will make widely available. I believe that it is also the case—and would be surprised if it were not—that the BBC, other broadcasting organisations, and the media generally will seek to enlarge the debate. If we can bring to it the passion and commitment that has characterised debates relating to particular channels, the public will have served us very well.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I welcome the reluctance of the Government in the Green Paper to consider advertising to raise funds for the BBC, not least because of the fragmentation that it may mean for commercial channels and the escalating number of cable channels. Does the Minister accept that the other side of that coin is the need to guarantee funding for the BBC? In that context, will he examine the need to develop English language television programmes emanating from Wales, to match the Welsh language programmes which have been developed so well, to give a full service to both language communities in Wales?

Mr. Brooke: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his statesmanlike observation about the productions that emanate from Wales. I cannot give him a precise commitment, but I caught the essence of his suggestion, and I respect him for it.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): My right hon. Friend has made an excellent start to the debate. Behind the matter hangs the shadow of the size of the licence fee and the burden that it creates, especially for the elderly, who examine some of the services provided by the BBC—pop music channels with highly paid disc jockeys and variety programmes with, arguably, too highly paid presenters. Will my right hon. Friend examine whether those services are required in a public service broadcasting organisation? I suggest also that he consider some phone-in input for the public to open up the debate.

Mr. Brooke: When my hon. Friend studies the document in detail, he will find that it raises the question whether the various component parts should continue to be part of the BBC remit. Those of us who are engaged in the debate will welcome a multiplicity of ways in which contributions may be made.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is the Minister aware that the strongest resistance to the BBC comes from the poor—one-parent families, pensioners, and unemployed people who resent the £80 "poll tax" that they must pay? Is he aware that many of them never have that amount of money in one lump sum? That is why so many people do not pay the fee and the BBC must send out vans to detect those who do not pay.

Will the right hon. Gentleman promise to examine a system by which poor people can pay weekly amounts towards their television licence? By that, I do not mean a system by which people buy stamps a year in advance but still pay a lump sum of £80. Is it not time that the poor were able to afford the BBC licence with dignity, instead of spending—in the case of a single pensioner—a week and a half's income on it?

Mr. Brooke: I understand the hon. Gentleman's question. Although the figure is only 22p a day, I recognise that it is a large amount of money for some households. The way in which the fee is collected is a matter for the BBC. I am conscious that the BBC is examining alternative ways in which the fee might be collected, along the lines that the hon. Gentleman suggested.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): Will my right hon. Friend elaborate a little more on the proposal in the Green Paper for the Public Service Broadcasting Council? Is he aware that some Conservative Members are worried about the proposal because, if it is introduced, it will mean that less funding will be available for the BBC and more funding will be given to independent productions which might have been made in any case? "Brideshead Revisited" is a good example. It was a programme in the public interest but did not need public finance.

Mr. Brooke: I recognise that the references to the Public Service Broadcasting Council in the document suggest a variety of purposes to which the council might be put. However, I re-emphasise that we are talking about a consultation process. I have no doubt that other hon. Members besides my hon. Friend will want to make their contributions on the subject.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): We in Northern Ireland welcome the opportunity of examining the charter of the BBC. I particularly welcome the part of the Minister's statement which referred to ways of making the BBC responsible to its audiences and accountable for its services. I hope that, when that matter is examined, the Government will ensure that the BBC pays attention to representations from its audiences and does something about them, rather than merely listening to them.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman will join me in paying tribute to the services which the BBC renders in Northern Ireland. I attended the memorial service for Sir Richard Francis the other day, in which most memorable words were spoken about the role of the BBC in Northern Ireland. I am certain that accountability will mean not simply listening but demonstrating that the BBC, in the hon. Gentleman's phrase, pays attention to what its audiences are saying.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is a crucial need in broadcasting to prevent a decline into pervasive mediocrity induced by unmitigated commercialism? While applauding his open-mindedness, may I urge him all the same to proceed on the assumption that the public service obligation of the BBC should be retained? Does he agree that the retention of the licence fee is likely to be a necessary means to that end?

Mr. Brooke: Yes. I reiterate to my hon. Friend both what I said in my original statement and what I said in answer to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd). We strongly envisage that public service broadcasting will continue to play a key role in the BBC's activities at the end of the consultation period. I gave earlier the specific commitment for which my hon. Friend asked in his second question.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): In these examinations, and in view of the appalling proliferation of radio outlets of all sorts, most of which put out nothing but a load of rubbish, would it not be advisable that the BBC's commitment to light entertainment of a rubbishy sort and to local radio should be much diminished?

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Bring back "Journey into Space".

Mr. Brooke: As I said in answer to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), I shall not prejudge that issue. Debate on that issue is an essential part of the consultation process.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): May I make my right hon. Friend reveal a little more of his own philosophy in these matters by asking him whether Melvyn Bragg is a monopoly? If he is, should he be regulated, deregulated or self-regulated?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. for the seductive temptation of his question. Mr. Bragg is someone whom I have got to know fairly recently, and I do not think that I should endanger my relationship with him immediately.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I am aware that Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are mentioned several times in the text of the Green Paper, but the Secretary of State will be aware that the section which deals specifically with those national broadcasting services is but two paragraphs in a 43-page document. Will he distance himself and the Government at this stage from any suggestion the Government underrate the opportunities that might arise for those national services if they can distance themselves from the dead hand of London control?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman is well aware of the hours of Gaelic radio broadcasting which are already available. They are numbered in hundreds. The people of Scotland are lucky that those services are available.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the BBC and ITV together have made a significant contribution to the culture and entertainment of the nation, and that we should think long and hard before upsetting the balance between a BBC funded by the licence fee and commercial television funded by advertising? Would it not be nonsense to create an Arts Council of the airways which would reduce the BBC's resources, in order to give money to commercial channels, which make significant contributions to the Exchequer?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend seems to be taking the same corner that my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) took earlier. I am confident that he too will ensure that his voice is heard in the debate that we are about to have.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Does the Secretary of State recognise that the answer that he just gave the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), who represents the Scottish National party, will not be welcomed in Scotland? What Scotland wants is a guarantee that the important role played by BBC Scotland in both radio and television is recognised by him, as it is not in the document; a guarantee that BBC Scotland will continue in the future; and an assurance that its finance will be guaranteed.

Mr. Brooke: In the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe), I sought to pay tribute to the quality of regional broadcasting in the territories. I gladly repeat that tribute for the hon. Gentleman's benefit.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): If we really believe in freedom of choice and the freedom of the individual, should we not allow people to watch what they want to watch, free from intervention by any self-styled council of the great and the good? By the same token, should we not stop forcing people to pay for services that they may not want to use?

Mr. Brooke: Let me repeat what I have already said to at least two of my hon. Friends. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) will make his own individual contribution to the debate that we are about to have. As I have said, however, I can think of no obvious improvement on the licence fee as a method of financing the BBC. It is therefore likely to form the basis on which the BBC's future will be secured.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Only half a page of the document is devoted to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Will the Secretary of State tell us what he has in mind when he speaks of a "larger measure of autonomy" for those three countries? Will the views of people in Wales be expressed through a national council, or by some other means? Finally, what are the right hon. Gentleman's views on broadcasting in Welsh?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman has sought, like others, to confine his observations relating to a particular part of the country to a narrow range of pages; the document, however, is directed at the BBC in the country at large. As he has said, it contains reference to a "larger measure of autonomy", and a balancing question is raised —how that can be secured without a duplication of effort. In any democratic society, that is a nice balance, and it will emerge in the debate.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, in terms of programme hours and output per licence fee, the BBC is one of the most efficient broadcasting organisations in Europe? Will he also confirm that, unlike Labour Front Benchers with their scaremongering—which, incidentally, would do credit to the BBC's drama unit—the National Heritage Department has reached no firm conclusion? This is a Green Paper, a discussion document, not a White Paper.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support.

I should have said in answer to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) that there is already a substantial element of broadcasting in the Welsh language. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to enter into a private debate with me on the matter, however, I shall be happy to respond.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Should we not recognise that part of the background to the Green Paper is the serious damage done to broadcasting by the Government's obsession with deregulation, along with the serious damage that resulted from the Broadcasting Act 1990 and the absurd franchise auction that took place then? It is ridiculous to see public sector broadcasting as a ghetto confined to a single channel. The ethos of quality programming should extend across all channels, and the Government must not undermine the other channels as they have done in the past.

Let me put a simple proposition to the right hon. Gentleman. The press in this country is governed by market forces—commercialism—and is held in low esteem throughout the world. Until very recently, broadcasting in this country was governed by principles of democratic regulation and control, and was admired throughout the world. I commend those good socialist principles to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Brooke: I am sure that it was a slip of the tongue that caused the hon. Gentleman to refer to public sector broadcasting instead of to public service broadcasting. I do not share his condemnation of the British press. Large parts of the British press are widely admired. I agree with him about the respect in which British broadcasting is held. The intention of the consultation process is to make sure that that admiration is maintained.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Although I welcome the opportunity to debate the matter, I hope that my right hon. Friend will not mind my pointing out without any disrespect that there is an alternative to paying a licence fee —that is, not to have to pay a licence fee. Now that we have commercial stations, it is important that people who want to watch them and not the BBC should not be required to pay £80 a year for the privilege of having a television set in their house.

Elderly and poor people, for whom I would expect hon. Members opposite to make a particular case, resent having to pay the licence fee. There is no need for them to do so in the present climate. We know that the commercial outlets will give sponsorship to the BBC and provide money for healthy competition with the commercial channels, which are often alleged to be swimming in the stuff.

Mr. Brooke: I am absolutely sure that, when my hon. Friend, who is fair-minded, sees the references in the discussion document to the potential financing, she will agree that the options have been set out. It is now for the nation to respond in terms of consultation.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is it not a fact that most Members of the Conservative party and Conservative Members of Parliament have already made up their minds? They loathe the BBC, just as they love capital punishment. If the

[Mr. Tony Banks]

Secretary of State could introduce capital punishment for the producers of "Panorama", those who sit on Conservative Benches would undoubtedly be overjoyed.

Will the right hon. Gentleman state clearly that he will publish the results of the consultation exercise, not hide them away? If the great weight of public opinion is that it wants the BBC to remain as it is, will the Secretary of State abide by that decision, or will he give way to the doctrinaire fools behind him?

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman said, "doctrinaire"——

Mr. Banks: Fools.

Madam Speaker: I deprecate the use of such language.

Mr. Banks: I apologise.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, who is one of the most articulate Members of this House, can find another phrase.

Mr. Banks: What about hon. dimwits, then?

Mr. Brooke: I have long admired the hon. Gentleman's precision of language, although not in this instance. I take issue with his observation that we on this side of the House, to use his phrase, "loathe the BBC." I made it clear in my statement that the BBC has supporters and critics in all parts of the House. That is what makes the debate worth while. I have made it clear in the foreword to the discussion document that I have lived abroad four different times for significant periods and that, as a consequence of that experience, I have a profound admiration for the service that the BBC provides.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We shall now move on.

Points of Order

4.17 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will recall that yesterday, in reply to a point of order from the hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce), you ruled that, when a Minister refers to an official document, that document has to be laid on the Table.

You will be aware that, during the debate on Iraqi exports, the President of the Board of Trade quoted from an official document, and that the matter was raised on a point of order by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). He asked whether the ruling that you had made earlier in the day applied, at which stage the Deputy Speaker ruled that the decision had been made that, when a Minister quotes from a "state paper", he must lay it on the Table. That ruling was much narrower than your ruling earlier in the day.

I understand, however, that, following a further approach late last evening, you agreed to consider the matter further and to give us your decision today. Is it in order to ask whether you have had time to consider the matter, and whether you can let us know your decision?

Madam Speaker: The President of the Board of Trade did quote yesterday from a paper. I can tell the House now that the whole of that document will be laid before the House.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Following yesterday's debate in the House, has the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) sought your permission to make a personal statement to substantiate his allegations that Lord Justice Scott has been "nobbled" by the Government? Many of us believe that he must be prepared to substantiate that scandalous allegation in the Chamber. Has he made such an application?

Madam Speaker: No application has been made by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I heard yesterday's exchange on whether Lord Justice Scott would be compromised by the Government, in which my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston said, "Yes, I believe that Lord Justice Scott will be compromised by the Government." I believed it then, I believe it now and, quite frankly, the only reason why the Government are refusing an independent tribunal under the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act 1921 is because they want to participate in setting up a whitewash inquiry.

Madam Speaker: No point of order arises.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will recollect that, earlier today during defence questions, I asked a supplementary question to Question 9, in which I raised the arms trade with Iran, which we believe may be illegal. I asked whether Lord Justice Scott's inquiry would cover relations and the arms trade with Iran, to which the Under-Secretary replied in the affirmative. To avoid any confusion, will you confirm that an assurance given to the House by an Under-Secretary overrides any decision or guidelines laid down by the Prime Minister?

Madam Speaker: The Chair makes no comment on the remarks of Ministers, at whatever level. The hon. Gentleman will have [illegible] find other means of probing the Government to obtain the information that he is seeking.

Development of Tourism for the Disabled

4.21 pm

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to encourage provision for tourism by disabled people; to establish a Council for Tourism for the Disabled; to ensure that the needs of disabled people are taken into account in the design of tourist accommodation and transport facilities and infrastructure; to amend the Development of Tourism Act 1969; and for connected purposes.

As the representative of Britain's major tourist resort, I am delighted that so many of my hon. Friends from lesser tourist resorts have decided to remain to listen to my presentation of the Bill. I feel rather like an ocean-going liner surrounded by a flotilla of tugboats.

Every year, millions of people in Britain cannot manage to have a holiday—sometimes because they cannot afford one or because they are too busy, but often because they suffer from a physical or sensory disability, which makes going on holiday, or even just being on holiday, too difficult. Finding accommodation that can cater for their special needs can be very hard, especially if, like many disabled people, they are poor or old.

Getting to a holiday resort can often cause severe problems for those who use public transport. British Rail's treatment of disabled passengers is often bad, and its recent decision to scrap direct InterCity services between London and Blackpool is evidence of its lack of concern for the thousands of disabled people who visit Britain's major tourist resort every year, many of them by rail.

Despite the many problems that are faced every year by disabled people on holiday in this country, there is now much greater recognition of both the problem and the opportunity in developing services to meet their needs. My Bill seeks to establish a framework within which private and public sector efforts to service those needs can be properly co-ordinated.

Some of my hon. Friends will know that, like the President of the Board of Trade, I am what might best be described as a pre-prandial interventionist. I believe that there are occasions when Governments should intervene before breakfast, before lunch and before tea. The development of tourism for the disabled is precisely such an occasion.

Much has already been done in this sphere. The English tourist board's "Tourism for All" campaign has helped to publicise the special needs of disabled tourists, and to encourage hotels and attractions to cater for them. Building regulations have brought improvements in the design of facilities for many types of disabled people. The national and regional tourist boards, together with organisations such as the Holiday Care Service, have begun to develop a system of information about accommodation, travel and entertainment facilities for disabled people. So good are some of the British initiatives that they have even been praised by the European Commission.

Despite these worthy initiatives, there is a long way to go. British tourism is still far from meeting the needs of the disabled, and it has not begun to seize the commercial opportunity in catering for them. There are 6·5 million disabled people in this country—one in seven of the population—with some form of physical or sensory disability. In the whole of Europe, about 50 million people suffer from some disability. Apart from anything else, that is a significant commercial opportunity.

We must now build on what we have achieved and aim to turn Britain into a centre of excellence in the provision of tourism for the disabled. To do that, we need to co-ordinate action from both the public and private sectors. That is why the Bill calls for a little light intervention in the form of a Council for Tourism for the Disabled. Such a council would be able to develop further the "Tourism for All" campaign by promoting more extensively the commercial opportunities for businesses that can cater for disabled people.

The council would undertake a national disability audit of Britain's tourist facilities so that accurate and comprehensive information was available for people with every type of disability and special need, not just those who need wheelchair access.

Most importantly, the council would be responsible for the design of a national strategy for the development of tourism for the disabled. To create that strategy, the council would harness the resources of the private sector and of voluntary organisations, in much the same way as has already happened with initiatives such as the ADAPT scheme—Access for Disabled People to Arts Premises Today.

The council would work with Government Departments whose responsibilities have an impact on the disabled tourist. It would work not only with the Departments of National Heritage and Transport, but with the Departments of the Environment, Employment, Health and Social Security.

The council's aim would be to develop high standards, quality and choice. It would seek to ensure that the needs of every type of disabled person were fully taken into account in the design of everything from accommodation and transport to promotion material and even to railway timetables.

I cannot resist a little more intervention. If we are to encourage the private sector in England to participate in the development of tourism for the disabled on the scale that is necessary in the middle of a recession, the Government must allow for some grant aid or cheap loans for suitable projects.

In Scotland and Wales, grants for the development of tourism under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 still apply. Businesses that want to upgrade their facilities to cater for disabled visitors do not have such a problem there. However, section 4 no longer applies in England. The Bill would remove that imbalance specifically and exclusively in the provision of tourism for the disabled by reintroducing an element of discretionary support for suitable projects in England.

The key to the development of tourism for the disabled must be a partnership, at both national and local levels. In Blackpool, we have a range of accommodation for people with various types of disability. Much of it is good, and the quality of service provided is first class. However, there is a great deal more that we can do.

I have set up a small working group of organisations and businesses to create a partnership that could help to bring about real improvements in the service that Blackpool offers disabled visitors. I am sure that Blackpool's experience will serve, as it so often does, as a model for other, perhaps lesser, resorts. Equally, I hope

[Mr. Harold Elletson]

that a national Council for Tourism for the Disabled will create the kind of partnership that will greatly improve tourism for the disabled in Britain.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Harold Elletson, Mr. John Sykes, Mr. Nick Hawkins, Mr. Michael Fabricant, Mr. Michael Ancram, Mr. David Lidington, Mr. Edward Garnier, Mr. Keith Mans, Mr. Matthew Banks, Mr. Charles Hendry, Mr. Alfred Morris and Mrs. Teresa Gorman.

DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Harold Elletson accordingly presented a Bill to encourage provision for tourism by disabled people; to establish a Council for Tourism for the Disabled; to ensure that the needs of disabled people are taken into account in the design of tourist accommodation and transport facilities and infrastructure; to amend the Development of Tourism Act 1969; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 89.]

Orders of the Day

European Communities

[Relevant documents: European Community Documents Nos. 6037/92, relating to outside staff and transfer of administrative appropriations from Part B to Part A of the Community Budget, 8286/92, relating to the fight against fraud against the Community Budget in 1991, the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by H.M. Treasury on 13th March 1992, relating to discharge of the 1990 Community Budget and Court of Auditors' Special Report No. 2/92, relating to export refunds paid to selected major traders in the milk products sector; also the Memorandum submitted to the Foreign Affairs Committee by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on Prospects for the Edinburgh European Council.]

4.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): On 2 July we debated the agenda for the British presidency, which I outlined to the House. I said that it was an ambitious programme containing six key elements: GATT; the completion of the single market; the future financing of the Community; enlargement; subsidiarity; and the Danish proposals on the Maastricht treaty. We have made progress on all those matters and we want to make that progress decisive when the European Council meets at Holyrood house on 11 and 12 December.

The Edinburgh meeting will have one of the heaviest agendas of any European Council in recent years. About one third of the Councils scheduled for our presidency will be held in the next four weeks. Foreign and Finance Ministers will meet this Friday, 27 November, and Foreign Ministers will hold a further conclave on 8 December. Meetings are not magic, but, alas, they are a condition of progress.

The past five months represent one of the most turbulent periods in the Community's history. We have experienced the general economic downturn across the world, the stormy French referendum, the volatility of the currency markets, the GATT dispute and instability in the east of our continent.

Out of the list of matters that I mentioned in July for our work programme, two massive achievements for Europe and for Britain are now emerging as reality—not yet secure but increasingly clear. I mean, of course, a GATT agreement and the completion of the single market. Both are the culmination of the work of several years.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): My right hon. Friend will be aware that, in connection with the single market, 3,000 freight forwarders and customs clearance agents, many of them in my constituency, are likely to lose their jobs between 31 December and April next year. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that on the agenda for the Euro-summit in Edinburgh are measures advanced by the European Commission, which I hope will be supported by the British Government, to give assistance to members of the freight forwarding and customs clearance industry in Dover?

Mr. Hurd: There is a retraining programme, which was discussed yesterday by Finance Ministers. I shall ask my right hon. Friend the Minister of State to give my hon. Friend further precise information about it. My hon. Friend is on to a good point about something which is, indeed, part of the programme.

I was talking about the two massive achievements now coming into sight—the GATT agreement and the completion of the single market. [illegible] we can bring them to reality they will substantially contradict the theory, which one now reads all the time, that the age of reasoned co-operation is gone and that Europe and the world are sinking into inevitable disorder and slump. If the GATT agreement or the completion of the single market were to fail, we would be closer to a dark age.

The Munich Group of Seven summit and the Birmingham European Council both called for the GATT agreement to be concluded by the end of the year. We are nearer to that goal than those who set it probably expected at the time. The House knows of the agreement on 20 November by the European Commission negotiators and their American counterparts on a range of outstanding differences. The Commission gave its unanimous backing to the agreement last Friday.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade made a statement about the agreement to the House yesterday, so I need not go into detail, but the way is now clear for negotiations to resume in Geneva among all parties to the GATT. Senior negotiators are meeting there today and tomorrow to fix the timetable for completing that work. I do not think that a final settlement will be ready by the time of the Edinburgh Council, but I am sure that the Heads of Government will welcome the progress that has been made towards the aim that they set in Birmingham of reaching a settlement this year.

The agreement is clearly in the interests of both Europe and America. We have not been asked to make some artificial choice between Europe and the Atlantic. With our encouragement, during our presidency the Commission has negotiated on behalf of Europe. The relationship with the United States is of critical importance to the Community, as they have guaranteed our security for half a century and their presence in Europe remains vital. However, Europe must define itself on its merits and not by excluding our American allies. That is why one of the most important events in our presidency will be the EC-US summit in the second half of December, at which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will represent the Community.

The second great achievement on the way is the biggest free trade project in history—the single market. It is much more ambitious than the creation of a conventional free trade area, with about 300 pieces of common legislation to replace thousands of national regulations and with common competition rules to govern the market. It will expand opportunities for British business and British consumers and should mean lower prices, increased efficiency and the end of routine border controls for goods.

Inherent in the single market is a large extension of freedom for our citizens. For example, 11,000 British students are studying under the European Community action scheme for the mobility of university students—the ERASMUS programme—in other Community countries. During coming years there will be a steady fall in air fares, which will make travel cheaper and easier. That is what we sometimes call the "citizens' Europe".

Those are the detailed measures which will make sense of the Community in the eyes of practical people. We must ensure that business and citizens know about, and take advantage of, the many benefits and opportunities that the single market will create.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the Secretary of State accept that what ordinary citizens are looking for most is to find work in a Europe where unemployment is increasing? In view of the trend during the past few months for the public sector borrowing requirement to increase in Britain, and the fact that Mr. Delors said that a massively reflationary kick-start package might be put forward, does the right hon. Gentleman accept that it might be increasingly difficult for us to meet the long-term aim of the Maastricht treaty, which is that there should be a 3 per cent. limit on the amount of gross domestic product allowed to go to the PSBR?

Mr. Hurd: I do not agree, but, before I close, I shall come to yesterday's discussions on the issue that the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

The completion of the single market has been central to our presidency. We were in the forefront of those who designed the project and we intend to bring it to fruition. Political agreement has been reached on a series of directives to do that: on value added tax, and excise duties; on life insurance; on pharmaceuticals; and we shall be looking for agreements on Community trade marks, and on animal and plant health, which are the last agreements necessary.

Completing the single market is not an exact science. Some of the measures in the original White Paper by Lord Cockfield are now given a lower priority, while others that were not in the White Paper have been carried through. We have not seen the end of the liberalising of areas such as telecommunications and parts of the energy market, but we believe that it will be possible to declare at the Edinburgh Council the single market open for business on time at the end of the year.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Does my right hon. Friend believe that we have simplified all of those matters? Can he explain why the papers for today's debate, which is only a "take note" motion, weigh 4·6 kg?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): What is that in pounds?

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I was translating for the benefit of the Europeans.

Is my right hon. Friend further aware that, having read them, I do not believe there is a lawyer in the House, far less a human being in Europe, who understands them? If he seriously thinks that this is all about a love-in between people, may I ask him to say what France is about?

Mr. Hurd: The weight of paper derives from the demands of the House to have a proper care for what is going on. What we are dealing with, and what my right hon. Friend will deal with in detail when replying to the debate, is the future financing of the Community, all aspects of its expenditure and the budget for next year, and I accept that such matters in any organisation give rise to weighty documents. I am delighted that my hon. and learned Friend has mastered them and I hope that he will tell us about them later. I assure him that the weight of documents derives from the enthusiasm of the House to keep an eye on what Ministers do in the Council of Ministers, in particular in deciding how much of our money the Community should spend.

[Mr. Hurd]

I was dealing with the single market. We have been talking about the virtual completion of the legislative phase, but we go on to the phase of compliance, enforcement and access for redress for those who run into difficulties in exercising their rights.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I will give way to my hon. Friend and then I really must make progress.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the rumour that in future we shall take almost as relaxed a view as is taken by our southern counterparts towards the implementation of regulations and directives?

Mr. Hurd: I am aware of the rumour to which my hon. Friend refers, but I am certainly not in favour of the relaxed implementation of rules. When rules are agreed —they need not of themselves be greatly detailed—they should be implemented. That is one reason why——

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I said that I would try to make progress. As I was saying, that is one reason why the CBI recently emphasised the importance of ratifying the treaty of Maastricht.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I have given way several times. I promise to give way to my hon. Friend later.

The treaty will, for the first time, equip the European Court of Justice with the teeth needed to ensure that member states live up to the obligations that they assume. That element is fundamental in establishing the level playing field in Europe which every British company says that it wants.

Mr. Budgen: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there was an authoritative leak in *The Times*—*[Interruption.]* —or it may have been in *The Daily Telegraph*, to the effect that a Minister had stated that it would be the policy in future of the British Government to take a southern European attitude towards the implementation of law? That sort of behaviour would be likely to spin off into a disregard of British law as well.

Mr. Hurd: I always thought that my hon. Friend was an opponent and critic of bureaucracy. What we are aiming at, in relation to what he quoted, are cases where officials in Whitehall take decisions made in Brussels and carry them through in excessive detail. That is known in the jargon as Bookerism, after the journalist who identified that ill. Christopher Booker is strongly against the European Community, but, being an honest journalist, he has spotted that much of the regulation is derived not from the Community but from the itch of Whitehall to insert its own bureaucratic instincts into the process. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) for enabling me to make the point clear.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I really must get on, because many hon. Members wish to speak.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: This must be the hon. Gentleman's speech.

Dr. Cunningham: I have heard of the seven-year itch —as the right hon. Gentleman is referring to the itch in Whitehall—but this is a 14-year itch. The Conservatives have been in office for 14 years. Have they suddenly discovered that the problem exists in Whitehall?

Mr. Hurd: If, in the fulness of time, the hon. Gentleman assumes office, he will know that the itch is permanent —that there is always an instinct among energetic and ambitious officials to push regulation and control that extra inch. It is an itch which Labour Members have constantly encouraged, which is one reason why they are always rejected by the British people.

I have referred to the two big achievements that are on the way. The third issue is the future financing of the Community. A review in that context would have been necessary, with or without Maastricht, and the Paymaster General will say more about that when he replies to the debate. I wish to comment on the review of financing.

The Community budget amounts to about £45 billion, which is about 2·2 per cent. of general government spending in the Community. Britain is the second largest net contributor after Germany. We are expected to make a net contribution of about £1·7 billion, after our rebate, in the present calendar year. France is also a net contributor, with Italy now broadly in balance.

We have made some progress in the negotiations since the Commission first tabled its proposals in February. Our aim is to reach a settlement at Edinburgh, though that will not be easy. Several member states have, unsurprisingly, sought to challenge the United Kingdom abatement. We have made it clear to our partners—firmly, though I hope quietly—that we shall not accept any adverse change to it. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor did that again yesterday and on the radio this morning.

Maintaining our abatement remains an overriding objective. It is a manifesto pledge. It can be altered only by unanimity, and if others persist in challenging aspects of it, there will not be an agreement. The House may recall how ambitious——

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I hope the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not giving way. I really must get on.

Mr. Robertson: I have a most important point to raise with the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hurd: Very well, and then I shall have to make progress.

Mr. Robertson: In the light of what the right hon. Gentleman said in absolute terms in relation to the British abatement—this is an extremely serious matter—may I remind him that what the Chancellor of the Exchequer said on the Radio 4 "Today" programme was not what the Foreign Secretary just said? The Chancellor said that "no serious or significant" change in the British abatement would be acceptable. That is not what the Foreign Secretary said. Is the British abatement negotiable, or is it not?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman should not be reduced to such pettifogging. There was a technical change in 1988 which did not affect adversely the United Kingdom rebate.

If the way in which the Community spends or raises its money is altered, there may be technical changes. But we are against and will resist any adverse impact on our abatement.

The House will recall how ambitious were the Commission's proposals for increasing the size of the Community budget. The original Delors 2 package envisaged a real-terms increase in Community spending of about £7·5 billion in 1997, over and above the level implied by the present ceiling. Some people presented that as the inevitable bill for Maastricht, but Maastricht also emphasised the principle of sound public financing. That means the Community cutting its coat according to its cloth, which means setting priorities.

We have seen some evidence of that as the proportion of the budget devoted to agriculture has been squeezed, from about 80 per cent. in the 1970s to 58 per cent. now. But there is much more to do. We have made it clear to the Commission, as the Prime Minister told the House, that its proposals are excessive and that we cannot support them. In present economic circumstances, when many member states are suffering from recession or are undertaking painful retrenchment, we cannot be expected to agree a package which implies a rate of real growth in Community spending way above what is planned domestically.

There was a time when that point of view, which is familiar to the House, was not familiar to the Community; it was regarded as something rather puritanical hatched in the British Treasury. But now there is a concerted view among not all, but most, member states and, in response to that, the Commission has scaled down its proposals. Some member states now see them as too niggardly, but we and others believe that they are still in excess of what the Community can afford. We are looking for a further substantial reduction in the Commission's figures for increasing own resources.

Enlargement was the fourth of the six subjects that I mentioned, so I am about halfway through.

Preparations for negotiations with Austria, Sweden and Finland have gone ahead. Switzerland has submitted its application and the Norwegian Prime Minister, Mrs. Brundtland, will be in London tomorrow to present Norway's application for full membership to my right hon. Friend the President of the Council. At Edinburgh we will submit a report on the completion of those preparations for enlargement within the Community. We need to decide at Edinburgh—there is a background to this on which I gave evidence to the Select Committee yesterday—when negotiations on enlargement, either formal or informal, can start. Our view is clear; we must maintain the impetus that we have helped to create.

The countries of central and eastern Europe are going through a period of enormous change and dislocation. One reason why I am so keen on trying to get progress on these Community matters at Edinburgh is that we really must have more time and energy in 1993 to analyse and act on the problems in the eastern half of our continent, including Russia, where the stakes are now formidably high. I do not think that the House, this country, the Community or the world is paying enough attention to what is going on and what the stakes are in Russia and, therefore, in the rest of the former Soviet Union and the rest of eastern Europe.

As regards the Visegrad 3—Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia—we have made good progress during the presidency. We hope to welcome them to full membership around the turn of the century, but meanwhile we are setting the pace. A meeting between the Community and those three countries was held at Foreign Minister level in October and the Prime Minister held a summit meeting with them in London on 28 October. The Commission will report at Edinburgh on strengthening co-operation with Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. We also plan to sign association agreements between the Community and Romania during December.

Certainly we need to be pragmatic, but we need to be generous, in particular in giving those countries of eastern and central Europe access to the Community market. Together and individually as member states, we are providing aid. Although I know the difficulties in special cases, such as steel, I believe that our policy must be to help them trade their way to prosperity.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The right hon. Gentleman anticipated my question. Does he agree that the Visegrad countries have every reason to complain that, while there has been a lot of generous talk about them, access for their goods, particularly agricultural goods, has been rather cheeseparing?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is a bit negative. I have said this before: we will press for further access, but a beginning has been made. The association agreements are a beginning and the trading parts of those agreements are already in place. The hon. Gentleman and I agree on the substance of the matter.

My next points are subsidiarity and openness. By the end of this year, 10 member states expect to have ratified the Maastricht treaty. The House will shortly be invited, in the light of our recent debate, to start the Committee stage of the Bill. The process of ratification has acted as a lightning conductor for general public concerns about the pace of European integration and the centralising tendencies of the Brussels machine. Those anxieties have to be listened to—as they have been—and addressed.

The Birmingham summit took note of the concern. The Birmingham declaration emphasised, in a way that it would not have done a couple of years earlier, the importance of national identity and the need for those who argue for Community action in specific instances to show why an objective cannot be achieved satisfactorily at the national level. The burden of proof will be shifted and no longer will Community action be seen as an end in itself, as it often has been over the past 35 years.

I hope that hon. Members who are interested in the issue will study the Commission paper on subsidiarity and the procedures that it will use to weed out proposals that fail the tests in article 3b of the treaty.

The Commission has already reduced its legislative proposals this year from the planned 118 to about 50—compared with about 150 in each of the last two years. That is partly because of progress with the single market, but partly because of the change that is taking place in the way in which the Community is operating. The Commission's paper, which I have mentioned, sums it up as follows:

> "A first consequence of the subsidiarity principle is that national powers are the rule and the Community's the exception."

That is the analysis of the European Commission.

It is quite contrary to the nightmares to which the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) so passionately adheres, but he had some right on his side

[Mr. Hurd]

and there are still people who would not agree at all with what the Commission is saying there. There are still people who believe that Community action is a virtuous thing in itself, but they are on the defensive, as these papers show.

We look forward to decisions at Edinburgh on procedures and criteria for applying the subsidiarity test. I believe that, once adopted and reinforced by the legal underpinning of the treaty, that will radically change the way in which the Community operates. That radical change is what the Select Committee clearly felt was necessary. At Edinburgh, the Commission will also bring forward examples of the sort of legislation that should be knocked off the statute book: rules that should never have seen the light of day.

We have not yet completed it, but we are trying to create a political fact—a change in the way in which the Community operates, in advance of the legal obligations under the treaty. I believe that those who still see Britain as beleaguered in resisting an inexorable movement towards a super-state are mistaken about the way the tide is flowing.

I listened to Chancellor Kohl talking to students in Oxford a fortnight ago. He said about the treaty:

> "We have not laid the founding stone for a European Super-State which reduces everything to the same level and blurs the differences. Rather we have committed ourselves to a Europe constructed on the principle of 'unity in diversity'. We must do everything we can in future to shape European policy in such a way that people can identify with it more easily. They must see that it is concerned with their interests and not with a technocratic Europe, far removed from the people."

Those are the words of the German Chancellor, which I think that every hon. Member would happily echo.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I think that I know what the hon. Gentleman is going to ask, but let him ask it anyway.

Mr. Salmond: I am very glad; I wish that I knew how the Foreign Secretary will reply. Let me ask the question. Is the Foreign Secretary going to say nothing whatsoever about the application of the principle of subsidiarity in the state of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hurd: I will say two things. The Birmingham declaration makes it clear that that is a matter for member states and, with regard to the policy of the Government, we are leaping over the kind of old-fashioned plans that the hon. Member and his party have. We are seeking to bring the decisions closer to the people in the way in which hospitals, schools and other institutions are run—much closer than anything that the old-fashioned nationalist parties ever had in mind.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: No, I must get on. I have created a hubbub, but I do not wish to continue with it.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I will give way to my hon. Friend a little later.

Sir Peter Tapsell: It is on subsidiarity.

Mr. Hurd: Very well.

Sir Peter Tapsell: My right hon. Friend, in his very persuasive way, has just summarised a much more attractive concept of subsidiarity, which, if it could be embodied in the treaty, would relieve a lot of anxieties. Since we are told that the treaty cannot be amended, how will his new concept and definition of subsidiarity be able to replace article 3b in a justiciable and enforceable form?

Mr. Hurd: It is written in article 3b. What I have said simply illustrates how 3b will work in the future and how we are trying to create it now as a daily fact in the life of the Community, even before the article is a legal obligation on anybody. The three paragraphs of 3b encapsulate what I have been saying. I have been describing what we are trying to achieve now in the work of the Commission, the Council and eventually the Parliament.

In Birmingham, the Foreign Ministers were asked to find ways of opening up the Community's work to greater scrutiny. I sometimes feel like a nutcracker at work on a particularly stubborn nut. We want to make the Community's operations more comprehensible and national Governments more accountable to their Parliaments. That involves greater openness on issues such as voting records or letting cameras into important guidance debates on major proposals. It is not proving easy to get agreement among the more buttoned-up members of the Community on that matter. However, the latest news is slightly more encouraging and I expect a solid start to be made on the question of openness in Edinburgh.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Hurd: No. I am sorry, but I must proceed with my speech because my voice is giving way and other hon. Members want to speak.

The Birmingham declaration also committed member states to make a bigger effort at explaining how the Community works and its relevance. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West enabled me to deal with the question of excessive bureaucratic zeal in Whitehall and I need not repeat the point that I made in answer to him. The press often pillory the Community for half-baked and stupid ideas—they are sometimes right, but they are often wrong. That is why we have circulated a paper to hon. Members on "Euromyths"—there is a big demand for that paper—and published a guide to British membership of the Community and the implications of the treaty. In just over a fortnight, we have dispatched 239,000 copies of the booklet and a reprint has been ordered, so hon. Members should place their orders now.

The final main point of the original work agenda is the question of Denmark and ratification. We now have the proposals put forward by the Danish Government, backed by seven of the eight parties in the Folketing—the basis on which the Danes could, in the view of those parties, put the treaty, suitably clarified and amplified, to a second referendum.

The Danes put a lot of weight on some of the points that I have mentioned, including subsidiarity and openness. They want a position on European monetary union broadly analagous to that which my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Chancellor obtained for this country. Their concerns focus on stage 3, citizenship, defence, and the interior and justice pillar. The Danish Foreign Minister has just completed a tour of capitals explaining his requirements. I spoke to him on Sunday evening, and we shall remain in close touch with him and our other partners.

It is clear that no other member state will accept the reopening of the treaty, and the Danes do not seek a renegotiation. It falls to us as President of the Community to find an arrangement acceptable to all member states, taking account of the stated Danish requirement for a legally binding outcome. We are working on that—we are drafting and discussing it—but it is too soon to speculate on the precise nature of the answer. We shall have a special meeting of Foreign Ministers to discuss it on 8 December. We are all committed to achieving a solution, which is essential if the treaty is to come into effect. We are condemned to succeed in solving the problem if there is to be a ratified treaty, and I hope that we shall reach agreement on that in Edinburgh.

An hon. Member has already asked about the economic position in the member states of the Community. Concern is growing in most, if not all, member states about the weakness of economic activity. In the past six months, activity has turned out weaker than we or others expected. Business and consumer confidence have diminished, unemployment has risen and, at the same time, inflation has fallen. Overall in the Community, economic growth this year is unlikely to be above 1 per cent., and next year is likely to see a similar picture. That is a substantial change from the outlook only a few months ago, when an early return to normal rates of growth were widely expected. Growth prospects in the United States and Japan are modest.

Against that background, the British presidency, and particularly my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, believe that it is vital to have a full discussion of economic developments at the Edinburgh Council. We have already responded to those challenges, particularly in the autumn statement, with measures that will boost confidence, promote recovery and protect capital spending in the context of a framework of low inflation and prudent finance.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): During those economic discussions, especially as they will take place in Scotland, can there be some serious discussion among Heads of Government on the future of the nuclear programme, because many of us are extremely worried about the Dounreay decision, which will last for some 30 or 50 years? As we have been the leaders in all that, is it really wise to call a halt to remarkable British developments? Can that matter be on the agenda?

Mr. Hurd: I cannot promise that, but I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman's point is passed on.

I was referring to the autumn statement. We need to consider now what action member states should take, both individually and at Community level, to hasten recovery and strengthen growth. Those measures include opening markets—I have already mentioned the GATT round and the single market—giving priority to capital spending in national budgets, rigorously controlling wage costs in the public sector and improving the supply side of our economies. At Community level, there should be a role for the European investment bank to provide more loans and guarantees to support investment spending, especially on projects such as the trans-European network. There will be a discussion in Edinburgh, which is the basis on which we believe that it can best take place.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): My right hon. Friend mentioned 1 per cent. growth across Europe and the rumour that we would take a more relaxed view towards implementing regulations. Does he agree that, if we do not take a relaxed view towards implementing regulations and curb the rigorous approach of the civil service, which has helped to destroy many small firms in this country by pursuing rules and regulations far beyond how they were originally devised, many small firms will get into even more problems? I should like to hear how the enthusiasm of officials, whether in Europe or in this country, could be curbed.

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend. When rules, for example on the single market—many rules are designed and encouraged by British firms—are agreed, they must be honoured. That must be right and the strengthening, enforcement and penalties for neglect are contained in the treaty. A fine example of our concern is where Whitehall adds its "extra". Many of the complaints, which are often attributed by people in local papers to the European Community, are a result of that Whitehall and town hall extra. My hon. Friend is right, and the Prime Minister touched on the matter in a speech in Brighton in October. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade intends to ensure that this country does not add that Whitehall or town hall extra to agreed rules.

There has been recent criticism from the Community, echoed by the Opposition, about the British presidency. I hope that, if the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has time to alter his speech before he makes it, will be careful about that. The wildest remarks, which he may be about to quote, came from people in Paris, who, understandably, were in political difficulty about the GATT agreement in the past few days, even though the Commission and not the presidency was negotiating on behalf of Britain. We should make allowances for such remarks, even though they were well off target.

A more consistent line of criticism of the presidency is aimed at the relatively slow process of taking the Maastricht legislation through the House. The Opposition know all about that, and they are the last people entitled to criticise us about it. Those who have taken the trouble to study the realities of parliamentary life in this country now have a good understanding of the position. They know, as the hon. Member for Copeland will have learnt from the Germans when they came, that we have settled on a course on which we are likely to be successful.

I have spoken of the massive achievements now emerging as a result of the GATT negotiations and the coming completion of the single market. The other problems at Edinburgh are formidable—they sometimes seem more so because they are linked. I think that the linkage gives us grounds for hope. The Community and the world are passing through a time of exceptional turbulence. Most of the main trading countries suffer from stagnation or recession. In many of them, there is distrust, not just of the Government in power, but of the political system and structure. We see that in Europe and beyond. The Labour party is one of the few opposition parties not to have benefited from that feeling, for reasons that need not detain us today.

[Mr. Hurd]

In order to extricate ourselves from those difficulties —which people can now see more clearly and about which they are more concerned—we need two things. We need an effort of will and an effort of persuasiveness—one without the other will not do. I do not pretend that in Edinburgh we shall solve, in detail, all the problems that I have mentioned, but I hope that we can show, between now and the end of the year, a determination in Europe to pass from argument—which is not a bad thing—to coherent action by the Community in the direction for which we in Britain have long argued and which Europe clearly needs.

I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the White Paper on developments in the European Community, January to June 1992 (Cm. 2065), European Community Documents Nos. 9649/92, relating to the principle of subsidiarity, 4829/92 and 5201/92, relating to Commission proposals for the finances of the Community to 1997, 5202/92, relating to the system of Own Resources, 5203/92, relating to renewal of the Inter-Institutional Agreement on budgetary discipline and improvement of the budgetary procedure, SEC (92) 1412, relating to the United Kingdom abatement, 8567/92, relating to establishment of a Cohesion Fund, COM (92) 140, relating to the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1993, 7933/92, relating to Letter of Amendment No. 1 to the Preliminary Draft Budget, 8209/92, relating to the Draft Budget, 9901/92 and the proposals described in the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by H.M. Treasury on 19th November, relating to the European Parliament's proposed amendments and modifications to the Draft Budget, 6569/92, relating to the Court of Auditors' Opinion No. 2/92, the Annual Report of the Court of Auditors for 1990, the negotiating approach adopted by Her Majesty's Government in the run-up to the Edinburgh European Council on 11th to 12th December and the Government's continuing efforts to secure budgetary discipline and value for money from Community spending.

5.14 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I beg to move, to leave out from '1990' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'but regrets that the British Presidency of the European Community, which has almost ended, has achieved so little for Britain and for the Community; deplores the fact that the Government has persistently refused to put growth and employment at the top of the EC agenda, has damaged the United Kingdom's standing by its inept handling of the British currency crisis, has produced no clear way forward on the Community's future financing, has made little real effort to solve the Danish problem, has produced confusion on its own ratification timetable, and has shown insufficient resolution on the problems of former Yugoslavia especially in regard to rising numbers of refugees and in enforcing United Nations mandatory sanctions; believes as a consequence that Britain's influence and authority in the European Community has been markedly reduced; and calls for a new direction to be taken by Her Majesty's Government in order that Europe's crucial problems are properly addressed at the Edinburgh European Council.'.

I am glad that the Foreign Secretary remembered to move the motion, or I would not have been able to move the amendment.

As I listened to most of the speech of the Foreign Secretary, I thought that, with his great experience and aplomb, he was going to skate over most of the more serious events in the European Community of the past few months, without acknowledging any problem or any issue that had caused trouble. Until the last few moments of the right hon. Gentleman's speech, it seemed as though all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds, and we were moving, unanimously and with great support across the Community, to the Edinburgh summit. As the right hon. Gentleman well knows, the reality in Europe is not like that.

To be kind, the British presidency has been an almost unmitigated disaster—many people have said much worse things about it than that. It was launched with a great fanfare, and was an excellent opportunity for Britain and Europe. The developments on enlargement may well mean that this is the last opportunity this century for Britain to hold the presidency. By the time our turn comes again, it is likely to be a different Community, in both membership and nature.

Without be[illegible] unduly critical of the right hon. Gentleman, I feel that the opportunity has been largely wasted by Her Majesty's Government. Our presidency has certainly done nothing to enhance Britain's reputation in Europe during the past six months. I shall quote what the Prime Minister said of his hopes for Europe and the British presidency:

> "Our membership of the European Community is about peace, stability, investment, jobs and prosperity."

Those were among the Prime Minister's objectives on assuming the British presidency, and few, if any, would disagree with him.

Sir Christopher Prout, leader of the Conservative group in the European Parliament, was even more optimistic about the British presidency. In *The House Magazine* on 29 June this year, he said:

> "I suspect that future historians will see it as a happy stroke of fortune that Britain was called upon to guide the Community through the choppy waters of ratification for Maastricht."

He was rather wide of the mark, but continued:

> "Might not the British acquire, over the next six months of their Presidency, a taste for running Europe, rather than simply running it down?"

I fear that Sir Christopher has been sadly disappointed in his hopes for the British presidency, as the reality has turned out to be something different.

As the Foreign Secretary properly said, the British presidency also had the following aims for progress: development of the ratification of the Maastricht treaty; a solution to the Danish problem and subsidiarity; enlargement of the Community; strengthened links with the new democracies in central and eastern Europe; an end to the suffering in the former Yugoslavia—sadly and regrettably, the right hon. Gentleman did not even mention that in his speech today—and a successful conclusion to the GATT talks.

The 10 objectives set out by the Government were peace, stability, investment, jobs and prosperity, and those that I have just listed. How have the Government fared? How did they measure up to their own stated objectives? Very badly. As publishing league tables of results is in vogue at present, I shall ask where the Government come in the league table of their own tests.

The first test is that of stability. Economic stability has gone down the drain during the period of the British presidency of the European Community. We have seen devaluation, and we have come out of the exchange rate mechanism. Investment has, sadly, reduced during the period of the British presidency. Unemployment has risen dramatically: 51 per cent. of the rise in unemployment in Europe, to August 1992, occurred in Britain. Can anyone say that prosperity has improved during the British presidency?

The right hon. Gentleman seemed sanguine about subsidiarity, but the position is remarkably confused. There is apparently some agreement in the House about enlargement, which has been stalled as the right hon. Gentleman and the Prime Minister accepted in Lisbon that enlargement should not proceed until the Maastricht process and the Delors 2 package had finally been agreed among the Twelve. A continuing and appalling tragedy is unfolding in the former Yugoslavia, and very little progress has been made on establishing better links with central and eastern European democracies.

Significant progress has been made in the GATT talks, which I acknowledge and to which I pay tribute. I welcome the successful outcome, which was important and which —I agree with the Foreign Secretary—goes far beyond the boundaries of the European Community and the United States of America. The final accord still needs to be sealed, but it is essential that it is sealed, not just for the rich and prosperous countries of the west but for the many poor countries in the developing world, for whose continued existennce a GATT agreement is so important. On a test against the benchmarks set down by the presidency, I give the Foreign Secretary a score of one out of 10.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): The hon. Gentleman anticipated my intervention. Who would he rather was in the presidency? Would it have been France? If it had been France, would we have had what happened last week? The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right: this has been about leadership. Prosperity is about GATT, and GATT has been delivered, thanks to the leadership offered by my right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister. If it had not been for them, we would not have had it.

Dr. Cunningham: The obvious answer to the hon. Gentleman's intervention is that I would rather have seen a British Labour Government holding the presidency. Failing that, I would rather have seen this British Government making a better success of the presidency in the interests of Britain and the Community.

The British presidency has been variously described as a fiasco and the worst that many of our European partners can recall; more objective observers have called it a disaster. In the debate on 2 July, the Foreign Secretary likened his task to pushing stones uphill. Obviously, many of them have rolled back down on top of him in the last few months and squashed him, and his aims and objectives, flat.

Most of Britain's European partners will be delighted when the British presidency ends. I suspect that the Foreign Secretary will secretly share their pleasure and relief. He will probably have a quiet drink on 31 December, not just to herald 1993 but to see the back of the burdens which he has been carrying—badly, unfortunately. That has not been all his own fault, because the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer are far more culpable.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): Speaking in the House two weeks ago, the hon. Gentleman made a point about lack of leadership. Would it not have immensely strengthened the British presidency, Britain's credibility in Europe and our support for the Maastricht treaty if the Opposition had been true to their principles and supported the Government on the ratification of the treaty?

Dr. Cunningham: That is a spurious intervention, on two counts. First, we made it clear from the outset that there was no Labour principle in supporting a treaty which contained opt-outs that we could not support. So the idea that we had principled support for the treaty is completely misreading the facts.

Secondly, as we have rehearsed many times, and as we learned the day after that debate, it was not about the ratification process. We learned that the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) went into the Lobby to support the Government at the last moment only because he was told that the Third Reading would not be until after the second Danish referendum.

We saw the leader of the Liberal party conned into the Lobby in support of a discredited Prime Minister, in the belief that somehow the vote was about the principle and about accelerated consideration of Maastricht. We know that that was not so. Since the Bill is returning to the House at the earliest next week, we know that the great difference between our amendment and the Government was a matter of 14 days—two weeks. Does anyone really believe that it was worth it for that minute difference? So no principles were betrayed; we stood by our position then, and we stand by it now.

Curiously, the Government have obstinately refused to put economic recovery in Europe among their priorities for their presidency or even on the agenda for the summit. They were asked to put it on the agenda for the emergency summit in Birmingham, and they declined. They have been pressed again to do so, and I hope that the matter is finally on the agenda for Edinburgh, but there is doubt and confusion even about that.

It is all very well talking about more freedom to fly in the European Community, and about cheaper air fares. That is all over the heads—literally as well as practically —of the 16 million people in Europe who do not have a job, let alone an airline ticket. It is an updated, high-tech version of the advice of the Foreign Secretary's former colleague—former friend, I almost said, but that may be more accurate than might be believed—Lord Tebbit, when he told people to get on their bikes. Now they have to get on their aeroplane, but they would like jobs and some income before they can be persuaded that cheaper air travel in Europe is a great benefit for them and their families.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I should like to understand the hon. Gentleman clearly, as a large number of my constituents work at East Midlands airport. Is he saying that it is now Labour party policy not to have any interest in cheap air fares? Does he realise that, if more people fly, as is bound to be the case if air fares come down, more people will have jobs working in that industry?

Dr. Cunningham: I am not saying that at all. I give the hon. Lady full marks for ingenuity in her intervention, but, as she knows, that is not what I said, and that is not the implication that she or her constituents should draw from my remarks. I do not want any misrepresentation on that point in the local press in Derbyshire in the next few days.

For five months of the British presidency, there has been no action on economic recovery in Europe, in spite of support from the Commission. Yesterday, there was a briefing at 10 Downing street at which journalists were told that that was the big new issue; an autumn statement

[Dr. Cunningham]

for Europe, no less, was the objective of the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was big news. The BBC fell for it, with 10 minutes on the 9 o'clock news last night devoted to it.

Today, within 24 hours, the Chancellor of the Exchequer was pouring cold water all over the proposed new spending package. Again the result is confusion in Europe, not least because there is confusion in Britain too. If 10 Downing street and 11 Downing street cannot get agreement on what the supposed package is about, no one should be surprised if our colleagues in the European Community are not only confused but dismayed yet again.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Is it also the case that the President of the European Commission suggested to the British presidency that it might care to put the issue of jobs on the agenda of the Birmingham summit, but that the British presidency did not want it there?

Dr. Cunningham: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I regret the abdication of responsibility by the British presidency on that matter.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman has said that twice. It does not become any truer because he is supported by his hon. Friend. There was a discussion at Birmingham, and there were conclusions at Birmingham. There will be a discussion at Edinburgh.

Dr. Cunningham: It is funny that there was no mention of it in the declaration from Birmingham, and that no action has ensued.

We firmly believe that there should be Europewide measures on employment, job creation, investment in transport and infrastructure, and measures for industrial regeneration and investment too.

In contrast, the British presidency proposes a reduction of 13 per cent. to 15 per cent. in the research and development budget for the European Community in the coming year. How will that help economic regeneration in Europe, in addition to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) about fast reactor research and development?

The repeated proposals, in speeches and questions, of my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition and my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) are well documented, but they have been ignored again and again. To come back to the point of a previous intervention, there has been a complete absence of leadership by the British presidency on the issue.

The humiliating and total collapse of the Government's policies which led to our withdrawal from the exchange rate mechanism has caused immense harm to our economic and political interests, and it has put us on the sidelines in Europe. The British presidency has done nothing to reverse that. Whatever the Government say, the plain truth is that the ignominious events surrounding black Wednesday were caused primarily by the deplorable weakness of our economy after 13 years of this Government.

In Britain there has been no partnership between Government and industry, as there is in France. There has been no partnership for training between Government and employers and unions, as there is in Germany. There has been no sense of the balance between economic and social policies, as is common throughout the entire Community, with the one disgraceful exception of the United Kingdom. The Government simply have not learnt from their experiences in dealing and working with our European partners; otherwise, they would not have been moved to exclude the social chapter from Britain's version of the treaty in the first place.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Does the right hon. Gentleman —*[Interruption.]*—well, honourable perhaps: he may have hopes for the future, but not if he carries on like this. He has forgotten that, for many months in the early part of the presidency, the British Government, under the Chancellor of the Exchequer, were trying to persuade a coherent force to work throughout the Community to reduce interest rates, and that that was blocked particularly as a result of the problems that the Germans were having with their reunification. The hon. Gentleman knows, as any economist knows, that, until monetary policy is relaxed, it is difficult to obtain any recovery, and that was the problem which ultimately had to be solved by black Wednesday.

Dr. Cunningham: I do not accept that as a reading of recent contemporary political history in Britain. The Government's stated policy again and again was that the cornerstone of their economic policy was high interest rates and membership of the exchange rate mechanism. That was what the Government said would resolve our problems, but everything collapsed around their ears. That is the only reason that we are in our present situation. It is all very well to blame others in the EC, but there is no escape from responsibility for a Government who have been in office this length of time, with majorities in the House of Commons which have sustained them through thick and thin, regardless of the disastrous outcome of those economic policies.

The reality is that the situation in Europe is serious, even dangerous, for democracy and stability. Unemployment stands at 16 million. We have seen the growth of racism and violence against ethnic communities in a number of EC countries. We should not be smug or sanguine about that, because racialist attitudes and attacks occur in our own country too, with monotonous and unacceptable regularity. There are tensions in Germany, France, Italy and other Community countries. As I have already pointed out, we have the worst increases in unemployment of all the Community countries.

The Government might have some excuse for failing to take any action on those matters if there was no consensus in Europe. But a consensus has emerged in the Community between employers and unions in the European Parliament, the President of the Commission and Commissioner Christophersen.

The Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland, has apparently written to our Prime Minister offering or suggesting talks between the European Free Trade Association countries and the Community countries on measures for economic growth and regeneration. I hope that she has had a positive reply, but from what we hear, like everyone else's, her suggestion has been abruptly dismissed—yet another opportunity missed, if not thrown away, by the Government.

I come now to the Maastricht treaty process. It is strange that, on the one hand, although the right hon.

Gentleman at first did not want to do it, the Government decided to suspend consideration of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill in the House, following the result of the Danish referendum; but, on the other hand, they were so tediously and painfully slow in taking any action at all to help the Danes to arrive at a position where accommodation of their problem may be achieved.

I hope that the right hon. Gentleman is right, and that that can finally be achieved in Edinburgh, but it seems unlikely. We know the real view of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, because it was disarmingly presented to us in an internal memo which tells the whole truth, as opposed to the sanitised version of events placed in the House of Commons Library. I make our position clear. We want to see an accommodation of the Danish position. We think that that is important. I urge the right hon. Gentleman to do everything he can in Edinburgh to achieve it.

The Foreign Secretary referred to what the Birmingham declaration had to say on subsidiarity. It said:

> "We reaffirm that decisions must be taken as closely as possible to the citizen. Bringing to life this principle, subsidiarity or nearness, is essential if the Community is to develop with the support of its citizens. We look forward to decisions at Edinburgh on that basis."

It goes on to emphasise a few other points.

Since then, the Commission has produced its own version of subsidiarity. The right hon. Gentleman seemed to think that all was sweetness and light, but there are 22 pages of closely argued and somewhat tedious stuff here about the Commission's version of subsidiarity. We know that there is a divergence of views between what the British Government regard as the importance, significance and intention of subsidiarity and what is felt elsewhere.

The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, under the chairmanship of the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who is here today, has had some important things to say in its recent report about the problems of reaching a clear and agreed definition of subsidiarity. I am sure that the Foreign Secretary is aware of that, because he was the prime witness at the Select Committee's hearings. But there is no early prospect of Communitywide agreement on subsidiarity and how it will operate, and the right hon. Gentleman knows that to be so. Moreover, although we shall have time to consider that in more detail in Committee, subsidiarity needs the agreement of all three Community institutions.

If subsidiarity means taking decisions closer to the people, as the Birmingham declaration says, we enthusiastically support it, because that implies more power devolved to regions, to Scotland and Wales and —a point that has already been made—to local authorities. That is how it is seen among our European partners, but I am not sure that that is what the Government have in mind, and we need to explore that in great detail when the appropriate opportunity presents itself.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the inadequacy of the way in which the definition of subsidiarity was approached during the negotiation process shows the inadequacy of the Prime Minister's negotiation of the treaty, an inadequacy which has continued to be shown during his presidency of the EC? That should have been sorted out during the negotiating process, because the Prime Minister now says that it is central to the treaty.

Dr. Cunningham: I agree with my hon. Friend. As I have said, final agreement on a definition seems unlikely at Edinburgh, but in any event the Government's attitude here to subsidiarity and to the Committee of the Regions seems a million miles away from the view taken elsewhere in Europe.

Sir Russell Johnston: Is it not strange to hear the Foreign Secretary quoting Chancellor Kohl as agreeing with him in his definition of subsidiarity, when everyone knows that Chancellor Kohl is a federalist? Consequently, to him subsidiarity means entrenched, legally defined subsidiarity, not subsidiarity according to the whim of officials.

Dr. Cunningham: I agree, not least because the Government's record has been to centralise more and more power and authority with every year that they have been in office. Whatever their claims for the importance of subsidiarity as part of the treaty, they seem unlikely now to want to divest themselves of some of that power.

We unequivocally support the enlargement of the Community. Austria, Sweden, Cyprus, Malta, Finland, Switzerland, Norway and Turkey want to join. That is good news, but is unfortunate that the process has stalled because of the decisions at Lisbon. I hope that that can be unblocked at Edinburgh, and that some progress can be made.

However, like my right hon. and hon. Friends, I have some serious objections about an application from Turkey to join the EC, at least until there is a satisfactory solution of the Cyprus question. Unhappily, the recent United Nations talks have stalled, with the Turkish Cypriots appearing intransigent and unhelpful.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition and I had the chance to discuss that matter yesterday, as I believe did the Foreign Secretary, with the Turkish Prime Minister, Mr. Demirel, and his Foreign Minister, Mr. Cetin. We made clear our position on that important point, and I hope for an assurance that the Government have done the same.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Does not the hon. Gentleman consider it odd that we should be trying to get into the European Community a country that is in Asia—namely, Turkey? Also, has the hon. Gentleman, with his electric mind, managed to work out how many forests or rain forests in the country that he mentioned had to be cut down to provide every right hon. and hon. Member with 4·8 kg of bumf, multiplied by the 12 Members of the Community and all the others to whom that material was sent? I thought that Europe was supposed to be green.

Dr. Cunningham: It is Turkey that has applied to join the Community, and I am certainly not trying to secure its entry. The whole tenor of my remarks was that I would not support Turkey's application until a lasting solution can be found to the Cyprus problem. As to the demise of rain forests or other kinds of forests, I am more concerned that the Kurdish people of northern Iraq have to chop down vegetation and burn it simply to keep alive. Although that matter is not strictly on today's agenda, I hope that the Foreign Secretary, in developing a policy, will do something to help those people to resolve their difficulties.

[Dr. Cunningham]

The situation in the former Yugoslavia—which is a matter for the Community and one in which it has been deeply involved—is a developing and appalling tragedy. We supported the London peace conference and regret that it has not been effectively followed through—not by Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen, who seem to be working tirelessly to secure some kind of accord, but by members of the Community and the United Nations itself.

Why is it that mandatory arms embargoes are not being effectively enforced many months after they were first voted on by the Security Council? Why is it that, even now, we cannot effectively blockade the principal if not sole aggressor, Serbia, and bring the Serbians to their senses and stop the appalling slaughter in Bosnia? Why has Britain handled the refugee question so disastrously? We could not accept even a busload of people, all of whom had a secure home to go to. That besmirched Britain's reputation in the Community. I take no pleasure in saying that to the Foreign Secretary, but he must know that is true.

I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman, in his role in the presidency, or members of the Security Council know who is arming Serbia and Croatia and how arms are entering those territories. I trust that we may have an assurance that armaments, weapons of war and supplies are not entering the former Yugoslavia from Community member states, as some suggest. That would be a shocking state of affairs. We must impose more effectively and rigorously the will of the United Nations, and I urge the Foreign Secretary to do even more than he has attempted, to secure a peaceful settlement of those conflicts.

Only today, the British ambassador in Albania—no doubt with the knowledge and support of the Foreign Secretary—warned of the deteriorating situation in Kosovo and Albania, and called for more effort and monitors, to prevent those territories from descending into more conflict.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is entirely within bounds in referring to that issue, which I dealt with at length in July, and on which there was a debate last week —which is why I did not address it again. The hon. Gentleman is right about the need for greater effort, which is why we have during this time—although it is not strictly a Community matter—deployed troops to ensure the passage of humanitarian convoys through Bosnia, and strongly support the strengthening of sanctions, such as the Adriatic stop and search and new measures along the Danube. We must continue to do that, try to introduce monitors into Kosovo, and prevent the situation in Macedonia going from bad to worse.

I am sure that we were right to create the London conference in a frame work that included Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance, but we have a good way to go. I accept the thrust of the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Dr. Cunningham: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will go further and agree to early recognition of Macedonia, which has long met all the requirements. I hope that something can be done to stop Greece, which is a member of the Community, supplying Serbia—I will not say with arms, but certainly with petrol. There are daily stories of convoys of tankers travelling through Greece into Serbia when there is supposed to be an economic embargo in force. Instead, we see it flouted day in, day out. The British Government have a major if not the sole responsibility for ensuring that proper effect is given to the blockade and to UN resolutions.

If that is not done, those voices calling for armed intervention—which I do not support—will grow louder and stronger as they see that the peace process is not working, because of a failure of will on the part of countries—some of them our partners, and all of them signatories to United Nations decisions—in quietly but persistently flouting those decisions.

The position, integrity and reputation of the United Nations and of the Community will suffer a devastating blow if the peace process fails. Islamic communities in this country and world wide will not forget what happened in Bosnia, and will not forgive us if they believe that their legitimate rights and human rights generally have been ignored by western countries. Neither will they forget— nor should they—if armed aggression and grotesque abuses of human rights are allowed to prevail.

The Foreign Secretary was right to discuss the former Yugoslavia at the Birmingham summit. However crowded the Edinburgh agenda may be, I hope that the European summit will return to the issue and redouble its efforts to bring peace to those tortured territories.

5.47 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): This debate comes at a convenient time—between the frantic activity of the paving debate and the start of the long journey through the Committee stage of the Maastricht Bill. This calm interlude will also allow many right hon. and hon. Members, particularly on the Conservative side of the House, to reconsider their attitudes towards the Maastricht treaty. A significant proportion of the Tory party must feel uncomfortable in this interlude and be deciding what their attitude will be towards specific parts of the treaty, and I intend to address a few words to them.

That section of the Tory party—I am sure that their views are reflected on the Opposition side of the House —will make an important contribution to the debate, and may save the Government from the real risk of the people demanding a referendum. If the House does not give the treaty proper consideration in Committee, without excessive and unfair pressure being exercised on individual Members, the smell will get abroad, and those outside will say, "Parliamentary democracy is not exercising its judgment properly. There can be no proper exercise of the judgment of individual Members of the House of Commons. Let the people decide."

Grave risks were taken in the way in which the Whips dealt with 50 or 60 right hon. and hon. Members a fortnight ago. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I say that with some knowledge of what was done. There is no doubt that we finished up with 26 right hon. or hon. Members voting against the treaty, as we saw it. The Government had a legitimate argument in saying that a high proportion of hon. Members and right hon. Members who were candidates at the last election did not distinguish their position from that of the Government, and that the Government had a mandate for the Maastricht treaty— that is, for the general principle of the Maastricht treaty.

As a former Whip, I take no exception whatever to proper and vigorous whipping exercised on those who are making up their minds.

Mrs. Currie: You did it.

Mr. Budgen: I did it. It was legitimate to say that anyone who was in any doubt would never get a job in John Major's Administration, and it was legitimate to back that up on occasion with abuse and even threats. However, the conventions of whipping in the Conservative party, as I understand them, do not allow interference between an hon. Member and his constituency and an hon. Member and his family. There can be no doubt whatever that those conventions were frequently and disgracefully broken for the paving debate. That may well account for the difference between the 80 hon. Members and right hon. Members who signed the "fresh start" motion on 2 June and the 26 who voted against the Government's motion.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Far be it from me to defend any of the tactics that my hon. Friend alleges were used by the Whips. Will he explain the presence of Lord Tebbit in the Members Lobby? Lord Tebbit was not looking his most benign and gracious during the immediate hours before the vote.

Mr. Budgen: As I said, this is a game that is played with a hard ball.

Mr. Taylor: Stop whingeing.

Mr. Budgen: I am not whingeing. It is important to understand that even a game that is played with a hard ball has some rules. As I understand the rules, they were broken a fortnight ago. It does not matter in the least to individual Members, and it does not matter in the least to the unnecessary paving debate.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Did the hon. Gentleman see the letter in *The Times* from his colleague the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn)? The hon. and learned Gentleman, who is a former legal officer, said that it was likely that a criminal offence was being committed because threats were made. It appears that the threats included giving the press details of the alleged private life of some Conservative Members.

Mr. Budgen: It is believed that that was done. *[Interruption.]* It is believed by my hon. and learned Friend. It was certainly done in my case in respect of my constituency. I have always believed that such behaviour was not within the conventions. I may be wrong about that, and it may be that the behaviour is within the conventions. All that I am saying is that the game was played with a much harder ball than usual a fortnight ago.

The Maastricht treaty was hardly discussed at the last general election. Nonetheless, it is important to understand that the Government are entitled to argue that they have a mandate for the Maastricht treaty. They do not have a mandate for every part of the treaty. The number of Members on this side of the House who signed the "fresh start" motion and the subsequent motion on 24 September shows that there is real doubt about at least some of the treaty's provisions. As we proceed with consideration of the provisions of the treaty I hope that we shall not find that heavy persuasion is offered to all hon. Members who suggest that they do not agree with any one part of the treaty. For the sake of argument, if hon. Members do not think that the subsidiarity arrangements are sufficient, they should not be accused of bringing the Government down, or of wishing to attack the Prime Minister or to smash the whole European Community.

If the country is to have the benefit of proper parliamentary democracy, we should not have an irresponsible debate about the treaty. I repeat that it is legitimate for the Whips to say to any hon. Member who votes against any single part of the treaty that he or she will never get a job. That is a proper and reasonable constraint which should be exercised against any hon. Member. But there are conventions, even in a game that is played with a hard ball. If the Government misbehave as badly during the Committee stage as they did in relation to the paving debate, it will be obvious to the country that the provisions of the treaty are not being properly examined. If the country comes to the conclusion that the treaty is not being properly examined, the demand for a referendum will become even stronger.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): Will my hon. Friend explain why the House voted for the treaty on Second Reading with a majority of 244? Does that not show that the deep misgivings which he suggests are so widely held are not widely shared but are confined to a small minority of the House?

Mr. Budgen: We shall find out where the majorities and minorities are only during the Committee stage. Of course, parliamentary democracy does not depend on irresponsible voting. Any Member of Parliament who votes and thereby embarrasses his party, whether it be the Government or the Opposition, should be prepared to take the political consequences of his vote.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): Does my hon. Friend believe that parliamentary democracy is reinforced by a referendum?

Mr. Budgen: No, I am opposed to referendums. I believe in parliamentary democracy. I hope that I have made it clear that parliamentary democracy depends on a relatively honest expression of opinion by the House.

Mrs. Currie: That is just what we have.

Mr. Budgen: That depends on the extent to which opinion is prevented from being expressed. My argument is that many hon. and right hon. Members on the Conservative side of the House have already expressed significant disquiet in public if not about the whole of the treaty, at least about significant parts of it. I hope that they will express their views in Committee, and I hope that they will not be prevented from expressing their views by wild suggestions that there will be a general election, the Prime Minister will resign, they will be de-selected or the Whip will be withdrawn every time they wish to express some reservation about some part of the treaty.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend clarify a point that our right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary rather fudged? Will he confirm that when a treaty between —in the present instance—12 parties is in any way altered by any of the parties, and the alteration is not confirmed by their Parliaments, the whole treaty must be renegotiated and brought back to the 12 Parliaments? If that is the case, any amendment to the treaty will inevitably mean that we must start all over again.

Mr. Budgen: That is my understanding. As we begin to consider the various aspects of the treaty, we shall face the most fashionable and current threat: the threat of renegotiation.

If the treaty is as important as its supporters suggest, what is wrong with dealing with it slowly? I can give an example of domestic legislation which was very important, but which the British Parliament considered very slowly —and, in my opinion, only got right the third time. I observe with increasing disquiet the belief apparently held by Ministers that bashing a Bill through with a guillotine will produce the answer to a problem.

I am remembering the way in which the British Government dealt with the question of industrial relations. As early as the late 1960s, it was obvious that industrial relations legislation was needed. The Labour party presented its "In Place of Strife" proposals; my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) produced his Industrial Relations Act 1971, which went the same way. Only on the third occasion, when the matter was dealt with slowly and methodically, did we get it right with a series of legislative measures.

The same will apply if the peoples of the EC are strongly in favour of a third—and, I contend, significantly federal—step. In that event, what is the problem if this particular attempt has to be renegotiated? Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that the desire of the peoples of Europe is analogous with the desire of the German people for reunification—a desire that the Germans nurtured in their breasts for 45 years, and whose fulfilment, when they saw the chance, they grasped with joy, seeing it as the basis of their national psyche. If the peoples of Europe feel the same way about the Maastricht treaty, they will not be put off by a hiccup in the British House of Commons: they will come back to it as quickly as possible.

The political classes of Europe do not want a renegotiation because they know that, if they had to renegotiate the treaty, it would be rejected—and resoundingly rejected—throughout the European legislatures. I suggest that we use this calm interlude to resolve to do our parliamentary duty and consider the details of the Maastricht treaty without let or hindrance, and without another period of excessive and unconventional threats. Let us understand that if a renegotiation proves necessary, and if the peoples of Europe genuinely want something like the Maastricht treaty, they will get it irrespective of any slight delay in the House of Commons.

6.3 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I do not intend to follow the speech of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) in every respect—not least in respect of his closing remarks, the logic of which I did not entirely understand. In the earlier part of his speech, however, he allowed a positive horror story to unfold before our very eyes. If he finds life on the Conservative Benches as deeply unpleasant as he suggested in describing the activities of his party two or three weeks ago, even he might prefer life in the European Parliament at some future stage. I am sure that MEPs do not indulge in such dreadful tactics as the gravediggers in the Conservative party apparently went in for to whip their malcontents into line on the night of that vote.

I am mindful of some of today's press comment about the Foreign Secretary's future in his present office. It struck me that—even allowing for the right hon. Gentleman's cold, and his rather weak voice—his opening speech had the tone of a near-valedictory address, as far as it concerned foreign policy management. It could well have provided a metaphor for what is about to happen, in that, as the Foreign Secretary concluded his speech—on rather a lame note—the Chancellor of the Exchequer left his place. If we are to believe what we read in the press, that may be about to happen in another sense, with the conclusion of what has been a fairly wretched European presidency for the Government.

At the outset of his speech, the Foreign Secretary said that he had outlined an ambitious shopping list to the House on 2 July, at the beginning of our presidency. It seems that those ambitions have not been met—in some cases for reasons entirely outwith the control of Government, in others fully as a result of Government incompetence.

Let us consider the most recent developments: yesterday's visit by the Chancellor, and his discussions with his fellow Finance Ministers at European Community level. Those developments provide a classic example of the confusion that appears to be at the heart of Government policy. One day, the Prime Minister's team is telling the world that Britain is pressing for a European growth plan—and many of us would say "hear, hear" to that, given the level of unemployment throughout the Community and the effect of the recession on so many member states. The next day—indeed, this morning—the Chancellor insists that that plan has been blown out of all proportion.

On the one hand, No. 10 Downing street says that Europe should have a co-ordinated growth programme, along the lines of Britain's recent autumn statement; on the other, the Chancellor advises everyone that the autumn statement is not a "dash for growth"—that was his phrase. A complete contradiction is at work here: it is little wonder that our presidency has become more incredible, as well as lacking in credibility, as time has gone on.

But the central criticism that surely must be made of the six-month period that we are discussing is very simple. Not least in regard to the Maastricht treaty, and matters European generally, the Prime Minister has behaved rather like a rabbit caught in the headlights: he has been unsure which way to dart, for fear of the consequences he sees on every side, and he has been too indulgent—too willing to play into the hands, or remain a prisoner, of some of the xenophobes who sit behind him. He has not been willing to confront them and take them on, and that is a failure of leadership.

The Prime Minister nearly succeeded in scuppering the Maastricht process a couple of weeks ago, given the closeness of the vote. Such action takes some ability on the part of a Prime Minister. When the House had approved the negotiating terms set out in advance of the Maastricht summit, and the terms then agreed by the House—albeit with objections and qualifications from different quarters and different parties, my own party included—and then given the Bill a Second Reading with an overwhelming majority, he reduced that majority to single figures, even with the support of my hon. Friends to do that calls for a fair degree of political incompetence; and I am afraid that the incompetence that we have seen at home has been more than matched by the incompetence with which too many European matters have been approached during our presidency.

Let us take subsidiarity, which the Foreign Secretary breathtakingly touted as one of the great achievements of recent years. The Chancellor announced the suspension of sterling from the exchange rate mechanism; hard on the heels of that came the announcement of the Birmingham summit. Following that fateful set of events, it was anticipated that the Birmingham summit would deal with some of the matters involved, but the ERM and consequent decisions hardly came up.

We were told, and we have been told again today, that Birmingham was all about subsidiarity and recognising the limits of the Community. We were also told that the Government were getting their message across at the European level. Subsidiarity, therefore, had become all-important.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office recently published "Britain in Europe". The way things are going, one wonders whether there should be a question mark at the end of those three words. However, it is a substantive statement—Britain in Europe. What is most interesting about the Prime Minister's foreword to that publication, only a few weeks after the Birmingham summit, is that subsidiarity is not mentioned at all. One wonders, therefore, just what policy is being pursued and how clear-minded the Government are about their policy.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The hon. Gentleman surely cannot be happy about the Government's definition and likely implementation of subsidiarity, is he ? It seems that subsidiarity, as far as this lot is concerned, means the dispersal of power between Brussels and London and that any dispersal of power to Scotland and Wales does not figure in their thinking.

Mr. Kennedy: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. As both of us represent Scottish constituencies, we see absolutely eye to eye on this issue. Both of us know that our respective parties view subsidiarity in the United Kingdom context as meaning a Scottish parliament and the devolution of more power to the English regions and to Wales. I suspect, however, that what the Government mean by subsidiarity is obstructionism—the ability to stop certain issues at Whitehall level without having to refer them to Brussels or without their having to be sent down the line for decision in Cardiff, Edinburgh or the English regions where legitimately many of them could be decided, many of us would argue, much more efficiently and much more effectively than they can be decided in Whitehall.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): Is it the hon. Gentleman's view that decisions about how regional government or local government powers should be distributed in Britain should be taken in Brussels, not in this House? Is that his interpretation of subsidiarity?

Mr. Kennedy: No. I accused the Government and, by implication, the Minister of viewing subsidarity as a good opportunity for obstructionism. The Minister is trying not so much to obstruct as to obscure. Of course I do not suggest for one moment that the structure of Government in the United Kingdom should be decided in Brussels. My argument is that the definition of federalism for which we argue is the federalism that one sees in Germany—a positive, practical federalism, with the devolution of power to the regions, away from nation-state level. The centralisation of power in Whitehall and Westminster, which all too often is unaccountable, is as unacceptable as the centralisation of power in Brussels would be.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The reason that the principle of subsidiarity and its acceptance by our partners to the treaty is so important is because, as President Delors said, subsidiarity now makes it clear that the presumption in all cases is that action will take place inside a member state and that action by the Community will be the exception. Therefore the presumption is that decisions made in the Federal Republic of Germany about the way that it wishes to distribute powers in the federal state is for it and that the way in which powers are distributed inside the United Kingdom is for this House and this Parliament.

Mr. Kennedy: I understand what the Minister says, but the point that I put to him—if he wants to be politically and philosophically consistent—is that if he says that the principle of subsidiarity means that there is no point in taking a decision at Brussels level that can be more effectively and properly taken at Westminster level, there is equally no point in decisions having to be taken at Westminster level that could more properly be taken at Cardiff, Edinburgh or regional level. The Government do not want to listen to the case that we make. If that principle had operated in this country, many of the developments ushered in since 1979, a great number of which are now being flung back in our faces as economic recession bites ever more deeply, would never have been bulldozed through in parts of the country where the Government commanded scarcely a mandate, far less a majority.

Dr. Godman: Is not the trouble with the Government's interpretation of subsidiarity—compared and contrasted with the German definition of article 3B and the Spanish interpretation of article 3B—that if Maastricht were ratified, article 3B would become justiciable, which means that the Government would politicise the European Court of Justice?

Mr. Kennedy: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. That is an additional argument that is likely to be further deployed when we consider the Bill.

I am not sure whether the Foreign Secretary referred in his speech to the Committee of the Regions. Little progress has been achieved. I hope that the Minister who is to wind up the debate will say something about the Government's thoughts about timetables, the mechanisms for selection or appointment, and so on. That is important for Europe as a whole and certainly for Britain. Many of us believe that Britain's input will be an important counterbalance and will provide political opinion of a broader range than the Government's alone when it comes to making decisions at Community level.

The Foreign Secretary referred also to enlargement of the Community. That has broad political support. Nevertheless, one has to voice a suspicion. I do not criticise the Foreign Office. It is a criticism of some Conservative Back Benchers and others who are critical of the European process as a whole. Enlargement should not be embraced as a means of trying to slow up the Community mechanisms per se. We are against that. I understand that the Foreign Office supports our view.

Before there can be any enlargement of the Community, we must face up to the present difficulties

[Mr. Kennedy]

over providing help to the more recent entrants to the Community which are, in per capita terms, poor members of the Community. There will have to be a bold and, one suspects, generous settlement at Edinburgh in relation to cohesion funding as a whole. If the cohesion funding issue is to be resolved, there will have to be consideration of structural funding and regional funding as a whole, so that after 31 December next, with over 90 per cent. of the single market completed, the so-called golden triangle at Community level does not leave the peripheral parts of the Community, be they in the southern Mediterranean or in the north-west highlands of Scotland, at an excessive disadvantage and unable to play their full part within the single market.

The United Kingdom Government will therefore have to recognise properly and implement the additionality principle for many of the structural funds. All too often that principle has been abused. Moreover, structural funding arrangements for the period 1994 to 1997 are being made. The case put forward by the various public bodies and agencies concerned with the Highlands and Islands is to move our area from objective 5B status, under which regions receive only 5 per cent. of the total European structural funds at between 25 and 50 per cent. assistance rate, to objective 1 status. Those with objective 1 status are allocated 65 per cent. of the total European structural funds, at an assistance rate of between 50 and 75 per cent. of total public authority support per project.

The Minister will be aware of the difficulties that have been experienced by the highlands and islands economy, such as the cyclical nature of North sea fabrication contracts and the dearth of orders in the foreseeable future, the rundown at Dounreay and the reduction in regional aid, all of which have had a disincentive effect on the local economy. Moving us from category 5b back to category 1 for structural funding assistance would be a significant psychological and practical boost. The Government have been fairly positive so far: we hope that they will move towards delivering the goods at the Edinburgh summit.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): The hon. Gentleman is advocating more expenditure on cohesion funds and regional development grants. Which countries will pay for that additional expenditure?

Mr. Kennedy: Let us be clear about which country has never been honest about structural funding—Britain. The additionality principle has been consistently abused by the Government, not to finance additional projects—road improvements, bridge construction and so on—to improve the economy of the regions but to replace the national Government commitment. That has caused considerable annoyance in Europe and has not helped us to win any friends. Bruce Millan, the Labour commissioner, has been able, not least with the RECHAR programme, to flush out the issue and to focus public attention on it, and I pay tribute to his work.

Mr. Milligan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kennedy: Will the hon. Gentleman forgive me if I do not do so? I do not want to take up any more time.

Many critics of further European integration have said, "Look at the situation in Bosnia and in what was Yugoslavia; there is a classic failure. How can people who want greater European integration claim that that will not happen here when Europe cannot deliver a better state of affairs?" If we deny the Community mechanisms to resolve differences or to promote further collective policies, the full tragedy of what can happen may emerge. Many of us argue that the tragic circumstances in Yugoslavia strengthen the case for a more integrated European foreign and defence policy.

One need not apologise for arguing that positive messages emerge from that, and perhaps the most positive is that of democracy itself. The Foreign Secretary, using a characteristically British phrase, spoke of how some other member states were more "buttoned-up" than us in their approach to openness in government, yet Britain has no freedom of information legislation, no citizens' rights defined in a Bill of Rights or written constitution, and one of the most secretive, centralised systems of government imaginable. That is why many of us argue that, to achieve democracy and openness, we need a more federal approach within the United Kingdom and within an increasingly federal European Community.

Perhaps the greatest criticism that can be made of Britain's six-month presidency is that, if one wants to sell an idea to the public outside—we can argue about whether that is best done in the Chamber or in a referendum—one must sell it positively and with hope. The severest criticism of the Prime Minister's behaviour in the past six months is that he has tried to sell Maastricht and the European Community as much by what the treaty will not do, by what it will not intrude upon, by what it fails to address and by what it leaves out as much as by what it will deliver and by the hope and mechanisms that it can put in place for a more united and positive Europe. That case continues to seek a hearing. We are not getting it from the Government and we did not get it from the Foreign Secretary, which scarcely fills anyone with confidence for the remainder of the period up to the Edinburgh summit.

6.25 pm

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): I cannot agree with the final words of the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), but I am pleased to follow him because it gives me the chance to pay him and his hon. Friends a tribute for voting for Europe in the recent paving debate. That healthy trend of showing a willingness to support the Government has not been apparent tonight, but we cannot have everything. At least Liberal Democrat Members have traversed the correct direction on at least one occasion. I am aware of the constituency pressure that was placed on some Liberal Democrat Members, so my tribute is well meant.

I wish to concentrate on some of the problems that we must address at Edinburgh and what we might be able to achieve. We have heard much gloom, doom and difficulty about the Edinburgh summit, but it is not so bad as all that. A good start has been made with GATT and the single European market, which has always been championed by the Government, who have implemented and played a leading role in what, from the beginning of next year, will be an increasing reality.

My approach to Edinburgh is not so pessimistic as it might have been even a few months ago, or certainly in the middle of September, when it seemed that there was a serious danger that the British presidency would be seriously disturbed and the Edinburgh summit would become rather unrewarding. We shall not be isolated, which was possible, and we shall not return to the ghastly circumstances of previous years in Europe. In addition, there are clear signs, although not necessarily the best signs for the Community, that other countries are now experiencing difficulties.

I speak of all the perfect Europeans—I am a supporter of the European Community, but I am not a fanatic—who were prepared to lead the gallop at a pace that is being seen to be unsustainable, but nevertheless must continue to be followed. The French expressed many views in their referendum and I am sure that at Edinburgh we shall see that their attitude to GATT is less than Mr. Clean. The Germans, although I do not criticise them for doing so, are seen to conduct a nationalistic economic policy and they, too, will have something to answer for. We therefore start from a much more even position than might have been the case.

The Maastricht ratification process must now be confirmed and re-emphasised. Our electorates will expect a new timetable for ratification to be agreed in Edinburgh. The old timetable will not be achieved, so we must tackle the challenge of meeting the new one. I hope that the Government will press on with the Maastricht Bill, despite the fascinating speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) about the Government Whips Office. I hope that the Government will not totally lose heart in the face of the observations by my hon. Friend. I hope that I and many of my hon. Friends can expect the Third Reading of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill in the House no later than May next year. I believe that we should make that clear as soon as is practically possible.

Mr. Salmond: Did the hon. Gentleman see the Channel 4 programme, "A Week in Politics", on Saturday night? Perhaps the Government Whips Office should be the least of the worries of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen). He should perhaps worry more about the demonic powers of the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones).

Mr. Temple-Morris: I always wonder why my right hon. Friend the Minister encourages the national press into certain excesses of comment. I have seen nothing but gentleness and understanding from him, including during his time in the Whips Office, when I was occasionally a rebel on somewhat heavy issues. Although on this occasion the pressure is on, and although I have suffered myself from that pressure—though not exerted by my right hon. and allegedly demonic Friend—I have always believed that if one cannot stand the heat, one should get out of the kitchen. We should not be put off by the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West, which seemed to be addressed more to the politics of the Committee stage than to anything which might or might not have happened to him.

At a time of recession, the general economic situation must be addressed. It is not a time to spend more, whether on convergence, on cohesion or on anything else, but it is a time to spend what we have within existing policy on getting out of recession. I am very encouraged that that policy is now assuming a European context for Edinburgh.

The next main point that will have to be addressed—we are not hearing so much about it now because of the macro-economic issues—is our old friend the exchange rate mechanism. Something will have to come out of Edinburgh to give people more confidence in the future of that instrument. The United Kingdom is out of it, but its policy is to get back into it when it can, according to its economic progress. Others are under severe strain. Although it was not their fault because they were unbalanced by their very success, the Germans completely unbalanced the whole system. At Edinburgh, we should perhaps begin the process of providing the exchange rate mechanism with greater flexibility to withstand speculators.

I give a slight warning. There is too much a tendency here when talking and thinking about the ERM to assume that Britain can dance in and out as it wishes, and that somehow everyone will let us do exactly what we like. It is assumed that if we do not want to go in, we need not, and that we are entitled not to go in. Without doubt, there will be increasing pressure on us, bearing in mind the economic difficulties of other countries, to make up our mind. With that pressure, we shall not be permitted indefinitely to waltz around with a low-value currency asking Germany and France to buy our goods if those countries are under the disciplines of that system. Being outside the ERM is not a permanent option. Everyone tolerates our position at the moment, but we must address it while we have the credit and the weight with which to do so. Rather than appearing to be backing off from the ERM, we must go in to try to reform it from within.

We must also address the overall European financial approach, internal and general. There are obvious differences on Delors stage 2. Differences have already crept in between those who are paying for it and those who expect to benefit from it. For a variety of reasons, those who are paying for it are in no condition to pay very much. I want to see convergence and cohesion, which are central to the argument for an eventual single currency. Having said that, now is not especially the time, and I desperately hope that we shall not get into a north-south tangle between the payers and the receivers. It is unnecessary at this stage. We can set out the demarcation and we can do as much as we can. On general economic policy, I welcome the approach to the European infrastructure at a European level.

In considering what it might be possible to achieve, the first issue is ratification. The Danes have been mentioned a number of times. Obviously, we must accommodate them, because there are no smart solutions without them. They have the responsibility for the Maastricht treaty and they must come within it. It is not on for the 11 to go ahead with all the stresses and strains at the moment. To say that it was on would, in a funny way, release the pressure on the Danes. We cannot renegotiate the treaty because it would then have to be re-ratified. I have always understood that to be the legal position.

I adopt the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. He said that, because the Danes do not want to renegotiate, for the reasons that I have just given, we seek a legally binding outcome. Reading between the lines a little, the Danes' demands are not too horrendous. They make dramatic demands about defence, which is one of the vaguest parts of the treaty. The Danes talk about

[Mr. Temple-Morris]

opt-outs from European monetary union when we already have such opt-outs, so that issue should not present insurmountable difficulties.

I repeat this point because it is so important. With ratification, the country and the House must keep up the pace. I and a number of my hon. Friends believe that the Third Reading of the Bill should be in May because if it is in May, it is before the final Danish summit. Our decision to ratify and our progress towards ratification will be there for all to see. There will be eventful times in another place, but we must not miss out on being at the heart of Europe. We must not miss out or be seen to be dragging our feet at a time—this is apparent now and will continue to be apparent—of important European development. If we miss out now or at any time, there is a danger of a two-tier Europe, a point to which other hon. Members have not yet referred. With this country's history, I do not see us as part of a second tier.

Dr. Godman: Is the hon. Gentleman confident that the Danes will reverse their original judgment? If they stick by that judgment, what happens to the treaty? Can it be resuscitated?

Mr. Temple-Morris: The matter is plain for all to see. We shall be reasonable with the Danes, we shall make every effort to accommodate them and there will be a second referendum. At the end of the day, I do not believe that the Danes will isolate themselves, for all their fears about Germany and for all their apprehensions about the Community as a whole. If the Danes do not ratify it, the treaty as it stands will be at an end. The 11 could, of course, immediately sit down, sign a new treaty and start the process all over again. A new treaty would, of course, have to be re-ratified. We are talking about legally enforceable matters to satisfy the Danes. I believe that I have outlined that plain position correctly.

After ratification comes subsidiarity, which has been well discussed in the House. As I understand it, subsidiarity is not a legal concept in the European Community context, although it is in an established federation such as the Federal Republic of Germany. There is no suitable legal instrument, there is no European constitution and there is no European constitutional court to turn it into a legal concept. We must not muddle nationalism with Community internationalism. We are looking here for clear political and governmental guidelines at all levels, and for practice in Brussels by the organs of the Community, and especially by the Commission and the Council of Ministers. In that regard, I welcome what my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said about the burden of proof.

Dr. Godman: If the treaty is resuscitated or ratified, article 3b will become justiciable. That must surely mean that, sooner or later, judgments by the European Court of Justice will be involved.

Mr. Temple-Morris: That does not alter what I was trying to say. Once article 3b is included and becomes justiciable, a body of precedent will gradually be built up. We are not talking about a federal Europe in any event, but under the treaty we should still be a long way away from the established constitutional structures of member countries of whatever system. It is not the same ball game. No doubt ways will be found to raise matters legally, and a body of precedent will eventually be built up. That is in the best English tradition—the common law rather than a whole load of written statutes.

I stress that we shall not be able to do very much about Community finance. We should not have an argument: we should establish our parameters and do what we can.

That brings me to overall spending on infrastructure. Because of our somewhat illustrious history, an important point often eludes us: we are an offshore island, and beyond us is another offshore island—Ireland. We must recognise the importance of infrastructure and of access from both Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic through Wales. Access from the north of England is as important as for the Principality. To my mind, it is verging on the disgraceful that a business man who can get into a train in Paris and shoot off at haute vitesse to all parts of Europe will come grinding to a halt at Dover. We should remember that that Parisian business man may want to do business not in London but in the regions—in Manchester, Liverpool or the Principality. We have a great European interest in that, and it is a very good trend.

What sort of Europe do I want to emerge from Maastricht and Edinburgh? I want us not to lose the prospect of a single currency, as I said on Second Reading of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. There is too much mincing of words on that subject. I want the security of that prospect—for myself, my children and my country. Anyone who considers what has happened to the pound—not just since the war, but before it—will have some idea what I am getting at and will also know of the sophistication of the pure speculation which present structures, I am afraid, permit.

One of the victories of Maastricht was intergovernmental co-operation, and may that trend continue—in respect of defence as well as foreign affairs. In the midst of our intergovernmental co-operation, we should not forget that increasingly in defence, bearing in mind the position of the United States, and in foreign affairs, bearing in mind our increased responsibilities as Europeans, we need to act together. Together we can be effective: as a little nation we can do little. If we do not recognise that, we let ourselves and our history down.

6.43 pm

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): I want to speak about both the Maastricht process and the draft European Communities budget for 1993.

Most hon. Members will agree that this is a time of great change and rapid development in the Community and in our relationships with other nations. For those of us who look forward to a wider and deeper Europe—to a Europe for people as well as for business—it is also a time of rising expectations.

There are dangers in the process of developing closer co-operation, however. As my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said, the rise in fascist violence in Europe—particularly in Germany, but in other member states, too—must give all hon. Members a real sense of outrage and concern. Resisting that racist tyranny is one of the biggest challenges facing all of us in the Community today. That is why I believe that the Maastricht process is so important for Europe.

Maastricht is important in that context, as in others, because it offers a vision, in principle and in practical terms, of a Europe in which member states work more closely together—where political and economic co-operation between member states becomes central to our relationship with each other. I am a strong supporter of the Maastricht process.

Sadly, however, the British Government seem to be obsessed with fighting yesterday's battles and appear always to be looking over their shoulder at non-existent enemies in Europe. I refer in particular to the so-called Brussels bureaucracy. The result of all this is that we often create the impression that we are not good Europeans—that we are not truly at the heart of Europe. That impression will run contrary to Britain's long-term economic, social and political interests.

Tonight, I shall concentrate on other aspects of the developments within the Community in the past six months and, in particular, on developments in the European shipbuilding industry and the problems of defence-dependent communities that now face the prospect of a rapid increase in unemployment as a result of the end of the cold war. In both these respects, I believe that the Community is failing to pursue the right policies—policies that will create and help to save vital jobs, skills and technologies not only in Britain—in communities such as my constituency—but in other areas of the continent.

Paragraph 12.16 of the White Paper contains a rather acerbic and short statement relating to the derogations, now part of Community law, for aid to the former east German shipyards.

All hon. Members will know that, in the past 12 months and, indeed, before that, Europe has continued to witness a major decline in our shipbuilding capacity. In the past six months, thousands of jobs have been lost all over Europe. I am referring not only to developments in my constituency, which I believe has lost more jobs in shipbuilding in the past two years than any other region of Europe—Barrow and Furness has lost more than 6,500 jobs since 1979—but to the problems facing communities throughout the continent.

I wish to refer to Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. In the shipyards in my constituency, we have some of the finest technology and skills that are to be found anywhere in Europe.

Throughout a period of immense job losses in European shipbuilding, the Commission continues to predict that worldwide demand for new merchant ships will double over the next 10 years. We ought, therefore, to be pursuing policies that will preserve shipbuilding capacity so that we can take advantage of the expected increase in work; yet, throughout, the European Community and its member states have been pursuing a policy that will lead to the eventual evaporation of our shipbuilding and marine capability in Europe. That is a ludicrous and outrageous policy for the Community to pursue.

We need a new maritime policy which should recognised that shipbuilding is not a smokestack industry or a thing of the past. British shipyards, of which I can speak with some knowledge, are modern and well equipped; they are centres of engineering excellence without parallel in Europe. Why, therefore, do our Government and those of our member states—and, in particular, the Commission—remain intent on pursuing policies that will lead to a substantial reduction in our engineering capability?

I am a passionate believer in engineering and its role in securing the future of our manufacturing industries. There is a real danger that Europe will lose one of its greatest industries needlessly. The British Government must not sit back and sacrifice our shipbuilding and marine engineering industries on the high altar of free market forces. Why should we surrender a lucrative market to the shipbuilders of the far east and the Pacific rim?

Dr. Godman: Is my hon. Friend aware that a recent report, commissioned by the European Commission, suggests that a gap of about 22 per cent. remains between the price of ships purchased in the far east and those from the best European yards? The seventh European Community directive on shipbuilding—the shipbuilding intervention fund—should surely be succeeded by an eighth directive on 1 January 1993.

Mr. Hutton: I agree, and I suspect that my hon. Friend must have been looking at my speech over my shoulder, although I know that he would not do such a thing. Like him, I think that the Government need to consider how the intervention fund regime applies to British yards. They should extend its application to cover British warship yards.

In the early 1980s, there may have been a rational justification for saying that the British warship yards had secure futures, as they had secure and prosperous order books. That was especially true of VSEL in Barrow, until the publication of "Options for Change", when it lost £3 billion-worth of orders at a stroke. It is not possible for the shipyard in my constituency—or, I suspect, yards in other constituencies—to make good on its own the loss of defence work and the huge adjustment in logistics, competitive outlook and marketing that is necessary now that defence work is set for a rapid decline.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), I believe that the initial justification for not applying the intervention funds to warship yards has disappeared. The shipbuilding industry in Britain and in Europe has had to face a substantial and material change of circumstances. If we are to maintain our shipbuilding capacity—I argue that that is essential if we are to maintain a successful heavy engineering base—we must consider the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow about closing the gap in competitiveness between good, well-stocked and well-equipped British yards and some of the low-cost yards in the Pacific rim and the far east. I hope that the Government will press in the Council and the Commission for an eighth directive, which will allow British yards to compete on level terms with those other yards.

One of the great deficiencies of the Government's White Paper and of their policy towards industry in Britain and Europe is that they do not recognise the important role of engineering—especially marine engineering, which has a substantial future and not merely a past. I sometimes wish that the Government would begin to recognise that.

I note that a resolution approved by the European Parliament on 17 September began to recognise the need for a European initiative to support and help areas such as my constituency, which are suffering the severe effects of a rapid and unpredictable decline in defence work. For example, in the late 1980s, 1·5 million people in Europe were employed in the armaments industry. The European Parliament is convinced that, during the next three to five

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years, between 300,000 and 500,000 jobs will be lost in the armaments industry, and I share that view. The figures are almost precisely comparable with job losses in the iron and steel industry between 1975 and 1985. During that period, the European Community developed a range of imaginative schemes to help iron and steel communities to cope with that sudden demise.

The European Commission and the Community should take the initiative and start to develop an effective response to the crisis affecting employment in the defence industries of Britain and Europe, because they are of immense importance to our manufacturing base. Hon. Members on both sides of the House who have defence establishments in their constituencies know of, and can testify to, the high levels of skill, especially in engineering, to be found in such companies.

Will the Government consider a range of new initiatives to reward innovation, and to encourage enterprise and diversification among our defence contractors? Why are the Government ending the peripheral programmes, which have benefited my constituency and others suffering from the decline in defence contracting? The peripheral programmes were developed to provide practical aid to defence-dependent communities. Their needs have not diminished during the past couple of years, and will get more intense. It is silly of the Government to withdraw the peripheral programmes from the European Community budget, but I understand that they have asked the Community to take them out. Last year, 50 million ecu were spent on the programme, but there is to be no budget allocation this year.

What is the European Community doing to help the defence industries to adjust? I am afraid that the answer is, not a lot. We have to act quickly and decisively or we shall lose huge sectors of Europe's engineering industries—probably for ever. In both the shipbuilding and the defence industries there are signs of complacency and inaction in the United Kingdom Government and the Community. That drift is damaging to Europe's long-term industrial competitiveness and to the economic prospects facing my constituents.

The problems that face both industries cannot and will not be solved by a strict adherence to market forces. Many hon. Members believe that those same market forces are creating the problem. In my constituency we have been dependent on defence-related contracts for the best part of 25 years. VSEL used to build merchant ships as well as naval vessels. Since the early 1980s, we have secured only naval shipbuilding work. When the demand for our products begins to evaporate, as it has done quickly with the publication of "Options for Change", we are not able to make the necessary adjustment. Our principal supplier has simply walked away and is telling us, and other communities like ours, to get on with it as best we can, as it is a market problem and market forces will sort it out. I am afraid that market forces will not solve that problem, and nor will they solve many others.

At the heart of a successful strategy for the marine and defence industries is a strategy to allow them to diversify. That is the secret of success and it will require the Government and the Community to act quickly. Inaction will confine many thousands of our fellow Europeans to the misery and frustration of mass unemployment for years to come. My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) talked about 16 million unemployed people in the European Community, and that is a conservative estimate. I refuse to countenance confining some of the most highly skilled and gifted engineering workers in the Community to enforced unemployment, possibly for many years. It is imperative for the Government and the Community to take the sort of action that I have outlined to help the shipbuilding and defence industries.

6.57 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I welcome the positive remarks about the Maastricht process that the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) made at the beginning of his speech. I hope that he will be a positive European in Committee, and I am sure that we shall find ourselves working closely together during those days.

I shall not embarrass him further, but I hope that he will have a word with those on the Opposition Front Bench. After the recent close vote on a Wednesday, I arrived in Amsterdam airport, waved my passport and was stopped. The customs officer said, "You are British, are you for or against Maastricht?" He did not even know that I was a Member of Parliament. I said, "I am for." He smiled and said, "You are not one of those British socialists then."

The Labour party has a lot of image-building to do after its unprincipled behaviour that night. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), who is no longer in his place, could also take note that he was dismissed by our Dutch friend as a British socialist.

The Committee stage of a Bill can be quite complicated, but during that stage of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill we must continually show the relevance of the process and of the European Community to the British people and to the problems that we face. Too often, we get bogged down in detail which is not easily understood, or we highlight the negative aspects of the European Community and emphasise what we are against rather than what we are for.

That relevance of the Community—the inextricable link between the economic and political development of the Community with happenings in this country and our efforts to revitalise the British economy—is why I particularly welcome the fact that at the Edinburgh summit we shall address the problem of how Europe as a whole can overcome the recession and the slow growth which is afflicting us and making all our political problems more difficult to solve.

That does not mean that we must have a sudden burst of further fiscal relaxation—in other words, more Government expenditure—and I noted carefully that the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that the funds would come largely from the private sector and the European Investment Bank. I welcome developments of that type.

At the same time, it is vital for the British people to understand that for a country which depends so much on trade—our trade with Germany is almost as large as our trade with America and Japan combined—we cannot solve our problems solely within Britain. We cannot have a British monetary policy solely for British conditions. If we tried to do that, either we would get a disproportionate fall in sterling, which would have inflationary consequences over time, or we would force up interest rates at the long end of the yield curve because we could not fund the British deficit.

We shall have to face that problem in the coming year. Our long-term interest rates are already above those of the Germans, even though our short-term rates are below theirs. The idea that we can enclose ourselves, when we are an open economy depending on movements of capital and trade, is false. That should be made clear to the British people. If we are to rebuild the British economy rapidly, as we hope will prove possible, we must also seek to rebuild the European economy.

It was for that reason that I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). Labour Members should not forget what the Chancellor was trying to do in the first few months of the British presidency. He was trying to get a common European approach to monetary policy, remembering that such an approach had been distorted during the last few months of our membership of the exchange rate mechanism by the fact that Germany was looking internally—I do not blame it for so doing—at the problems created by reunification.

There is nothing wrong with Germany looking internally, but it should be aware that the tensions created by reunification have resulted in monetary problems in other countries. If we respond through fiscal expansion, we must hope that Germany will examine its fiscal position as well. Help must be mutual, rather than competing with each other in monetary and fiscal policies.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): My hon. Friend says that we cannot view British monetary policy in isolation. Will he look again at Germany's position? Does not the same analogy apply there, particularly in the context of today's money supply figures for Germany, showing that the 5·5 per cent. target for M3 has been exceeded to such an extent that it is now 10·2 per cent., no doubt as a result of the factors to which my hon. Friend referred in respect of European monetary movements in the last few months?

Mr. Taylor: I appreciate my hon. Friend's comments, but regardless of what the Bundesbank is saying just now —it has as many arguments with the German Government as it has with other Governments—and regardless of the situation in Germany in relation to monetary policy, many east and west German Members of Parliament are concerned with the effect of the hard deutschmark on German industry within the European Community. A headline in a German newspaper proclaimed recently, "German industry worried about strong deutschmark." These are difficult times, even if what that newspaper proclaimed meant a competitive advantage for us.

As I keep stressing, the real problem in the European Community—a market of 340 million people with the free movement of capital, goods and services—is that there must be co-operation on monetary policy, so it is inevitable that we must have a policy towards managed exchange rates.

Mr. Hoon: The hon. Gentleman says that it is impossible to have a British monetary policy for our monetary conditions and I share his view, but was that not precisely the way in which the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced the autumn statement? The Chancellor said that a cornerstone of the autumn statement was a British monetary policy for British monetary conditions. The hon. Gentleman voted for that last week. How does he reconcile his position?

Mr. Taylor: The Chancellor also said that he would have to set British interest rates while bearing in mind the position of sterling in relation to other currencies. So the hon. Gentleman is effectively agreeing with me, and I am agreeing with him. But we must make sure that the British people understand the interdependence in the Community. If not, they will want to take a very British position, and if the Government cannot deliver that position we shall face a credibility problem.

Another issue which has featured widely in our debates about the European Community is the 1992 programme. By 1 January 1993, that programme will be all but complete. Indeed, 95 per cent. of it is already complete. That represents a tremendous victory for Britain and we should shout it from the rooftops. It has not meant our taking a defensive stand against the European Community because of something being forced down our throats. We virtually invented the programme.

I pay tribute to the former Prime Minister, Lady Thatcher, who understood only too well that, if Britain was to open up the Community and remove restrictions, hidden and overt, to the free movement of people, goods and services, we needed a strong Commission to initiate legislation. It also meant that we needed qualified majority voting in the Council of Ministers; we had to make sure that no one country could block the efforts to open up the Community to the single market. Should she reflect on that, Lady Thatcher can remember with pride her efforts to push those measures through this House during our debates on the Single European Act.

It is essential for the British Government to make it clear that there will be times when it will be in Britain's interest to have a series of strong Community institutions. We would not wish there to be subsidiarity in the single market programme. If that were to happen, some preventionism and protectionism would re-emerge, particularly in France and Germany, in industries in which we have spent some years trying to break down such attitudes.

In terms of qualified majority voting and the single market programme, Britain has hardly ever been out-voted. Unless those points are properly explained, the British public will not understand why we have been in favour of strong European institutions. Nor will they understand why a valuable aspect of the Maastricht treaty is the fact that we are proposing to strengthen the powers of the European Court of Justice to make sure that member states which agree an action in the Council of Ministers do not then evade its implementation in their respective countries. The ability to fine is a cornerstone of that part of the Maastricht treaty. It strengthens a European Community institution, and it is in Britain's interest for that to happen.

A great triumph for the Prime Minister during Britain's presidency has been the progress to date in the GATT round, an issue of perhaps disproportionate importance to Britain because of our nature as a trading country. His determination has seen it through to the present stage. The Prime Minister has added strength because the European Community is negotiating as one. Once the European Council has asked the Commission to negotiate a common position in the GATT round and the Commission has

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returned with a unanimous recommendation, it is possible for there to be qualified majority voting in the Council for the acceptance of the GATT position. That, of course, is precisely why the French are now looking at whether the Luxembourg compromise can be taken out and dusted off —rather embarrassing for President Mitterrand if he decided to go that far.

I shall not go too far down that track, as I do not want to affect the very delicate negotiations which may be going on between the British Government and the French Government. The point that I am making is that it is vital for the British people to know not only about the success of our British Prime Minister in getting this far on the GATT round, but that this is a case in which strong Community institutions work in Britain's favour. That is something that it would be well worth my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, who I see is in his place, making clear in the run-up to the Edinburgh summit.

We must be quite self-confident about the European Community. It is not something that threatens us: it is something which, when we are confident, we can use to our advantage. If we say that with a great deal of pride, it is because we believe that it is to our advantage and therefore to the advantage of many other people within the Community; but they will know that only if we say it positively. That is why there are so many positive Europeans on this side of the House, certainly dominating the Chamber on this side of the House at the moment.

Another aspect of the Maastricht treaty which we should note is the creation, as an official institution, of the Court of Auditors. That, too, is a British initiative and, again, it establishes a strengthening of the institutions of the Community which will look after many of the aspects that have concerned people in this country. I notice that the massive bundle of papers, which the Foreign Secretary has rightly said is for the benefit of the House, despite its weight, contains a report from the Select Committee on European Legislation on the report of the Court of Auditors for 1990. There are several recommendations in that which lead to a strengthening of the position of the Court of Auditors.

There is a further point which I think is very important in the context of Britain's interests. We very much welcome those members of the European Free Trade Area which wish to apply for membership of the Community. It is in Britain's interest that they apply. The whole process of negotiation of the ratification of the European economic area leading on to the negotiations for full membership depends very much on Britain taking the lead. The process of negotiation is in danger of being delayed unless the House moves fairly rapidly forward through the process of ratification of the Maastricht treaty. Until we ratify, there will be great areas of uncertainty and I believe that that will delay the effective handling of the negotiations with those countries.

It is in our own interest that those countries join as soon as possible, because they will all be net contributors. A balance within the Community where there is a preponderance of net contributors will go a long way towards resolving the kind of debates that we shall have at Edinburgh and beyond on the Delors plans and other aspects of the Community budget. There will be greater self-interest within the Community in seeing how money is spent and this will greatly assist the negotiating position of my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General, who is present on the Government Front Bench today.

A recent report by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was reprinted in a document in the other place, which I cannot quote, but the indications there were that all the nations which were to apply—Austria, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland—would be net contributors to the Community budget, particularly Sweden and Switzerland. This is quite an important tactical point, for a different reason.

The Danes are facing difficulties. The British Government have been very influential in trying to build bridges with Denmark, but when the Danish people consider their final position they will have to consider not only a Community with 11 members—I include Britain, because I hope that we shall proceed to Third Reading in this place by May, regardless of the Danish timetable—but a Community anxious to welcome other nations which surround it.

We, of course, would very much like Denmark to become positive about the Community. I am sure that we can deal with some of the Danes' worries and, in a legally binding form, tricky though that may be, with certain aspects of their worries about citizenship.

The reality is that the European Community needs to pull together: it needs to be stronger, and it needs to be stronger on a wider basis than the Twelve. If it is stronger and pulls together, it has a chance of coping more effectively with the economic problems which it faces at the moment. It is also in a much better position in a world which is increasingly uncertain and in which we shall be welcoming shortly a new American president who, however good he proves to be, is certainly, from some of the statements that he has made, a good deal more introverted in terms of policies than past Republican presidents have perhaps been.

This is a time for Europe to pull together and be strong; it is a time for the House to be positive about Europe; and it is a time to get on with ratification and remove one more uncertainty.

7.16 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) except to reject the charge in his measured speech that there was unprincipled opposition on that now famous night. However, I agree with him about the objective of rebuilding the British economy and, to do that, the European economy.

I wish to speak on regional policy and industrial affairs. Frankly, my constituency and the surrounding sub-region will always need a regional policy, and so will Wales. Certainly Wales needed that £22 million RECHAR money recently allocated, at long last. To lose either assisted area status or access to Common Market structural funds would be disastrous. We appreciate the access to money from objective 2 status and the grants that accrue from development area status.

Since the Prime Minister took his high office, unemployment in Wales has risen by 35,000. Currently, my constituency has some 3,000 citizens unemployed and it has been worked out that the annual cost of keeping them unemployed and on the dole is some £27 million. For the 127,000 people in Wales who are unemployed, the annual bill is more than £1·1 billion. Even worse, in some respects, over the past two years Wales has lost 18,000 precious, almost priceless, manufacturing jobs. There are 18 people seeking every job vacancy in Wales. On my own Deeside, nearly 800 citizens are long-term unemployed.

As part of my case for retaining objective 2 status and assisted area status, I would say that in north-east Wales we have seen the loss of 1,100 Brymbo Steelworks jobs, 240 British Steel jobs at Shotton; 270 British Aerospace jobs at Broughton; 240 cement jobs at Penyffordd; and 80 jobs at the Brother factory near Wrexham. Also, in my constituency, a large construction company, McFadden, has gone into receivership and some 300 jobs are involved. Nearby, on the coast, the famous Hotpoint factory is scheduled to close. The famous Laura Ashley factory near my constituency has closed, with the loss of 240 garment-making jobs. To sum up, we have lost far more jobs than the new manufacturing jobs that we have gained.

My constituency, the sub-region and the county need the retention of development area status. We want continued access to Common Market moneys under objective 2 operational programmes. We need the continued reclamation of derelict land and the building of a new River Dee crossing, financed, we hope, in part by Common Market funds. We want the Deeside industrial park to be extended by 400 acres, as proposed by the Welsh Development Agency and Alyn and Deeside district council. We need more industrial units, more commercial premises and a new access road into Deeside industrial park. We also want a more vigorous overall economic strategy.

If we are to implement a vigorous economic strategy, we shall need continued access to objective 2 status moneys and assisted area status. We need European money to electrify the railway from Holyhead to Crewe, to create work and to attract more inward investment to north Wales.

Fortunately, we have made progress after Europe's largest ever redundancy programme at Shotton steelworks, in which more than 8,000 steelworkers lost their jobs under British Steel between Christmas 1979 and Easter 1980. It caused much trauma and hardship in my constituency when the blow fell in 1980. Since then, my constituency has fought back hard, and several thousand new jobs have been established on the Deeside industrial park. We have attracted some inward investment against tough competition and now have companies such as Toyota, Sharp, Hoya, Brother and Optec. We are glad of that inward investment, but we cannot be complacent, as much remains to be done.

Touche Ross has made an analysis of my constituency and the whole sub-region and county. Its report highlights the fragility of the local economy. Our case for retaining assisted area status is that Clwyd is in the worst third in Great Britain for unemployment. Based on the 1991 census, unemployment in Clwyd is nearly 25 per cent. for men and approaching 40 per cent. for women. That position has been deteriorating in the past 18 months.

The reports also says that the structure of employment in Clwyd is weighted heavily towards an economic sector in decline. That is most prominent in manufacturing, on which the region is 39 per cent. more dependent than the average for Great Britain. The pattern of employment is uneven, with most manufacturing concentrated in the east of the county. The region has below average gross domestic product per head when compared to the rest of the United Kingdom. Earnings are significantly below the national average and Clwyd has a small share of the country's senior, well-paid jobs.

Furthermore, new company formation is below the national average, although recent economic improvements resulting from a policy of pursuing inward investment have brought down unemployment. However, the jobs created have often been in low-wage, low-skilled assembly work and, thus, the local wealth creation that should have resulted from that activity has yet to materialise fully.

There are no higher education facilities in the immediate area. Rail communications remain poor and the region is distant from major markets and EC ports, a point that was made effectively by the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris).

The recent economic downturn has stalled and, in many cases, reversed earlier economic recovery. Unemployment in the county has risen sharply in the past two years. Recent Government policy decisions are not helping. My locality is threatened with the possible closure of the last remaining colliery in Clwyd, at Point of Ayr. If the closure goes ahead, it will mean 500 direct job losses and probably the additional loss of 1,000 local jobs. It would be wrong to close Point of Ayr colliery, which has done everything asked of it. I hope that the review will show its integrity by reprieving that colliery, among others.

We have suffered recent cuts in steel production by British Steel, which is still a major employer at Shotton. However, I warn the House that the steel industry in Europe is under massive pressure and that British Steel is in a serious predicament. A 20 per cent. cut in production has been imposed and only last week it announced losses in excess of £50 million. There is continued uncertainty over aircraft production, especially the executive jet at the British Aerospace factory in my constituency at Broughton. We need a regional policy, and we need to rebuild the British and Welsh economies.

The House may not know that, in the travel-to-work area of Aberdare, male unemployment stands at 19 per cent; in Bangor and Caernarfon in north Wales, it is 15 per cent; in Bridgend, it is 14 per cent; in Cardiff, it is 13 per cent; in Holyhead in Anglesey, it is a staggering 15 per cent; in Porthmadoc and Ffestiniog, it is 11 per cent; in Shotton, Flint and Rhyl—my travel-to-work area—it is 11 per cent; in the city of Swansea, it is 14 per cent; and in the town of Wrexham it is at 12 per cent.

Those figures are getting worse. I believe that the serious rise in unemployment throughout Wales is more than disturbing. It is an alarming development, as we see the loss of important manufacturing jobs, the steel industry under major pressure, and the coal industry on the brink of extinction. All the hard work and benefits of attracting inward investment are undermined when indigenous manufacturing jobs are swept away.

Wales must continue to have assisted area status grants. I warn the Government that they should not take away that hard-won status from the assisted area map of Wales. If they do, it will guarantee the loss of more manufacturing jobs. Wales should have continued and more access to European moneys. When we debate regional policy, it concerns the livelihood of communities and their future. There will be no future for manufacturing in Wales if the Government make the mistake of withdrawing one assisted area from the map.

7.28 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I hope that the House will listen to the plea by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) and to some of the crystal ball speeches, foreseeing what will happen, which have been made on both sides of the House in the past couple of hours. My speech will be much different and a little shorter, as I wish to concentrate on the rules and regulations emanating from the European Community which are helping to destroy more and more businesses in Britain.

Nearly 30,000 small businesses went to the wall in the first nine months of 1992—5,500 of them in the south west. That is an increase of 42 per cent. over last year in the south-west. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary spoke, in his excellent opening speech, of the over-zealous application of European Community rules and regulations. As a result of regulations emanating mostly from Europe, industries in the south-west have the most depressed and pessimistic employment prospects in the country. Many of the businesses blame the excess of regulations for the increasing gloom.

It is easy for blue chip companies to lobby Strasbourg and Brussels, but the little man in the little firm is plagued by regulations and cannot lobby in the same way. I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are familiar with DG23. It is not a spy ring, but a unit in Brussels—part of the British Government's commitment to the Community—responsible for the fiche d'impact system. As the House will know, the fiche d'impact system is the European equivalent of compliance cost assessment in the Department of Trade and Industry—the deregulation unit.

Nobody quite knows what the fiche d'impact system is. I have tried to find out from the Library, where I was passed around half a dozen people who were not familiar with it. They could not tell me where it appeared in DG23, how many people worked in it, or how much it cost to run. Does my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General have more information on it than the House of Commons Library has? Is it larger than the deregulation unit? Is it better? Does it do a different job? Does every country in Europe have one? How is the impact of it on each country evaluated and by whom?

The House has a responsibility to know more about the system and to learn exactly what its officials in a Government Department does. It seems that, every time we pass a new regulation, it has an adverse effect on industries in Britain. I wonder whether the same is true in all other European countries. Are they all finding that every time a regulation is passed in Europe it helps to undermine and ultimately destroy their small firms? If that is so, DG23 is an odd institution, as it appears to agree to regulations which undermine the success of industry.

When my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General winds up the debate, will he see whether DG23 could contain a provision that a percentage of European money should be spent on re-examining, 12 months later, the directives that the fiche d'impact system has considered? We need a sort of monitoring process to see how effective or ineffective the European regulations have been on our industry.

Our officials have much to answer for in respect of the problems faced by many of our small firms. The general economy is blamed, but the problem is more the fault of the regulations emanating from Europe. For example, new regulations have forced out of business many of the abattoirs in my constituency and those of other hon. Members in the south-west. One of my constituents told me that, as a result of an EC directive, he cannot buy a pork chop with the kidney in place. I do not know whether that is a myth or whether there is a new directive stating that a pork chop cannot be bought with a kidney in place.

Some butchers say that they cannot use ordinary sawdust on the floor, but have to use dust-free, flame-resistant and biodegradable sawdust. Doubtless it also has to be disease-free as a precaution against Dutch elm disease. Two independent small butchers in Devon have gone out of business. Some people will say that that is because of the economy, but the butchers say that they cannot afford, and are not prepared to cope with, the endless expense required to comply with EC directives from Brussels.

Another company complained about patent law. Before the European Community, legislation protected a product in this country for 20 years at a cost of about £5,000. A representative from a company called Kirby Devon said that there is now a European patent office, based in Munich. He said that the company now has to file a patent, costing £5,000—not just in Britain, but in every one of the European countries, at another £5,000 each. I cannot believe that that is true, but if it is, why are the fiche d'impact officials doing nothing about it, and why did they allow the legislation in the first place?

A representative from another of the companies in my constituency, 1st Class Roofing, has told me of the ever-increasing bureaucracy surrounding the disposal of rubbish. Apparently, there is so much paper in the new regulation that a new tip has had to be created to dispose of the paper produced by the regulation. A licence is required to carry rubbish, then tickets have to be purchased to dispose of the rubbish at tips, a ticket is given to the tip operator and a form is then printed in triplicate. All of that paper has to be disposed of, and new tips are being created to dispose of the paper emanating from the regulation.

A representative from a retail store with three retail outlets said that the annual cost of implementing the health and safety regulations was £55,000 a year, and that of implementing the building regulations, £30,000. The store wanted to provide a creche and was told that it had to subsidise it at a cost of £400 a week.

In addition, there is the Electricity Act 1989, the Environmental Protection Act 1990, hygiene regulations, and the Food Safety Act 1990. Ice cream manufacturers in Devon are being pursued by the water authority. Another retailer feels persecuted by the Government because of the mountain of statistical information required. The construction industry is overwhelmed by new regulations.

I know that my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General will probably say that not all the regulations emanate from Europe. He is probably right, but the regulations are being pursued with such vigour and enthusiasm by public sector officials and staff, not just in Westminster but in town and county halls throughout the country, that our industries are being damaged and their profitability is being destroyed. Will my right hon. Friend say something about that when he winds up? If nothing is done about it, the regulations will continue to destroy and undermine the profitability of our industries.

As I understand it, subsidiarity means taking the decision at the most appropriate level. If EC regulations affecting small businesses are not worked out correctly by the fiche d'impact staff in a manner sensitive to the needs of local communities, most of those regulations will continue to cripple firms. However, I am concerned that the regulations do not seem to have the same effect in other EC countries.

Why are we in Britain applying rules and regulations while Greece, Portugal and Spain—to mention just three countries—do not seem to be imposing the same regulations at the same speed? When I put that question to Ministers, they say that Britain must be the leader. It seems crazy for us to be the leader if it means that we destroy all our small firms, which the Conservative party is committed to supporting. It is crazy if, by putting into practice rules that the fiche d'impact officials in Brussels have not scrutinised carefully, we undermine our industry while Greece, Portugal and Spain carry on as though the regulations did not exist.

There should be a level playing field—to use a famous phrase—throughout Europe. Until the other countries in Europe put into practice the same regulations, whether good or bad and whether or not they have been through the fiche d'impact system, those rules should not be applied in Britain. Will my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General seriously consider the issue because I think that the House will agree that British enterprises should not suffer from regulations emanating from Brussels if other EC countries are not enforcing them?

In that way my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General could help the country out of recession. He could also ensure that council officials and the Government ease off and do not apply the rules and regulations so vigorously. The Foreign Secretary mentioned extra enthusiasm. I ask officials to exercise normal compliance so that we do not keep on punishing small firms, which have dreadful cash flow problems and cannot manage to invest more money, more man management or more training in the new rules and regulations which are constantly coming from Europe.

I said that I would keep my comments short. I think that I have made the best contribution I can in the time available.

7.40 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I shall certainly follow the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) in being brief. I want to speak specifically about one of the few working common policies in Europe, the common fisheries policy. To paraphrase Nye Bevan, because it is a working, existing policy we do not need a crystal ball to see what might happen; all we need to do is look at the book to see what has happened and what is happening.

Justice has not been done to the common fisheries policy or to the fishing industry through scrutiny by this House. A few weeks ago, rightly, we had a major debate about the future of 30,000 mining jobs throughout the United Kingdom. There are 30,000 jobs in Scotland alone dependent on the health and welfare of the fishing industry and not far off that number again in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Yet at a time when the common fisheries policy is undergoing substantial fundamental review, or perhaps even replacement—we cannot be sure because the relevant document refers to it being reviewed, replaced and amended—there has been no debate about it in the House. Major changes are being made to take forward the policy for the next 10 years, but we had to wait 10 months for the matter to be examined by the Select Committee on European Legislation. We have had no debate on the Floor of the House about the fundamental review of one of the few working common policies within the Euorpean Community. It does the House no credit that the fishing industry should be dealt with like that.

When final decisions are made, as is likely to happen at the Fisheries Council in December, the best that hon. Members from fishing constituencies can expect in the House is a brief debate immediately before the Ministers go to Brussels when, in all likelihood, decisions have already been made and we will be debating in effect a fait accompli. That is the inadequate scrutiny which the House currently gives to a major European policy which is under fundamental review.

Like many hon. Members, I am looking forward to the European summit in Edinburgh. If I interpreted correctly the world-weary speech of the Foreign Secretary, what happens outside the conference chamber may be as exciting as, if not more so than, what happens inside. I am sure that the people of Scotland will take the opportunity to display to the heads of state and the European visitors who come to our capital city the fact that the vast majority of them do not wish to tolerate a situation where fundamental decisions affecting the future of the entire continent can be made in the capital city of Scotland without the Scottish people having any direct access to the conference chamber or proper representations of their views and ideas about the future of the continent.

Among the many demonstrations, the mini-summits, the youth summits and various activities which are planned, there will be a major demonstration by the fishing community. It will be demonstrating its concerns about the review of the common fisheries policy and its opposition to the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill which is going through Parliament. Thankfully, I understand that the other place amended that measure substantially this evening. In particular, there will be a major demonstration at the inaction of Fisheries Ministers, who, by their dereliction of duty in Brussels last evening, condemned Scottish fishing communities to another five weeks of anxiety and dislocation.

Looking round the Chamber, I can see only one fisheries Member, the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy). The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), who is also present, is a substantial friend of the fishing industry. Let me explain, therefore, to hon. Members what is happening within the common fisheries policy.

In Scotland the haddock quota is exhausted and no haddock is allowed legally to be landed until the end of the year. Hon. Members may say, "That is fair enough; there must be a problem with the stock and the limitation on fishing is essential for conservation." That is not the case. The seas round Scotland are teeming with haddock. That is not just because the fishermen are catching them and discarding them dead in thousands of tonnes into the North sea, because once a fish is caught it cannot be released alive into the sea. The fishermen are not allowed to land the fish. It is also because in, their evidence to the next Fisheries Council, scientists will propose a doubling of the haddock quota in the North sea next year.

[Mr. Alex Salmond]

We had an amusing debate last week in the European Standing Committee about Hogmanay haddock. For the benefit of hon. Members, I will explain. These are haddock which, according to the official explanation, do not exist; they cannot exist because the quota system says that they do not exist, but miraculously they will materialise on 1 January when the quota will be doubled and we will be moving from a shortage to a glut. Common sense tells us that these will be the self-same haddock, but to fulfil the requirements of the quota policy, the fishermen are not allowed legally to land the haddock at present. Therefore, thousands of jobs in the fishing industry in Scotland will be subject to dislocation over the next five weeks and there will be a very bleak Christmas for many families in the fishing communities.

Dr. Godman: May I point out to the hon. Gentleman that many of my constituents believe that it is a heinous sin to discard the fish and that it is much better to sell them on the black market, even if that is illegal under European Community rules?

Mr. Salmond: It would be extremely difficult to argue that the discarding of fish dead into the North sea represents any sort of a conservation policy.

The burden of my remarks is to suggest a solution to the problem. The Foreign Secretary told us about Euromyths. He has even published a booklet to help hon. Members to understand that many of the things we hear about the European Community are not the fault of the Community but myths spread in the press and elsewhere which bring the Community into disrepute. I suggest that it is not the Euro-myths which bring the Community into disrepute but the actions and inactions of United Kingdom Ministers who fail to pursue proper negotiations within the European Community.

What should have been proposed to the Fisheries Council yesterday by the two Ministers representing the United Kingdom was a simple mechanism of borrowing forward on next year's haddock quota to solve the immediate problem and not jeopardise the long-term stability of the industry. There was precedent for such a proposal because other countries have used that exigency in the past. A vital national interest was at stake, certainly for Scotland. It is not just that 78 per cent. of the haddock caught in the North sea are part of the United Kingdom quota; the important point is that no other member state has the same vested interest in the haddock quota as the United Kingdom, and particularly Scotland. Therefore, no one had a vested interest in stopping an adjustment of the quota.

Within the Commission documents proposing the review of the fisheries policy there is a move away from annual quotas to multi-annual quotas. Therefore, there would not even have been a damaging precedent set for annual quotas, because they will disappear under the proposals of the Commission.

It would have been bad enough if Fisheries Ministers, with that wealth of argument at their disposal, had come back and told the House that they had tried but failed, but the reality of what happened in Brussels yesterday is that the issue was not even placed on the agenda by the Scottish Fisheries Minister representing the United Kingdom in negotiations. Therefore, I hope that hon. Members will understand the present anger in fishing communities in Scotland at the total dereliction of duty by the Scottish Fisheries Minister, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland.

May I now generalise from the particular. What does that example of the confusion and chaos in fisheries policy tell us? Is it a result of the common fisheries policy itself or a result of the negotiators from the United Kingdom not having enough interest in the subject to secure the common-sense solution that was available for the fishing communities? Is it an example of where subsidiarity might have applied?

There is more than enough reason to believe that the Scottish Fisheries Minister is a nice man, but has no power because he is overruled by his ministerial superior in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Certainly it is an example of where there would have been a different outcome if Scotland were an independent state within the Community. No genuine Scottish Fisheries Minister could have survived in post after having so signally failed to raise an issue of such importance at the relevant Council meeting.

I was somewhat stung earlier by the Foreign Secretary telling me that I have an old-fashioned view of the EC. I think that I have a modern view of the EC. I may have an old-fashioned view of politics. I think that Scottish Office Ministers should try to defend the interests of the industries for which they are responsible. I was stung because I cannot think of an hon. Member who is more Edwardian in his approach to politics than the Foreign Secretary. If ever there was an hon. Member who was born after his time, it is the Foreign Secretary.

The Foreign Secretary, in that way of his, waved his hand and told us to consult the documents supplied to the House and the principle of subsidiarity from the Commission. Many of us have consulted just those documents to find the following description;

> "This common sense principle therefore dictates that decisions should be taken at the level closest to the ordinary citizen and that action taken by the upper echelons of the body politic should be limited."

It goes on to say that the first application of that political principle of subsidiarity is in many cases within the states of the EC itself.

The essential hypocrisy of the Government's attitude to subsidiarity is that they believe that the principle can be applied to the relationship between the United Kingdom and our European partners without the same principle being applied within the United Kingdom. On that point of hypocrisy, I suspect that the Foreign Secretary, come the Edinburgh summit, may find that it is not "Scotch on the Rocks" but a Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary on the rocks.

7.52 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): First, I add my congratulations to those of a number of hon. Members on the Government's success in the GATT agreement. More than anything else that we might do at the moment, the successful conclusion of those five years of negotiation, involving 108 countries and 28 different agreements, will do more for world trade and prosperity than almost anything else that we might do. If that is the only success of our six months' presidency of the EC, it is a substantial success, and one to which we shall look back in time to come with much gratitude.

I also join my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn), who has clearly found something else to do at 8 o'clock in the evening, in his protest about the papers. Every hon. Member who has gone to the Vote Office to collect that great heap that is now sitting on the Table has grimaced at seeing it. However, anyone who has ever seen the monthly papers that come out of Derbyshire county council would not be in the least surprised at that quantity of paper, bearing in mind that, for every person employed by the European Commission on any of its budgets, Derbyshire county council employs two in Matlock, and very few of us can see exactly what they get up to.

A great deal of that paper has been around for a very long time, and much of it was written in London. The most incomprehensible chunk of all was written in Her Majesty's Treasury. The explanatory memorandum on the transfer of administrative appropriations says:

> "Attached to the paper are a number of annexes covering a breakdown of outside (non-statutory) staff; the criteria for converting appropriations to posts (and for the continued use of outside staff); the technical procedures to be used to incorporate administrative appropriations from Part B into Part A of the budget; and criteria for distinguishing between appropriations for studies, consultants, meetings, conferences, information and publications, which are to be transferred to Part A, and those likely to remain in Part B of the Commission's Budget."

This is an explanatory memorandum. The subject is transparency of management. If that is an explanatory memorandum, it is no good. Most of the other stuff produced by the Treasury is in the same form. The explanatory memoranda produced by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are much better and clearer and I commend their style to my colleagues in the Exchequer. Such documents appear to be written by someone with English as his third language.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my hon. Friend help the House by reading that for the record in the other Community languages, in which I am sure it will sound much better?

Mrs. Currie: I would like to bet that it is comprehensible in French, but it is not comprehensible in English, and it should be. If we are to be presented with explanatory memoranda to assist us in debating these important matters, I hope that they will be much clearer in future.

Those hon. Members, particularly Conservative Members, who have said that we should face our future in Europe with resolute, determined and positive attitudes are right. We should see the challenges that face us not as unpleasant or unacceptable, although they are difficult, but as opportunities. We should ensure that we in the United Kingdom benefit by taking advantage of those opportunities, particularly on trade.

I speak from a strong position in south Derbyshire, because the Toyota factory will soon be starting production in my constituency. It is a remarkable achievement to open a new factory so fast and with a brand new model, the Carina E—E for Europe—a redesigned model intended for the European market. That is a tremendous credit to all concerned.

Toyota is here because we are in Europe. It would not be in the United Kingdom if we were not an active and full member of the Community. It is here because, within the Community, the United Kingdom presents the most attractive business environment, with our low taxation policy, few restrictions on business and our refusal to accept the social charter. We are very much at the heart of Europe.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Has the hon. Lady seen the recent report by Ernst and Young, which says that there are some worries among would-be investors in the United Kingdom because we now seem somewhat semi-detached from the rest of Europe, and because of the double opt-out in Maastricht there is a question mark over investment? As my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said earlier, investment has dropped.

Mrs. Currie: Worries about the United Kingdom becoming semi-detached or being in any way half-hearted are a reflection of small majorities in the House. If the hon. Lady and her hon. Friends feel that way, they should be voting with us on every aspect of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill and ensuring that we have the thumping big majorities that we had on Second Reading which this country needs.

Toyota is in the United Kingdom not only because we are in Europe but because of the British approach to international business which has made such companies more welcome, unlike the French, who have spoken in hostile terms about the Japanese, and unlike the trade unions, who have called their practices alien, a comment which rankles, and which continues to hurt them.

We fought for Toyota's cars to be accepted as British and European. When I say "we", I mean that I fought for them. I went to Strasbourg. Our European Member of Parliament, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson), who is not in the House at the moment—goodness knows where he has got to—did not fight for them. The Labour Member of the European Parliament who sits for Dagenham was responsible for the proposal that Japanese vehicles built in this country would have counted as Japanese and as imports. I was pleased that I was able to go, and that we were able to have that policy thrown out.

Such action is part and parcel of meeting the challenges and of welcoming outside stimuli to this country—rather that than sit on our backsides and moan about the difficulties. Most of all, as a nation we must get out and sell not only our products but ourselves and our communities.

There are huge benefits in adopting that attitude. Toyota now employs 1,000 people in my constituency, the unemployment rate in which was 6·7 per cent. in October and falling. Of the 10 Derbyshire constituencies, unemployment is falling in six and static in three. Unemployment is rising only in the constituency of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). The fastest fall in unemployment last month was in the constituency of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett)—but you would not hear her say that.

That improvement is partly due to the impact not only of Toyota but of other locally based international businesses such as Nestlé, Pirelli, Asea Brown Boveri, Stanton—which is now owned by St. Gobain—and GeGa Lotz, a German company. Unemployment has also fallen nearby in Burton-on-Trent and north-west Leicestershire.

Derbyshire could have retained—as several hon. Members suggested—the dominance of old, nationalised, subsidised and protected industries. It could have begged for subsidies, but it never has done so. South Derbyshire does not receive subsidies, enjoy special status, or get

[Mrs. Currie]

grants. We do not want grants, believing that draws attention to problems rather than to the opportunities for inward investors and business people.

Derbyshire chose instead to cultivate international businesses as the motor heart of Europe, and it did so. I will not mislead the House—the transition was painful, but very worthwhile, and I commend it. I would like to see the same positive attitude pervade the rest of our great trading nation—and that must start with the Government. If they are concerned about the negative tone of some of their supporters—a tiny minority in the House—they must consider whether they have only themselves to blame.

Every time that Maastricht or some other European policy is presented in a negative way, a few more decide against it. If we talk about subsidiarity not as an essential clarification and strengthening of the relationships between nations and central organisations but in negative terms—as "restricting the powers of faceless bureaucrats" or "the centralising tendencies of the Brussels machine" —which is the phrase used by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—the Government should not be surprised if a few of my right hon. and hon. Friends say, "We hear you, John. We are with you, Douglas. We will vote against the lot."

If every effort to bring down invisible trade barriers is portrayed as Brussels bureaucrats interfering in the noise emitted by lawnmowers or motor bikes, of course some commentators will think that the whole thing is a pettifogging waste of time. Lawnmowers are made in my area, and we needed to bring down those invisible trade barriers. I regard it as insulting that that aspect—which resulted in a success in enabling and improving trade for this country—appeared in the Foreign Office booklet "Euromyths". I received an apology, but I hope that reference will be removed in the next edition and that it will instead concentrate on successes.

I am proud to be a founder member of a group of Conservative Back Benchers who are positive Europeans, and who numbered 75 at the count yesterday. We outnumber the sceptics two to one, and are otherwise known as "Whitney's wonders" after my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), who is not in his place at the moment, and who yesterday was elected as our chairman. I pay tribute to him and to my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) for calling that group together.

We urge the Government to get on with the Maastricht Bill and to secure its Third Reading as soon as possible —certainly by May—and not link it to whatever goes on in Denmark or anywhere else.

Why should this proud nation hide behind any other country? Why should our country even dream of being the last in Europe to ratify the Maastricht treaty—particularly when the treaty that we are now debating and discussing is different from, and better than, that achieved by other nations—who are jolly envious.

I urge the Government to be altogether more positive about Europe from here on in. If I may phrase this in the double negative style that seems to float around Front Benches, I beg the Government not to forget that they should not get so bogged down in the detail that they ignore the necessity of explaining to the British people and the House the broad thrust of what they are trying to achieve and their objectives. With all the talk of budgetary discipline, auditors, subsidiarity and the rest, we are trying to build a Europe that is strong, competent, and free.

I urge the Government not to get so hung up on the problems that currently face the Community that they fail to promote and to draw attention to the Community's hugely beneficial benefits, of which my constituency has concrete evidence right now. Those benefits are the fruits of previous changes fought through the House, such as the Single European Act, which in retrospect were enormously helpful. The results that they brought in my own area are leading to growth and prosperity—the like of which we have never seen. I commend those thoughts to the House.

8.5 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): It is one of those nice ironies of parliamentary life that I follow the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), because in due course I shall be leaving the European Parliament to concentrate on my work in the House, whereas I understand that the hon. Lady is about to abandon her constituents for the prospect of a seat in the European Parliament.

Mrs. Edwina Currie: I am going the right way.

Mr. Hoon: The hon. Lady will at least be able to fight for her constituents, wherever they may be, from the Floor of the European Parliament—rather than from its gallery, where she did her fighting on behalf of Toyota. In any event, I wish the hon. Lady every success in her efforts to secure a candidature, but I warn her that the present opinion polls do not look particularly favourable for Conservative candidates for the European elections in 1994.

Rarely has any presidency of the European Community been subject to so much criticism as that of the present British leadership. Usually, disappointment with the performance of any country's presidency is expressed only at the end of the six-month term of office—and then only in muted diplomatic niceties about the numbers of directives passed or agreements reached. Sadly, we have open, clear, and condign criticism of the British Government's handling of a series of Community issues.

Central to those issues are the related budgetary and financial questions which are the essential subject matter of today's debate. The Government consistently criticise the way in which the Community spends its income, so it was not unreasonable to expect during the British presidency evidence from the Government that they are sorting out the interlocking difficulties currently on the agenda of the Community's Finance Ministers.

The 1993 Community budget appears to be heading for considerable difficulty because of the wide gap between the Council's position—after the ruthless cuts in the Commission's draft budget, in which the British Government lead the way—and that evident in amendments tabled by the European Parliament. Many analysts suggest that that will lead to the budget being rejected, the collapse of the budgetary process and further difficulty for the United Kingdom presidency.

Other issues include continuing discussion about the Delors 2 package, particularly in the light of its recent revision by the Commission, and negotiations for a new inter-institutional agreement to replace that which lapses at the end of this year.

I shall deal first with the 1993 budget. It is not clear whether the British Government have accepted the arguments in favour of a real strategy for European growth backed by funds from the European Community budget. If the British Government endorsed such a strategy, that must have been received by European Finance Ministers with a mixture of amusement and incredulity as those same Finance Ministers have heard British Governments consistently oppose and even refuse to discuss plans for employment and economic growth throughout the European Community. We understand that until recently the British Government even opposed the idea of economic growth being a separate item on the agenda for the Edinburgh summit.

Perhaps we are right to remain cautious about the prospects of some blinding conversion on the road to Brussels for our Government. After all, during consideration of the 1993 draft Community budget, the British Government led the Council of Ministers into a series of deep cuts in expenditure on the very programmes which could form the core of any European package for recovery and growth.

The British Government have cut at least £2·8 billion from the total budget set out by the European Commission. It is interesting to measure what has been reported about the Government's so-called commitment to European economic recovery against the individual items in the draft budget which they and their colleagues in the Council of Ministers have cut. The Government have cut £240 million from regional and social spending. Previously, under a series of different presidencies, regional and social spending was generally left untouched. The Government, however, think it appropriate to cut £240 million off the Community's budget for regional and social spending.

The Government have cut £320 million off the Commission's figures for research spending at a time when almost everyone accepts the importance of further research to enable European industry to be truly competitive, especially in relation to far eastern countries. If we are to be competitive in new technology and electronics, we need the research spending that has been cut by the Council of Ministers.

A further £160 million has been cut from a series of projects covering education and training, environment policy and consumer protection, all of which are vital to the continuing health of the European economy.

I shall make a comment about one other area of council cuts in the light of the Foreign Secretary's opening statement. He waxed rather lyrical about the need for openness in the European Community. He spoke about the need for information about Europe and for the people of Europe to understand the European process. Unfortunately, his remarks about openness and information must be measured against the determination of his Government to preside over a cut of almost 50 per cent. in the European Commission's information budget. That is hardly an appropriate way to ensure that the people of Europe become more informed about the processes of the European Community.

The Council of Ministers has slashed the proposed cohesion fund from £1·25 billion to zero. That money was aimed precisely at the growth and convergence which the Government say that the Community needs. The money was promised as the price of agreement over Maastricht. It is compensation for the poorer outlying areas of the European Community and the centralising tendency of Maastricht. Of course, the money is an essential part of the Delors 2 package which has been revised by the European Commission.

Mr. Milligan: The hon. Gentleman is complaining about the cohesion fund. Is he aware that the cohesion fund cannot be set up until the Maastricht treaty is ratified because it is part of the treaty? If he wants to see the fund set up, the best way to do that is to persuade his Front Bench to give full support to the ratification of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Hoon: I am grateful for that observation. I anticipate that the position of the Labour party on the constitutional process of ratifying the Maastricht treaty will remain very much what it was on Second Reading. We shall not be diverted in the way in which the Government want us to be diverted—along paths established solely for the benefit of the Conservative party to paper over the deep cracks that have emerged in that party.

We want to see a cohesion fund as part of the Maastricht agreement. Clearly, we also want to see a policy for the European Community which emphasises not just centralisation but the contribution that can be made to the Community by all of the countries working together, equally. That is why we have considerable sympathy for the Delors 2 package, which is the second subject that the Government must address.

What is the Government's position now, in the light of the revision of the Delors 2 package which has been agreed by the European Commission? The Government have wanted consistently to provide a longer-term perspective for European Community financing. The reaction that the Commission have consistently had from the Government is scorn. The Government have consistently rubbished the efforts of the European Commission to put the enlargement of the Community into perspective and provide assistance to eastern Europe at a time when they are saying that economic development in eastern Europe and enlargement of the European Community would be a good thing. Yet when the Government are faced with proposals to implement those principles, they suddenly find that they cannot go along with them.

So there is a matter on which it would be possible for the Government, leading the European Community in the way the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South advocated, to put into practice the leadership of Europe that is so vital. It is necessary to have extra money to enable countries to develop and to enable areas which have only recently been released from totalitarian Governments to develop economies of the sort which I assume that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South wants to see. Extra funds can be made available only if there is a commitment by countries such as the United Kingdom and other countries in the European Community.

The European Commission has backed down considerably in its original programme for the cohesion fund. It backed down in a way which is, frankly, unlikely to find favour with the European Parliament. The European Parliament has stressed the need for a substantial increase in that part of the Community budget which is available for eastern Europe and development. It has also stressed the importance of making more of the present Community budget available for internal policies. It remains to be seen whether the Commission's revision of the cohesion fund

[Mr. Hoon]

will find favour with the European Parliament. That is where the Council and the British Government need to direct their arguments in the budgetary process. They need to find an agreement which will satisfy the European Parliament.

The Council and the British Government must satisfy the European Parliament with a new inter-institutional agreement. The 1988 guidelines lapse at the end of 1992, at the end of the British presidency. Therefore, it would have been sensible, and one could have expected the British presidency to be well under way in the process of reaching a new inter-institutional agreement for 1993 and the years beyond. Sadly, however, that appears to be far from the case. The negotiations involving the Council, the Commission and the Parliament seem to have made modest progress to date. There is a meeting tomorrow between the Council and members of the parliamentary budget committee, but no one is confident that any real agreement will result from the meeting or, indeed, that any agreement will be reached before the end of the financial year.

A new inter-institutional agreement is a priority for the Commission and the European Parliament. It remains to be seen whether a new agreement is a real priority for the Council. Without a commitment to the Delors 2 package as part of the arrangement, an agreement is unlikely to find favour with either the European Commission or the European Parliament.

The package must involve measures to improve the industrial competitiveness of the European Community. As the Foreign Secretary said earlier, it must involve the development of trans-European networks in transport, telecommunications and energy. However, those policies need funding to make them work. So far, the Government have been strong on saying that the ideas are good but extraordinarily weak on putting into place the financial support which could make them happen.

Those are precisely the areas which have been hit hardest by the Council's revision of the Commission's draft budget for 1993. It is extraordinarily difficult to take seriously the suggestion by Conservative Members that the present Government are deeply committed to the European Community; given an opportunity to demonstrate that commitment in the context of the 1993 budget debate, the Government ducked the responsibility.

I want to see real leadership from the British Government in relation to the financial and budgetary difficulties faced by the Community. They could use their presidency to sort out clearly, on behalf of the Council, problems whose solution would gain them widespread support across the Community. I suggest a modest package of measures which would go a long way towards resolving the three main areas of difficulty.

First, there should be an agreement on the cohesion fund, and a doubling of the structural funds, to provide employment and training across the Community. Secondly, there should be a restructuring programme to take account of the employment consequences of cuts in defence spending. Thirdly, there should be a programme to ensure improvements in vocational training across the Community. Finally, there should be a commitment to the Community's responsibility to the countries of eastern Europe—and, indeed, those of the developing world—at the level suggested by the Commission in its draft 1993 budget.

If the Government have the courage and conviction to adopt such a straightforward and sensible package, their present difficulties within the Community will disappear. The package would appeal to the European Parliament and would lead to a swift settlement of any difficulties remaining over the 1993 budget; it would endorse the main elements of the Delors 2 package; and it would set in place the building blocks for a new inter-institutional agreement. That would be a real achievement for the British presidency in its six months.

8.21 pm

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): By and large, Opposition Members' speeches have been couched in constituency terms, and that of the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) was no exception. They have contained pleas for more help for steel, shipbuilding, fisheries or regions. Taken together, however, they carry a clear message—that there should be higher public spending and higher borrowing. I do not believe that that would work in Europe, for the same reason that it would not work in this country: it would mean higher taxation and higher interest rates. Such an approach is not the best way in which to create jobs; it is the best way in which to stop recovery in its tracks.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) heaped on the Government much abuse for what he said that they had failed to do during the British presidency. He said, for example, that they had failed to deal with the problem of unemployment. It is a bit rich to hold the British presidency responsible for rising unemployment across Europe. The hon. Gentleman does not seem to have noticed that unemployment is also rising in Japan, the United States and, indeed, every industrialised country in the world.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has forgotten what happened under the last Labour presidency of the Community, which I had the misfortune to witness as a journalist in Brussels. It is difficult to remember a time when this country was more unpopular in Europe. Hon. Members may recall the time in the 1970s when a Labour Government opposed direct elections to the European Parliament, and opposed not just our joining the European monetary system but the very creation of that system. Then, Labour was opposed to a common energy policy—and, of course, it faced economic catastrophe at home. I do not think that comparisons based on presidential success befit Labour Members.

I believe that today we have some reason to be proud of our achievements in Europe, if we consider those achievements over a longer period. When we joined the European Community, we joined a Community which was primarily agricultural, paying very high prices to prop up French and German farmers. We joined paying a wholly disproportionate amount into the European budget. Now, that Community is slowly but surely changing: in the six months of the British presidency, a number of significant alterations have been made.

First, there has been a change in the budget. Under the leadership of my noble Friend Baroness Thatcher, we made significant reductions in the British contribution, amounting to £14 billion over the period concerned. I consider it vital that the British abatement is maintained, but I also think it important for us to resist excessive public spending of the kind proposed in the Delors 2 package. Someone must pay for it: it is not a free ride.

It is significant that, when British Ministers talk of excessive spending, waste and fraud in the Community, they now have allies—most notably the Germans. I was surprised to hear the hon. Member for Ross and Cromarty (Mr. Kennedy) say, when challenged on who should pay more towards regional spending, that he thought that Britain was not paying enough into the European budget.

Mr. Kennedy *rose*——

Mr. Milligan: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to explain.

Mr. Kennedy: On a point of fact, I am the Member of Parliament for Ross, Cromarty and Skye; but let us leave aside that particular principle of additionality. I was merely making the point that, when it comes to nation state contributions, this country has constantly abused the principle of additionality by replacing projects that would otherwise have gone ahead, and making them additional in the eyes of the Commission. I was criticising the way in which the system has been operated by the Treasury, both historically and currently.

Mr. Milligan: I am delighted to hear that clarification. I take it that the hon. Gentleman thinks that we are not paying enough, and also thinks that we should reduce the amount that we pay to the Community budget!

Incidentally, it is an unhappy fact that our gross national product is now below 90 per cent. of the Community average, which will make us eligible for payments under the cohesion fund if the Maastricht treaty goes through. I hope that Ministers will not be too timid in applying the fund. It may be embarrassing that our GNP is below 90 per cent. of the average, but, if there is money for Britain, I hope that we shall put in for it.

Secondly, there has been reform of the common agricultural policy. We have made great strides in the past few years, mainly because of the freeze in prices, the introduction of quotas and the reduction of agricultural output; but I believe that the GATT agreement will constitute a decisive step towards CAP reform.

Then there is enlargement. We are now quite close to an agreement to admit Austria, Sweden and Finland, and —I hope—eastern European countries soon after that. The sooner that we ratify the Maastricht treaty in the House, the sooner we can begin enlargement negotiations. As the first three countries to join will be net contributors to the budget, this country has a direct financial interest in their joining as soon as possible—which is a further reason for our ratifying sooner rather than later.

The concept of the single market is very much a British concept, to which Lord Cockfield contributed in particular. It is about to become a reality in January.

Finally, there is subsidiarity—a new idea, developed over the past 18 months, which is very much in harmony with the traditional British idea of trying to reduce the influence of bureaucrats and to decentralise the Community.

I believe that subsidiarity is the key to why the Maastricht treaty should be ratified. Many hon. Members have asked what it actually means: is it legally enforceable? There are some doubts about whether a few paragraphs in the treaty are clear. If hon. Members want to understand what subsidiarity really means, they should go to Brussels, and visit the Commission and the various delegations—as I did a couple of months ago with my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth). They will be amazed at the change in attitude among national delegations. It is no longer just the British, the Danes and the French who are canvassing for subsidiarity; the Germans are doing the same. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary pointed out, Chancellor Kohl has now strongly embraced the concept, and is actively campaigning in favour of it.

If hon. Members visit the Commission building, they will find that the number of propositions for Community law has been reduced by two thirds. I pay tribute to Jacques Delors. I know that that may seem heresy to some of my hon. Friends——

Mr. Whitney: They have all gone to dinner.

Mr. Milligan: I am happy to hear it.

In the past 12 months, Mr. Delors has radically changed the Commission's approach, and has demanded that every proposal that comes to his desk should have a piece of paper attached to it explaining why the proposal should be dealt with at European rather than national level. That is one reason why the number of proposals has dramatically declined.

Mr. Delors has also made one decision that my constituents particularly appreciate. Hon. Members may remember the dispute about the completion of the M3 at Twyford down, and the Commission's suggestion that it knew better than the British Government which side of St. Catherine's hill the motorway should go. I accept that the Commission and the Council have a right to interfere in environment policy if we are producing acid rain by pumping sulphur dioxide into our atmosphere, but it is absurd for the Community to try to decide matters such as the route for the M3. I pay tribute to Mr. Delors for withdrawing the Commission's intervention, in the new spirit of subsidiarity.

I hope that we shall make further progress on subsidiarity at the Edinburgh summit—that we shall put flesh on the bones. In particular, I hope that there will be a hit list of directives that are to be repealed. I hope, too, that there will be a new Council procedure to enable people to blow the whistle on an unnecessary directive at any point in the discussions and that there will be a clearer definition of how subsidiarity might apply.

Niggling regulations are, I believe, irritating our constituents. Most people in this country accept that, when we are dealing with a problem such as Yugoslavia or currency movements it is right to do so on a European scale, but they cannot accept niggling intervention in what my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary called the nooks and crannies of public life. If we cannot put flesh on the bones of subsidiarity, it will make an enormous difference to public opinion.

We must be careful, however, not to take the principle of subsidiarity too far. Britain has an interest in interference in certain areas. If money spent by the Community is wasted, or it olive tree growers in Italy indulge in fraud, we want Commission officials to interfere. If there is protectionism inside the internal market, with the result that the French or the Greeks are

[Mr. Milligan]

keeping British goods out of their countries for no good reason, we want the Commission to interfere. Subsidiarity, therefore, need to be defined carefully.

The best definition of subsidiarity is that the Community should take action when problems of great significance cross national borders. Recently, the Government put forward a proposition to harmonise the rules on the vaccination of racing pigeons. One has to admit that racing pigeons cross borders, but it is not a significant issue. Although there may be issues on which it is thought that action is needed, there is no common Community interest there.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that in some parts of the country that lie further north than my hon. Friend's constituency, the export of first-class racing pigeons is an important trade.

Mr. Milligan: I defer to my hon. Friend's great knowledge and I appreciate that what she says is correct, but I believe that exports could continue without there having to be common rules on the vaccination of racing pigeons.

My hon. Friend referred earlier to lawnmowers. That is a very good example of what I mean. When I worked as a journalist in Brussels, there was a story that the Commission was trying to harmonise the noise made by lawnmowers. Everybody roared with laughter and said, "What could be more absurd? This is a parody and amounts to unnecessary Commission interference."

Three weeks later I had to write an article about barriers to British exports. I telephoned the Confederation of British Industry and said, "Can you give me a practical example of a barrier to British exports on which the Community ought to be taking action?" The reply was, "Yes, lawnmowers. The rules in Germany are so designed that noise can be emitted only by German-made lawnmowers. If we are ever to sell British lawnmowers in Germany, we need to harmonise the rules." Absurd rules can be of no practical advantage to this country. We need to define subsidiarity carefully so that we do not prevent the making of rules and regulations that would greatly benefit this country.

The Edinburgh summit will have a heavy agenda. It will be an enormous success if it can get through half the agenda. Subsidiarity is the key to success. If we can reach agreement on subsidiarity, the British presidency will end not with a whimper but with a triumph.

8.23 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Having listened to the debate, I am more than ever convinced that the dilemma for the Government in their European policy is that they are unable to obtain the agreement of their supporters on whether Britain should be at the heart of Europe, or whether we should have some kind of special semi-detached status on the periphery of Europe. The dilemma hampers the Government at every stage. It will continue seriously to weaken our position within the European Community for the foreseeable future.

The single market, to which the Foreign Secretary referred when he opened the debate, is a good example of the Government's illogicality and inconsistency. They claim to be enthusiastic about the creation of the single European market and about the need for a level playing field within it. However, the single market is about four freedoms: freedom of movement of goods, services, capital and people. The Government seem to believe in a level playing field for the first three freedoms but not in a level playing field for the fourth freedom—people and their working conditions.

The Government's position on the social charter and the opt-out from the social chapter undermines their wish to create a level playing field in other areas. Other European countries rightly wonder why, if the Government are interested only in a partially level playing field, should British goods be allowed free access to their markets, where there are higher standards of social protection and social legislation and where the social charter and the social chapter have been fully accepted?

In an earlier exchange with the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) I referred to the fact that the opt-outs, including the financial opt-out, are damaging the Government and Britain's position within the European Community. I referred to the recent survey by Ernst and Young, which clearly states:

> "There is already evidence that the United Kingdom's attractiveness for inward investment is being reduced by a perception that we are not in the main stream of the European debate."

That is a serious matter.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South and I are aware of the importance of investment, both of us having experienced the benefits of foreign investment in our parts of the country. If investment is dropping, as it certainly is, and if investment is threatened by the Government's European stance, there will be real worry. Both the Government and my former colleague in the European Parliament, Jacques Delors, have got it wrong. Far from Britain being an investment paradise, the result of this country being marginalised in Europe in future will be that inward investment will deteriorate rather than improve.

There are many sound reasons why British business and the Government should change their mind about the social opt-out. If the social opt-out is maintained, it will create many worries for British business. For example, multinationals with branches in the United Kingdom and other countries may find it easier to close plants in the United Kingdom during the recession, simply because the costs of closure and employment protection are lower in the United Kingdom than elsewhere. In addition, United Kingdom companies that are also multinational companies are concerned that, because other parts of Europe have accepted the rules of the social chapter, they will be subject to those rules elsewhere in Europe, but the United Kingdom will be unable to participate in discussions about the implementation of those aspects of social legislation.

Finally, and perhaps rather contradictorily, there is evidence that, even if it is thought in business circles that the social opt-out is desirable, they feel that in practice it is not possible and that the Government will be dragged unwillingly into accepting certain social regulations.

There is already evidence for that, due to the Government's half-hearted acceptance of the directive on the rights of pregnant women to work and their grudging acceptance of the need for all employees to have a written statement of employment, as well as their even more grudging acceptance, which has huge implications for the compulsory competitive tendering procedure in the United Kingdom, of the acquired rights directive.

Business is starting to say that it is surely better to be in there negotiating rather than eventually having to be dragged along, without any influence, and therefore getting the worst of both worlds. The Government's claim that employment protection measures destroy jobs looks increasingly threadbare, at a time when Britain has the fastest rise in unemployment in the European Community.

In case there should be any doubt about it, my belief in the social charter and social chapter is due to my conviction that they will bring benefits to some of Britain's lowest-paid and least protected employees, and there are all too many of them. In the past, Britain was described as a nation of shopkeepers. What worries me is that, if the Government persist in going down the route that they have chosen, we shall become a nation of sweatshop keepers. In addition to the moral reasons for accepting the social chapter, there are good practical reasons for ending the social opt-out that the Prime Minister agreed at Maastricht.

Many hon. Members have referred to the economic situation, and Labour Members have referred to the weakness of the United Kingdom economy within the European Community. Government policies have weakened our position, and significantly the United Kingdom was the only EC economy that contracted last year. Our weakness was evident during the turbulence on the money markets earlier this year. The pound buckled under the pressure, whereas the franc managed to survive.

That was a consequence of the weakness of our economy and of the foolishness of the Government in joining the ERM at a time that was politically convenient because of the Tory party conference rather than industrially appropriate, and at a level that would have helped industry and the exports on which we all depend. Furthermore, a Government who were at the heart of Europe would have been able to reorganise a general realignment of currencies before the monetary turbulence, but the Government's marginality at that time was clear.

I should like Britain to attach greater priority to economic growth and co-ordinated European action to create jobs, as many hon. Members have said. It seems that the Government have made a mini U-turn in the autumn statement and in their recent pronouncements that they would like to agree a recovery package with our European partners. I agree strongly with my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) that it is a pity that the Government have adopted that attitude only at this late stage. Many of us argued for such a co-ordinated recovery package in the recession at the beginning of the 1980s, never mind in the current recession.

It is outrageous for the Government to claim that Europe is following the lead that they gave in the autumn statement. Many people in Europe have wanted the United Kingdom Government to take a more positive attitude to economic recovery, and have been disappointed when the Government have been unwilling to put money into European infrastructure projects. That was particularly true at a time when the Government were running a huge budget surplus, which offered a golden opportunity to lay the foundations for our economic prosperity.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield referred to cuts in the research and development budget, and I echo his concerns. We should not be cutting this key area of European spending, and certainly not at this economic juncture.

Subsidiarity has been mentioned by many hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) and the Foreign Secretary. I always understood it to mean that decisions should be taken at the lowest appropriate level. I therefore agree with Labour Members who said that subsidiarity has obvious relevance to our structure and decision-making within the United Kingdom, as well as to European decision-making. It has obvious relevance not only to Scotland and Wales but to the regions of England. Much has been done recently by local authorities and regional bodies in the northern region to forge direct links between the regions and the European Community.

I assure the Foreign Secretary that, in my part of the country, there is real feeling that subsidiarity is relevant to us and our regional future not only within the United Kingdom but within the European Community. I should like to commend to him the work of the Northern Development Company, which was set up with the support of local industry, trades unions and local authorities to achieve a high profile in Brussels and to promote the economic development of our region at home.

Activities in the northern region have been paralleled by those in other regions of the United Kingdom, including Yorkshire and Humberside, the east and west midlands, the north-west and the south-west, all of which have taken steps towards establishing their own identity within the European Community, and wish to benefit from the principle of subsidiarity.

My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) referred to the Committee of the Regions. I hope that, when the Government finally get round to dealing with the United Kingdom's representation on the committee, they will ensure that not only Scotland and Wales but each of the English standard planning regions are represented. The representation of the committee should reflect the political views of the region, and its members should be chosen from the regions, rather than being appointed by the Government from within the ranks of their own supporters.

In the three areas to which I have referred—the economy, the social dimension and the regions—Britain is in danger of being marginalised and weakened if the Government pursue their present course. By treading the fine line between their pro-European and Euro-sceptic supporters—and failing to satisfy either—they are isolating and damaging Britain and the British people. If we are to make a success of our EC membership, and if the British people are fully to benefit from it we must change course and achieve greater co-operation with our European partners.

8.45 pm

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): If I may, I shall turn later to some of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin), because I particularly wish to deal with her views on the ERM.

I shall begin by referring to two excellent speeches made by Conservative Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan), whom I am pleased to see in his place, made a magnificent speech. I also commend the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), who spoke with some force about the fact that of late the European debate has been affected by too much

[Mr. Jonathan Evans]

negativity. That negativity may have been stimulated by two events in the summer—the Danish vote on Maastricht and the currency turmoil in the ERM in September.

Much of that negativity was evident in the speeches of Opposition Members, such as in the gloomy prognosis of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). I know the hon. Member, who I am sorry is not in his place, very well from his former role as shadow Secretary of State for Wales. We heard from him a litany of gloom that we have heard so many times. He was the shadow Secretary of State 13 weeks ago, and there have been three shadow Secretaries of State for Wales in the past 13 weeks, compared with three Secretaries of State in the past 13 years. Those Secretaries of State have managed to achieve a substantial transformation in the Welsh economy largely because of the positive stance that each has taken to our role within the European Community.

Those who paint gloomy pictures of the difficulties that business may be facing should consider the example of Wales, where the rate of unemployment is lower than the national average. Just after the war, 250,000 people were employed in the mining industry in south Wales, whereas today, even before the latest announcement that has caused so much turmoil in the House, only four mines remain in operation. However, jobs were found for so many of those people in enterprises backed by the substantial record of inward investment that we have managed to achieve in Wales.

A fifth of all United Kingdom inward investment has come to Wales. Why? Because the Secretary of State and his team have sold the benefits of Wales as a part of Europe. It is the advantage of being able to manufacture in Wales and to be able to sell to the European Community. Many people in Wales now have employment in Bosch, in Sony, in Panasonic and in other well-known companies which have chosen to base themselves in Wales primarily because of what we have been able to achieve in terms of a positive relationship with the Community. That is why it is so important that the House should start to develop a more positive approach towards our position in the European Community.

From time to time, there may be good reasons to question some aspects of our European partners' policy. There are good reasons for us currently to question German monetary policy. We may all agree that we question France's stance on the general agreement on tariffs and trade settlement. However, that is not a reason why we should decide that we shall be negative generally about our membership of the Community.

At Edinburgh, Mr. Delors is expected to present a statement about the economic situation in the Community. It is essential that the Community addresses the difficulties being caused across Europe by the recession. All hon. Members must recognise that the recession has caused difficulties across Europe. The difficulties have been substantially alleviated in the longer term by the excellent settlement that has now been reached in the long-standing dispute between the EC and the United States. We now hope that that settlement will lead eventually to a proper GATT round settlement.

In that regard, it is somewhat churlish of Opposition Members not to recognise the demonstrable qualities of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who decided to take charge of that situation. He averted a trade war which threatened not only Europe, but the whole world. We were days or weeks away from such a prospect. My right hon. Friend managed not only to achieve the reinstatement of Commissioner MacSharry but the backing of Jacques Delors, the President of the Commission, for the proposal.

I represent an agricultural constituency, so I recognise many of the concerns in the farming community about whether the settlement can be accommodated in the terms of the common agricultural policy reform settlement which was agreed earlier this year. Farming has been in recession for some time, and many farmers are concerned that there may be yet further reductions in farm incomes. However, my constituents recognise that a GATT round settlement is important to the whole of Britain, to the whole of Europe and to the whole world. In those circumstances, they believe that it would be disastrous if the settlement were set aside in the narrow, sectional, national interest of French sunflower growers.

There is no justification for the French Government's current position. I also find it unacceptable that, during the course of what was likely to be a difficult negotiation, the French, or some elements within the French team, seemed to have tried to strengthen their hand by the inspired leaks of documents which exaggerated the effects of a settlement. We have come to expect such conduct from the Labour party, but we do not expect it from our European colleagues. I hope that that point will be made with some force during the discussions between our Ministers and their French counterparts.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East mentioned the turmoil in the exchange rate mechanism in September. That has also had a fundamental effect in terms of confidence and in an attitude of negativity towards the Community. However, we are wrong to assume that coming out of the ERM was some great boon or bonus for the British economy. On the contrary, the effect of the devaluation on our trade deficit is that it has now broadened, as reported in our newspapers today. That is contrary to all the blandishments we heard on the matter from the Euro-sceptics. I note that there has been a far more positive approach from Conservative Members in this debate. Incidentally, I do not understand the operation of the so-called J-curve, another economic manifestation which seems to have worked its way into financial analyses of late.

There seems to be a presumption that the turmoil in the ERM affected only Britain in September. That was implicit in the remarks by the hon. Member for Gateshead, East. She said that the franc had survived—for now, I am bound to say. It seems that Mr. Schlesinger, the head of the Bundesbank, displeased by the 0.25 per cent. reduction in interest rates that was forced on him in September according to *The Guardian*, which I note from earlier debates today can be quoted in the House, may now be prepared to jettison the franc and even Maastricht in dealing with inflationary pressures on the mark.

We know that the franc is vulnerable. The competitiveness of the French economy has been damaged by the series of devaluations and realignments of other European currencies. It had been felt that France might have escaped by being offered an interest rate cut by the German authorities, but those prospects have evaporated today with the news, which I was at pains to draw to the attention of my hon. Friend the Member for Esher, that Germany's M3 money supply figure out today shows a surge to 10·2 per cent. against an annual 5·5 per cent. target figure. That seems to remove the last prospect of an easing of German interest rates.

That increase clearly shows that even Germany is not immune from the effects of currency fluctuations across Europe. It is the fact of those currency fluctuations with so many of the funds flowing into the mark which has resulted in the substantial expansion of German monetary supply. According to City analysts, the next targets for the currency speculators are the French and the Irish. The latest news appears to show that the strain on those currencies is building day by day. That news demonstrates the clear need for far greater economic co-operation between the countries of the European Community.

I was pleased to note from the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor this morning that he has for some time been pressing the German Finance Minister on the operation of German monetary policy. It is clear that the way in which German monetary policy has operated in terms of interest rates has had a most damaging effect not just in Britain but on all the countries in the EC—and will shortly, it seems, have such an effect on Germany itself.

The Delors 2 package appears to have been welcomed by the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon). It was particularly interesting to hear his glowing tribute to Delors 2, given that only three weeks ago he was in the Opposition Lobby voting to kill Maastricht dead. The Government's position on the Delors 2 package is quite right. At a time such as this, it is appropriate that we should be seeking value for money from all the operations of the Community and important that we should expose the myths as they come across.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh mentioned some of the myths that have been put about concerning European regulations. I am pleased to note that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has been put in charge of scything through home-grown regulations, because, from my experience of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and also of the regulations that come from Europe, I believe that there is even more work for the President of the Board of Trade to do here at home than there is in Brussels.

8.59 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): As a Scots Member, I envy the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) and the people of Wales the Welsh Development Agency. We had a Scottish Development Agency which the hon. Gentleman's ministerial colleagues in Scotland chose to execute—a matter of regret for many Scots. Like the hon. Gentleman, who represents a Welsh constituency, I live in a multinational state, so I have a fairly relaxed attitude to the multinational European Community.

One of the most sickening moments that I have experienced in recent months was when the Government opted out of the European Community's social chapter. That is where the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor and I part company—pretty fundamentally, I am sure. The appearance of the social chapter in the Maastricht treaty represented for me the first real glimmer of hope that the Community might become the liberating association of peoples that its founders envisaged. Every other EC Government were enthusiastic but the British Government—those market force morons—sought to scupper the social chapter, which they effectively but disastrously did.

It is typical of the myopia of the English Tory Government that they took us into the EC promising us huge economic benefits, whereas in fact we have finished up with the grant grabbing of the common agricultural policy and what I have described elsewhere as the Spanish piracy of the common fisheries policy. I have a great deal of sympathy with the remarks of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) about the plight of the Scottish and, indeed, the United Kingdom fishing industry as a result of the management of fisheries by the bureaucrats in Brussels.

The original concept of the EC was remarkable: it represented a bringing together of European nations to prevent war, improve living standards in general and promote freedom. Those were laudable objectives. The social chapter is evidence that the early vision was not just a dream. The Community has expanded and will continue to expand and clearly cannot remain the greedy trading club which some little Englanders in Downing street and elsewhere desire. Admittedly, trade still seems to be the main engine of change in the Community, as evidenced by the Single European Act and monetary union, but in agreeing to the social chapter, other member Governments accepted that the rights of individual citizens and not just the rights of capital must be the Community's first concern. That, again, is an admirable view.

I should like to see the social chapter reinserted in respect of the United Kingdom, and its scope broadened to strengthen basic rights and working conditions and to cover provisions covering racial and sexual equality, pension rights, trade union recognition, maternity and paternity benefits, and so on. I want the harmonised standards specified to be based on the best standards, which are certainly not those of the United Kingdom. The biggest employer in my constituency—IBM, a major American multinational—has no worries about the social chapter, because it more than meets the stipulations laid down in that part of the treaty.

Priority must also be given to the decision-making processes in the EC, which remains profoundly undemocratic. It is true that new powers are to be promised to the European Parliament. Even so, as an institution it will remain essentially powerless to constrain the bureaucrats in Brussels and the Council of Ministers democratically. Within the past few weeks, I have asked in the House whether some openness could be introduced into the deliberations of the Council of Ministers, but was told that that cannot be the case because of confidentiality and the Council's rules, even though I think that there is a regulation on the Council's deliberations which would allow that.

I shall be brief as I know that another hon. Member wishes to speak, but I cannot sit down without a mention of subsidiarity. Nearly every other hon. Member has mentioned it en passant, even the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor.

Subsidiarity could deal with some of the problems associated with the absence of checks on decision making, but the Prime Minister's version of it is that decisions should be taken at the lowest appropriate level—but certainly no lower than No. 10 Downing street. In Scotland, subsidiarity has a different meaning. We believe that it should mean consideration of key EC matters by a

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

strong Scottish Parliament with wide-ranging social, industrial and economic powers—a Parliament which would be much better in that regard than the German Länder or the Spanish regional Governments, which still exercise control over social and domestic matters in a way that we in Scotland can only dream of. Without that definition of subsidiarity, the idea of a Community of the regions remains a meaningless catch-phrase.

The Prime Minister's stocktaking of the governance of Scotland is a disingenuous attempt to lull or gull the people of Scotland into quiescence. We are all fortunate that the Scottish secessionist movement is, quite properly, peaceable and adheres to parliamentary democracy. Long may it remain that way, no matter how support for the Government, low as it is, may dwindle in the next few years.

Without the social chapter, the Maastricht treaty is unacceptable, and I shall argue along those lines during the next few weeks. The Government's definition of subsidiarity is also unacceptable.

I have mixed feelings about the European Community, because I welcome the establishment of the European Court of Justice, as a supreme court for the Scottish and English legal systems. What the Government deny us in the so-called United Kingdom we can sometimes obtain from European Community institutions and from that supreme court. I hope that it will decide against the Government in the case of commissioner's decision CS/27/91, made in Liverpool, which stated that the Department of Social Security's decision to stop the payment of invalidity benefit to women in the United Kingdom at the age of 60 was incompatible with a directive on equal treatment in social security matters which became European Community law as far back as 1979.

I asked a question of a Minister at the Department of Social Security on the Government's reaction to the commissioner's decision. The chief adjudication officer's office told me that he intends to appeal against the decision made in Liverpool. I asked what information the Secretary of State had

> "concerning the timing of the hearing of the appeal, at the Court of Appeal, of the chief adjudication officer against a commissioner's decision . . . and if he will make a statement."

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary replied:

> "A date for this case to be heard by the Court of Appeal has not yet been set since a decision is awaited on another case dealing with related issues and which is currently before the European Court of Justice".—[*Official Report*, 16 November 1992; Vol. 214, c. 77.]

Many thousands of women in the United Kingdom lose their invalidity benefit at the age of 60. Some of them have lost as much as £30 a week. So we must seek assistance from the European Court of Justice.

I have written to Commissioner Papandreou asking her to take the British Government to the European Court of Justice for their refusal to adhere to the commissioner's decision. More than 400 women in my constituency alone have been urged by me to apply for the benefit. One of them—Mrs. MacLatchie, of Port Glasgow—on the basis of the commissioner's decision received arrears payments of about £1,000 and is now receiving invalidity benefit.

The European Court of Justice is determining the issue, and the *Official Journal* of the European Community stated in its edition of 11 February, volume 35, that the court was considering the question:

> "Where national law provides that there shall be pensionable ages of 60 for women and 65 for men for the purpose of granting old age and retirement pensions and that there shall be an invalidity benefit scheme for persons of working age, does Directive 79/7/EEC require a Member State to apply the same upper age limit (if any) for both men and women when defining the scope of the scheme for invalidity benefit?"

I hope that the judges who make up that supreme court for the 13 legal systems withi[illegible]e 12 nations of the European Community answer in the affirmative. I say that because the British Government, in the form of the Department of Social Security, are seeking to challenge in the English appeal courts the decision of the Commissioner to which I referred.

Commissioner Skinner said that the Department of Social Security was infringing European community legislation. I think I am right in saying that, under the treaty of Rome, the laws in those 13 legal systems must be compatible with European law. Thus, in the case that I have raised, concerning 400 of my constituents and thousands of women in other parts of Britain, I hope that the European Court of Justice will decide that the British Government are wrong to stop the payment of invalidity benefit to women claimants at the age of 60 when men continue to receive it until they are 65.

I confess that I was not happy when the European Court instructed the British Government to change a provision in the Merchant Shipping Act 1988, an instruction which harmed the fishermen of Scotland and elsewhere, including the constituents of the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris). But in the types of case to which I have referred today, involving social directives, that court has proved to be in every sense of the word a supreme court, with power to instruct national Governments to adhere to European legislation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) expressed his concern about the problems bedevilling the shipbuilding industry. I too have those problems. I believe that methods can be evolved within the Community which will give the same amount of protection to our communities as has been given to those in east Germany. But, as I have said, Maastricht without the social chapter is unacceptable to Labour.

9.15 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): As the House will be aware, pulling up the tail end, so to speak, before the Lord Major's show gets back on the road is not the most delightful experience. However, I will try to make one or two points, which have been expressed already in various ways.

First, however, I want to make the point that one of the most enjoyable things about sitting through several hours of this debate—there have not been many enjoyable aspects—has been that the majority of speeches from both sides of the House have been by hon. Members who clearly have the interests of Europe, and this country within Europe, at heart. Although there have been difference of opinion between those on the two sides of the House, basically centred on the level of public expenditure in its European guise, there has been evidence of a widespread belief that this country's future is inextricably entwined with the future of Europe. That is a tremendous change from many debates that we have had in the House on Europe.

I have unashamedly supported the Maastricht treaty ever since my right hon. Friend came back from Maastricht nearly a year ago. I want the House to move very quickly towards its ratification. I recognise that it will take many months of debate in the House to achieve all the Bill's stages, but, like others, I hope that we shall see the Third Reading early in May or soon after, even if the Danes do decide to defer any future referendum at that time.

There are many reasons why I support Maastricht. One of the most significant is the whole question of enlargement. I have always believed it somewhat strange that we should appropriate the term "Europe" to describe a minority grouping of the countries of Europe. In my view, the European Community will never be a full community until it reaches out and is able to embrace all the countries of the continent of Europe that wish to be part of it.

There is an element of British self-interest in seeking enlargement. It is a question of the balance of power between those who are contributors to, and those who are recipients of, the European Commission's expenditure. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made the point abundantly clear, and I endorse it. The pressure for increased expenditure from the centre—the demand in Delors 2—supported, as we have heard this evening, by many hon. Members, will be considerably reduced with the admission to the Community of the European Free Trade Association countries, which will be helping to pick up the bill for any extra expenditure and, through their voting powers within the Community, seeking to redress that balance.

There are, of course, other aspects connected with enlargement. One is the size of the European Parliament, and I hope very much that my right hon. Friends will resist the pressure from Germany to increase its representation. At the moment it is a simple system, with larger and smaller countries grouped into different brackets without specific reference to differences in population. It would be a retrograde step to move along the road of more closely reflecting population differences, because there would then need to be a clear reassessment of the representation of all countries, not just Germany.

The same applies in many ways to the question of the size of the Commission. It is important to provide sufficiently flexible and wide structures for Europe to allow for maximum participation by others as the Community develops in the short and medium terms.

Much has been said this evening about the European Community's significance to our economy. I wish to comment specifically on fiscal harmonisation and value added tax. Almost all the other member nations of the Community have multiple rates of VAT. We are in a tiny minority to restrict ourselves to just a standard and a zero rate of VAT.

I have always supported the Government's market-led approach towards harmonisation, but it is a two-way process, which requires the Government to respond to the market. I have spoken previously in the House about VAT on bloodstock, and I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General, who is responsible for that, is in his place tonight. I shall not go through all those arguments again, as he is familiar with them——

Mr. George Robertson: Watch the time.

Mr. Paice: I am well aware of the time. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should draw it to the attention of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) who, having said that he would take only a few minutes to speak, took 17 minutes. I wish to make a few quick points before I sit down.

The Government must re-examine their approach to fiscal policy vis-a-vis business competitiveness. We cannot demand and expect sovereignty over our fiscal policies and taxes while ignoring the external pressures placed on them. Although it is correct to say that our future economic well-being is tied up with that of Europe, it is perverse to ignore any fiscal handicaps placed before it. I have made that point to my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General several times in the past, and I look forward to his resolving the difficulties with which he is familiar.

I conclude—grudgingly, because I wanted to make a number of points—by echoing the words of my hon. Friends who have said that we must make progress in Europe with determination but with the spirit of ensuring that our future well-being within Europe is not jeopardised. We must fight for what we believe to be right.

Europe is not an ogre. It is all of us and all around us, and our economy is clearly entwined within it. However, the development of Europe must work with the flow of public opinion, not against it. Some national leaders within the Community have not yet caught up with the change of public opinion in their countries against the trend of centralism. In this country, we are at one. When and if one can explain to the people of this country my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's policies on the future of Europe, the vast majority of people will support that approach.

The sting in the tail is the word "explain". We have much more to do. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House are guilty of allowing the floor to be held too much by those who are basically opposed to an extension of our involvement within Europe. We have allowed the minority to have their way for too long. One message that has come out of tonight's debate is that the tide has now turned.

9.23 pm

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): I agree with the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) about the constructive tone of the debate. It is a pity that the contributions have not been matched by the motion, which shows the Government's poverty of ambition and action. It amounts to nothing more than taking note of that great bundle of documents.

Where are the proposals to fire the imagination of peoples across Europe and rebuild confidence in what the Community can achieve? Where are the proposals to set in motion the reform of Community financing? Where is the action to tackle the democratic deficits? Where is the force for emancipation to which my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) referred? Hon. Members will look in vain through the documents, just as they will have listened in vain to the Foreign Secretary for such information, other than what he said about GATT. Indeed, the Foreign Secretary found the motion so eminently forgettable that he almost forgot to move it.

[Mr. Andrew Smith]

As is perhaps inevitable with such a big bundle of documents covering so many aspects, the hon. Members who participated in the debate have approached the issues from a variety of angles, some more technical than others. I look forward to the Paymaster General's response to the issues raised by the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) on the impact of the fiche d'impact, and those raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow and the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) on fishing and fish of all sorts, including the Hogmanay haddock. The needs of both small firms and the fishing industry are crucial, and deserve a proper response from the Government.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) presented a persuasive case, stating that the operation of parliamentary democracy would be immeasurably enhanced if we did not have the Tory Whips. I thought that that was an interesting observation.

I agreed with what my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) and the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) said about subsidiarity having to apply to the counties and regions of the United Kingdom. They said that additionality must mean extra spending, not substitution for spending that would have happened anyway. I join the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye in praising the achievements of Commissioner Bruce Millan in that respect.

The hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) ably embodied, as did the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), the group characterised this evening as "Whitney's Wonders". They embody one side of the chasm in the Conservative party. The hon. Member for Leominister was right to speak of the difficulties to which an indefinite attempt to stand aside from managed exchange rates would cause this country. The Government would do well to heed that warning.

The hon. Member for Leominister was also right to speak of the tragic farce of the channel tunnel being linked to the high-speed rail network on the other side of the channel, but having no similar links on this side. It should be linked to the whole of Britain as well as to London. However, the hon. Gentleman must ask whose fault that is. The Government must accept their responsibility for that abject failure.

Britain desperately needs coherent and positive policies for infrastructure investment and a proper industrial strategy. My hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) spoke powerfully and with expertise on behalf of shipbuilding in general and his constituents in particular. How right he was to stress the importance of a concerted British and European strategy to build up and build on our superb engineering skills. He was also right to talk of the value of European co-operation and the Maastricht process in countering the appalling outbreaks of fascist and racist violence that the Community has witnessed.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said, it is clear that the Government are in utter confusion over their European policy, European recovery, the EC budget and, today, the United Kingdom abatement. The House will have seen the headlines that were full of the Government gloss of Euro-expansion. Yesterday's edition of *The Daily Telegraph* proclaimed:

"Major urges Europe to go for growth".

What does that amount to? It is so much froth, and will be even more short-lived than the confident hype surrounding the autumn statement.

When I listened to the Chancellor on the "Today" programme this morning, I heard no hint of Euro-growth. I see that the Chancellor is entering the Chamber on cue. He said that he hardly recognised what was in the newspapers. Perhaps that was because it was the Prime Minister who put the stories there and not the Chancellor. However, the Chancellor denied this morning that there was to be lots of new spending for European recovery. He stressed that no figures had been discussed at any time. He announced no new projects. I see him nodding. He said that anything that happened would be reallocation of existing money.

We would have welcomed yesterday's change in rhetoric. We have long been urging a concerted European programme for recovery. As my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) said eloquently, we need, Wales needs and his constituents need precisely such a programme. The problem, as with the autumn statement, is that yesterday's rhetoric is not matched by today's reality. How much better it would have been if, instead of this anodyne motion, the Government had proposed real measures showing how the EC budget and the European economic recovery programme were setting Europe on the road to sustainable prosperity and full employment.

As to the budget itself, far from any stimulus to growth, the papers before us show cuts in important Community programmes. Unlike the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who could not make up her mind whether to disparage more the excellent Derbyshire county council or the Treasury, I find the Treasury memoranda helpful. Annexes A and B to the memorandum of 19 November set out precisely the cuts that we face. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) referred to them.

At a time when the United States and Japan are planning to spend huge sums on research, what possible sense can it make for the British presidency and the European Council to propose cuts of 12 per cent. in Community-funded research? That is bad not just for Europe but for Britain, because research is one of the areas in which the United Kingdom has derived benefit from Community expenditure.

At the start of the full operation of the single market, when environmental and social concerns have never been more pressing in Europe, how could it be right to propose cuts of 8 per cent. in the budget for environmental policy, consumer protection and social policy?

When there is such starvation in the third world, how can even the British Government attempt to justify cuts in food aid of no less than 22·5 per cent.? Those cuts show the lack of vision of the British presidency, and how the Government are failing to respond to world and European needs, just as they have failed to respond to Britain's needs. Indeed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East pointed out with her telling reference to the Ernst and Young report, Britain is already paying a price through lost investment as a consequence of the Conservative Government's semi-detached stance towards Europe.

Fundamental problems remain over the resolution of the EC budget itself. I ask the Paymaster General to make clear to the House what the Government propose on the cohesion fund. It is conspicuously absent from the Council version of the budget before us. The Government are on record, in the Chancellor's evidence to the Select Committee on the Treasury and the Civil Service last February, as having

"reservations about the whole question of achieving an adjustment by the transfer of resources".

Will the Government now tell us whether they accept the need for resources so that the cohesion fund can be set up, and how much they propose to put into it?

A further problem, aggravated by the Chancellor's comments on "Today" this morning, is the United Kingdom abatement. The Chancellor said that there would be

"no serious, significant, adverse change in our abatement; that would not be easy for us to accept."

That has spread further confusion, because the Chancellor did not say that such a change was unacceptable; indeed, he seems to accept that some change may be envisaged.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. We are not prepared to accept a change in it.

Mr. Smith: That contradicts the references earlier to the way being open for technical change. When does technical change become a concession of substance? That is a matter to which we shall return.

On a wider macro-economic policies for the Community, the Government seem to be groping their way around another rather murky S-bend. They are reported to be considering proposals for the Edinburgh summit.

I return to yesterday's *The Daily Telegraph*, in which Downing street was reported to have said:

"Our aim is to extend the British strategy for recovery across Europe."

That will really have them dancing in the streets of Naples. We and our European partners should be told which bit of the British strategy the Government are so keen to wish upon the rest of the EC.

Is it the 2·5 per cent. cumulative cut in real domestic product that Britain will have seen during the past three years, even if the Government manage to realise their pathetic 1 per cent. growth target for next year? Is it the 4·5 per cent. fall in employment, the 5 per cent. drop in industrial production, the 11 per cent. fall in business investment or the 12 per cent. fall in fixed investment? Which bit of the British economic miracle are the Government wishing on the rest of the EC?

In the same article, describing a possible Government Delors-style initiative at the European summit, a Treasury inside source said:

"You could say it is an attempt to steal his clothes."

That shows just how few clothes the Government have of their own, and how embarrassed they are at their inadequacy.

We saw a few of the Opposition's clothes stolen in the autumn statement. Government by kleptomania is now the Tory style. I warn the Conservative party that, as they pick bits piecemeal from Labour's proposals but the public see them as half-hearted, hesitant, renouncing from No. 11 Downing street today that which was hyped-up from No. 10 Downing street yesterday, as they see the Government refusing to adopt our full-blooded programme for recovery, all the Conservatives will succeed in doing is legitimising and popularising what the Opposition are saying.

As the public's appetite for active government is whetted, they will turn increasingly to the party which believes in it, not the Government who have spent more than a decade preaching the virtues of so-called non-intervention. An ideological tide is turning, as people realise that common action is needed to solve common problems, that Government must build a partnership with industry, with employees, with trade unions, with regions and with the countries of the United Kingdom, as well as with our European partners.

For that partnership to work, it must embrace everybody. It cannot cut out the trade unions or the workers covered by the wages councils or the poor and dispossessed. The Government cannot say yes to the single market but no to the social chapter, yes to Maastricht but no to progress on economic and monetary co-operation, and they cannot say yes to subsidiarity abroad but no to subsidiarity at home.

Throughout the British presidency, the Government and the Prime Minister have tried to face both ways. As someone memorably said, they go into Europe like a gatecrasher walking into a party backwards assuring those around them that they are just on their way out. The truth is that the British presidency, at this crucial time in the Community's development, has been chronically and irretrievably enfeebled by the yawning chasm in the Conservative party.

Faced with the Conservative record of ambivalence, incompetence and missed opportunity, the House can have no confidence in the ability of a Government who have achieved so little in the first five months of their presidency now to bring about all that is needed in their last five weeks. A new purpose, new partnership, and new direction are called for in Britain's policies on Europe, and I ask the House to signal that new direction by voting for our amendment.

9.39 pm

The Paymaster General (Sir John Cope): I will respond in the time available to as many as I can of the points raised in this wide-ranging and timely debate. We are at a key moment in the Community's development, given that we are in the run-up to the Edinburgh European Council and also—though not entirely—because of the Maastricht debate, about which we heard a good deal today.

Today's debate was timely also because we are 37 days away from the completion of the single European market —a concrete realisation of our commitment to the principles of the free movement of goods, services, people and capital. Furthermore, we are working towards settling the Community's financial framework for the coming years, as well as the 1993 budget.

The GATT talks to free world trade have moved forward again, we are preparing for the Community's enlargement, and we are leading the humanitarian effort and the call for greater United Nations involvement in the conflict in Bosnia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia. We are strengthening our links with the democracies of central and eastern Europe.

Apart from that terrific agenda for the presidency that we have been vigorously pursuing, all the countries of the Community face difficult economic problems and a tight financial situation. All those issues are central to our economic and political well-being and to British prosperity, which is why they are so important to us.

[Sir John Cope]

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs spoke earlier about some of the major themes of our presidency and of the Council. I shall focus principally on economic and financial issues. None is more important than the single European market. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) that we shout from the rooftops whenever opportunity offers—including now—the central role that the single market is playing in the well-being of this country and of the European Community.

The single European market will bring real benefits for British business and for British individuals. It means more business opportunities, and that means more jobs. It means less red tape and lower business costs, with an end to routine customs controls and paperwork. The single market means that, as barriers to trade come down, consumers will have a wider choice of goods and services. Employees will find wider recognition of qualifications, making it easier for people to live and work wherever they choose in the Community.

Mr. George Robertson: Was not one of the objectives of the single European market the harmonisation of value added tax rates? Can the right hon. Gentleman give an update on progress towards that?

Sir John Cope: Not harmonisation. After all, we are retaining fiscal sovereignty for the House, which is absolutely right. I suppose that the hon. Gentleman wants us to give away the financial powers of the House? The agreements are about minimum rates of VAT and excise duties, and that is how it should be.

Our membership of the single market has already made Britain a magnet for inward investment. My hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) paid eloquent tribute to inward investment in Wales, and my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Currie) paid an even more eloquent tribute, if that is possible, to the beneficial effect of inward investment on jobs in south Derbyshire—but only after slating the Treasury, in the person of myself, for the wording of a particular explanatory memorandum. I am afraid that such texts must be rather complicated, but I accept her strictures.

As to inward investment, 40 per cent. of Japanese investment in the Community is in the United Kingdom. There was £17 billion-worth of inward investment in 1990, with 50,000 manufacturing jobs now flowing from that. The United Kingdom has some 40 per cent. of total United States investment stock in the European Community.

The single market will encourage British companies to invest in businesses in Europe. As the single market extends to the European economic area next year, United Kingdom businesses will have a home market of 375 million consumers. That will help us to compete in the world marketplace as well as within Europe.

I recognise that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) said, some people will not gain from the single market. His example was freight-forwarding agents and customs agents in his constituency and elsewhere. As the Commission has said, retraining of customs agents is primarily a matter for member states, but Community funding is also available from the social fund. In addition, the Commission is proposing a one-year package to assist redundant agents.

At the meeting of the Finance Ministers yesterday, there was a lukewarm attitude towards the proposals. Nevertheless, the discussions are continuing within the Council. Meanwhile, 30 million ecu have been entered in the draft budget, pending the adoption of a legal base.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)—I must admit that it is a nice name for a constituency——

Mr. David Shaw: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir John Cope: No, I must get on—I have little time and many matters to deal with. I have said all that I can about that particular matter.

The hon. Member for Copeland blamed the presidency for all sorts of things, including the recession. Several hon. Members have spoken about the prospects for growth and jobs. The United Kingdom presidency has given a clear lead to ensure that the Community takes effective action.

My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister, the Chancellor, the President of the Board of Trade and the Minister of Agriculture were tirelessly involved in paving the way for the GATT agreement. That is the most important step that the Community can take to boost confidence and growth.

OECD estimates suggest that an additional $200 billion in world output could follow. That is important not only to the United Kingdom but to the rest of Europe and much further afield. I have already referred to the single market, which is extremely important for the United Kingdom.

We propose a full discussion of the European economy at Edinburgh. As the House knows, and as we debated last week, the Government have introduced a package of measures for the United Kingdom. Within a framework of fiscal discipline, we have sought to sustain investment growth and rebalance public expenditure—constraining wages but protecting capital. All that is to boost confidence. Last week, the Labour party was unsure whether to claim credit for that or to attack us, and it was the same today. Similar measures could be taken and are being taken by other member states.

Mr. Andrew Smith: What specific measures and new projects for economic recovery and job creation will the Government propose at Edinburgh?

Sir John Cope: The discussion in Edinburgh will focus on the matters that I have just discussed. Member states are examining those matters. Measures are also being taken at Community level. The co-ordination and development of actions of member states are most important. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman may laugh, but that is the fact of the matter. At the Community level, there is scope, within a tight fiscal framework, for a shift in priorities. The European investment bank can be used to work with the private sector to increase transport and other capital projects. The Community can also encourage capital spending. We shall be discussing those matters further at Edinburgh, but there have been many discussions before. Of course, as my right hon. Friend said this morning, there are other matters of great importance, including German interest rates. Interest rates were also mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Esher and others.

We have heard a great deal about regulation and deregulation, especially from my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen). He made an entertaining speech about a series of controls of unspecified origin which bore down on small firms in his constituency. He and the House will be aware of my involvement with small firms and my support for them as a boost to the economy. I am happy to tell him that, about two weeks ago, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced an enhanced rôle for the deregulation unit in the Department of Trade and Industry and the appointment of Lord Sainsbury to review the matter and investigate examples such as those to which my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams drew attention. My hon. Friend has given Lord Sainsbury a good agenda on which to start. I gather that Lord Sainsbury's remit covers both United Kingdom and European Community legislation.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): There is some anxiety in the House about such regulations. Have the Government decided which of the regulations are acceptable to them and which are not? If some are not acceptable, what mechanism exists to ditch them?

Sir John Cope: If the hon. Gentleman is referring to domestic legislation, it is fairly easy to deal with the matter. For regulations in European Community legislation, the remedy is to go back to the European Community, to DG23 and so on. That is exactly what we do, and what we shall do in the cases highlighted by the committee to which I referred and by the deregulation unit of the DTI.

Mr. Steen: Will my right hon. Friend consider that we could shelve or delay implementation of rules and regulations until all the other countries implement the regulations that we have implemented?

Sir John Cope: We do our best to ensure that all the legislation is introduced at the same time and pursued equally by all member states. The Maastricht treaty will help us to achieve exactly that.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) asked about the Committee of the Regions and about several other matters. Ratification of the treaty will have to take place before the committee can be established. It would therefore be premature to examine the composition and procedures of the committee, but we are considering the matter and consulting on it.

Several hon. Members referred to subsidiarity and the position of Scotland. The matter was raised with my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary but also came up later in the debate. I was asked whether article 3.6 would be justiciable. The answer is yes, it will be justiciable once the treaty is ratified, but it is clear that article 3.6 is not about the internal organisation of member states.

Mr. Andrew Smith: The Minister means article 3b.

Sir John Cope: I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon. I cannot read my own writing. Those who suggest that article 3b should deal with the internal organisation of member states would be widely criticised if they attempted to put that idea into practice. What it means, after all, is that the Maastricht treaty—or some other treaty—should affect the powers of the House, apart from anything else. That would be totally unacceptable, to say the least.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) entertained us with some discussion of Hogmanay haddock, but he also made some serious points. Fortunately, my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) was in the Chamber at the time and heard what the hon. Gentleman said. My hon. Friend is currently Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and is also President of the Fisheries Council.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye accused the United Kingdom of abusing the additionality requirements. I do not accept that for a moment; the United Kingdom complies fully with the spirit and the letter of the legislation. The hon. Gentleman may have been thinking of some delay by the Commission earlier this year in approving the United Kingdom's RECHAR allocation. That issue was resolved to the satisfaction of both the United Kingdom and the Commission as a result of a change in the presentation of the United Kingdom's structural fund receipts in the public expenditure documents.

A number of hon. Members mentioned the general issue of the United Kingdom approach to budgetary and financial matters. The United Kingdom's underlying net contribution to the European Community budget through the public sector is now running at some £2 billion a year—the figure would be much higher without the abatement. That is a large sum, but it is not the whole story. It does not reflect, for example, the substantial receipts which flow from the Community budget to the United Kingdom private sector, amounting to about £500 million a year.

In addition, some elements of Community budget spending directly substitute for what would otherwise have to be paid from our national budget. One example is external aid. The United Kingdom takes in structural fund receipts of more than £1 billion a year, which are extremely important to us; and, as a former Northern Ireland Minister, I can vouch for the significant contribution made by such receipts in the Province. One of the achievements of the 1993 budget is a doubling of the structural funds since 1988: that was a commitment that we undertook previously.

Several hon. Members referred to the position within the different objective regions, including the highlands and islands. Decisions on which regions will be classified as objective are for the review of the structural funds next year.

Let me say a word about the European Community budget. As originally proposed by the Commission, the commitments for so-called non-obligatory expenditure were to increase by no less than 15·8 per cent. I know that Labour Members always want to spend more on everything, but throughout the debate they have stressed the importance of spending just as much as the Commission and nearly as much as the European Parliament, which suggested that expenditure should rise by 17·67 per cent. in a single year. The Budget Council has reduced that to a 3·91 per cent. increase over 1992. That is still a considerable increase, but there is further discussion to come. I have already referred to the extra spending on the structural funds, which is within the expenditure to which I have referred.

Yesterday, we made it clear once again that we would not accept an adverse change in the abatement. An intervention from the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary suggested that Labour would put the abatement up for negotiation. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I am glad to have that reassurance: it was not at all clear when the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr.

[Sir John Cope]

Brown) spoke on the radio this morning. It is very important that Britain should maintain that abatement. It is also very important that we maintain budgetary discipline, value for money and the fight against fraud, all of which we are doing in the budget this year, as part of the British presidency.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 262, Noes 312.

Division No. 92] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell; Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Alan Meale.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James

Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*

Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui

Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom

Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Amendment accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the White Paper on developments in the European Community, January to June

1992 (Cm. 2065), European Community Documents Nos. 9649/92, relating to the principle of subsidiarity, 4829/92 and 5201/92, relating to Commission proposals for the finances of the Community to 1997, 5202/92, relating to the system of Own Resources, 5203/92, relating to renewal of the Inter-Institutional Agreement on budgetary discipline and improvement of the budgetary procedure, SEC (92) 1412, relating to the United Kingdom abatement, 8567/92, relating to establishment of a Cohesion Fund, COM (92) 140, relating to the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1993, 7933/92, relating to Letter of Amendment No. 1 to the Preliminary Draft Budget, 8209/92, relating to the Draft Budget, 9901/92 and the proposals described in the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by H.M. Treasury on 19th November, relating to the European Parliament's proposed amendments and modifications to the Draft Budget, 6569/92, relating to the Court of Auditors' Opinion No. 2/92, the Annual Report of the Court of Auditors for 1990, the negotiating approach adopted by Her Majesty's Government in the run-up to the Edinburgh European Council on 11th to 12th December and the Government's continuing efforts to secure budgetary discipline and value for money from Community spending.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Will hon. Members leaving the Chamber please do so quietly?

Mr. Spearing: I rise on a point of order of which I gave Madam Deputy Speaker prior notice. I must first apologise for not being able to raise it at the beginning of the debate, which would have been the more appropriate time. I have the best of reasons: I was on duty with a Select Committee meeting representatives of the Folketing in Copenhagen, and have just returned.

Under Standing Order No. 127, it is the duty of the Select Committee on European Legislation to refer to Standing Committees documents that it believes should be considered by the House before a decision is taken by the Council of Ministers in Brussels or wherever the Council is meeting. Under the Standing Order, the debate takes place in Committee unless the House decides that the matters involved are so important that they merit a debate on the Floor of the House.

The Select Committee wanted 12 or 14 matters to be referred to the House and informed the Leader of the House to that effect. Consequently, a procedural motion was moved last week to the effect that the Standing Order should not apply and that the documents should be considered by the House before a decision was made in Brussels.

You will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Committee required the House to consider about 14 documents. They were laid on the Table and were available in the Vote Office last week, although when the Leader of the House announced the debate which has just taken place, he referred to it as a debate "on the budget".

I shall not rehearse the topics involved, as they were contained in the motion that the House has approved. The point is that, had the Select Committee decided that those matters were of lesser importance, it would no doubt have suggested that five or six debates should take place, batching the 14 papers together in Committee, in which case there would have been an opportunity to question each Minister for an hour, and for another two hours of debate, adding up to at least 10 and perhaps 15 hours.

Today, we had to consider the documents—which could have been batched together in the way that I suggested—and also matters relating to the Edinburgh summit, to GATT and to the EC. My question is: having passed those Standing Orders, and as it is the clear will of the House and of the Government that national Parliaments and assemblies should be fully associated with those matters, has the obligation of the Government to provide time for debate and consideration of them been properly discharged?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the motion tabled was perfectly in order. It is not a matter for the Chair, and I suggest that he may wish to pursue it with the Leader of the House or the appropriate Ministers.

EC Banana Regime

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

10.20 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): The European Community's banana regime is treated by some people as an issue of little moment or of much amusement, but it is vital for banana producers in the West Indies, the Canaries, the former French colonies, Somalia and also in Latin America. It is also important that any regime adopted by the Community guarantees fair competition between existing banana distributors and new entrants to the industry, and that it should take full account of consumers' interests.

I have been heartened by the interest shown outside the House—if not within it—since the debate was announced. I am glad that the interests of a liberal economist are shared by independent distributors, who are anxious to shake up the industry, and by retailers. A major food retailer wrote to me saying:

> "Tesco would like to work with our traditional suppliers applying its knowledge of improving production, packaging and the distribution process to the banana industry."

At the beginning of a debate, it is normal to declare an interest, and mine is that any regime adopted by the Community should benefit the consumer and encourage competition, which is the best guarantee of economic progress, but the European banana market is more akin to the Schleswig-Holstein question, of which it was said that one man who understood it had died, one had gone mad and the other had forgotten it.

The industry has an anomalous position, in that there are three different markets within the European Community. There are those designed for former colonies, such as the French market, the Spanish market, which imports from the Canary Islands, the United Kingdom, which imports from the West Indies, and Italy, which imports from Somalia. The Benelux market imports dollar bananas, imposing a 20 per cent. tariff. Germany is a banana addict's dream because it has no import restrictions and no tariffs, and the price of bananas is about two thirds of what it is in the United Kingdom; not surprisingly, consumption of bananas is much greater in Germany.

We recognise that bananas come from poor countries. The African, Caribbean and Pacific producers confirm that bananas are produced by people whose wage rates are low. Wherever we buy our bananas from, we are helping a third world producer. But the present British banana regime suffers from certain defects. British consumers are paying a third more than the Germans for bananas and per capita consumption is accordingly much less.

The second major fault with the British system is that three main authorised importers account for 90 per cent. of the importation of bananas. In any other industry, Fyffes, Geest and the Jamaica Banana Board would be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Instead, import licences are allocated in secret in the United Kingdom. Because the licences are known to have a financial value, one importer will sell them on to another.

An institutionalised cartel is just as evil as any other cartel. It results in much higher prices and, while the objective of the cartel is to help producers in the Windward Islands and Jamaica, working papers produced by the World Bank suggest that, for every dollar of aid given to ACP suppliers of bananas, the British consumer pays $5·30, and for every dollar that goes to the producers of bananas, the importer gets an extra $3. So the fat cats of the banana industry do three times as well out of protection in the United Kingdom as do the peasant farmers of the West Indies whom the regime is designed to help.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Hear, hear.

Mr. Marshall: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's support.

The monopoly profits earned by the distributors of bananas distort competition elsewhere in the fresh produce market. Those who enjoy the cushion of high banana profits are able to compete unfairly with those who do not. A tragedy of the situation that has existed since the mid-1940s is that inadequate attempts have been made by the importers of bananas to advise the farmers in the Windward Islands how to improve their productivity.

Productivity in the West Indies industry is half that of the Latin American industry. Protection breeds complacency and excessive profits, and many leading retailers would welcome the opportunity to import directly from the West Indies. The European Commission has produced a policy which is due to come into effect on 1 January 1993, but it has had to take account of conflicting trends and one wonders whether it has succeeded in that task.

The first question to ask about any policy is what impact it has on the consumer. A restriction on the import of dollar bananas would clearly harm the producer. Whereas, in 1992, about 2·6 million tonnes of dollar bananas were imported into the European Community, the Commission is proposing in 1993 a substantial reduction, to a base figure of about 2 million tonnes.

The second question must be whether the proposals will help the third world. Will the higher prices flow through to the producers in the West Indies or stick to the hands of the monopoly distributors? Currently, the higher prices in the United Kingdom have tended to benefit the distributors rather than the producers. The proposals, by severely restricting the right to import bananas, make it highly likely that a similar situation will prevail in the future.

The third question is whether the proposals will lead to the efficient production of bananas. A serious of policies designed to restrict imports from Latin America, where production costs are about half those in the West Indies, can scarcely result in increased efficiency. A regime that will not allow retailers in the United Kingdom, such as Sainsbury, Marks and Spencer and Tesco, to import directly from the West Indies and develop relationships with suppliers is not designed to increase efficiency. The United Kingdom food industry has been characterised by retailers developing links with suppliers and improving efficiency for the benefit of everyone.

It is not possible under the EC proposals, which give monopoly profits to favoured importers, who failed to encourage growers to improve quality in the past, to look forward to an improvement in quality in the future. We must ask whether the proposals will do anything to help diversification among our suppliers, and clearly they will not.

It is not surprising that the proposals have led to widespread opposition within the Council of Ministers. I

[Mr. Marshall]

think it fair to say that, within the Council, there is now a blocking minority led by Germany, and we have to recognise that the proposals would result in a substantial increase in prices in Germany. Outside the Council, the proposals have caused a great deal of unfavourable comment. The independent fruit importers recognise that the proposed regime would cause grossly unfair competition between them and the established importers. Those who are concerned about low-wage economies such as that of Dominica recognise that the problem of low wages in those countries will be aggravated by restrictions imposed on their exports to the European Community. Similarly, retailers are not happy with the proposals; nor are those who are concerned with the prosperity of the West Indies.

Many believe that West Indies producers would do better if they replaced the monopoly importers into the Community with a system of export boards. It is significant that growers of fruit in Israel, New Zealand and South Africa have all prospered by setting up their own system of export boards, and it might well be that the growers in the West Indies should do the same.

Many are concerned that most of the proposed assistance to the West Indies will be siphoned off in monopoly profits for a hand-picked group of favoured distributors. Latin American producers are concerned that the plan could cost them £500 million.

The proposals of the Commission are against the rules of the general agreement on tariffs and trade, and I am told that a number of exporters are unwilling to grant a GATT waiver. Perhaps the Minister would like to comment upon that.

We must ask the Minister, finally, whether it is right that the Commission should have proposed a 10-year transitional period to a free market. Obviously, a period of transition is right, but a period of transition that lasts for 10 years seems to me to be unconscionably long.

There is clearly pressure on the Council to reach a decision by the end of December, but it is much more important to reach a correct decision than to reach an early decision, because the policy will last a very long time. That is why I should like the Council to re-examine the possibility of tariffication—replacing the quota proposals with an external tariff. I believe that that would be acceptable to a number of countries that currently object to the Commission's proposals. I also believe that it would be acceptable to the independent importers, who are terribly anxious to increase their stake in the United Kingdom and other Community markets.

10.32 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) began by saying that this was somewhat similar to the Schleswig-Holstein question: one man was dead, one was mad and the other had forgotten it. The one who had forgotten it was Palmerston, of course. I have to say that the options that were available to Palmerston are not available to Her Majesty's Government in present circumstances. Nor, I must say, is there any danger of anyone forgetting this issue. Indeed, there has been an intensity of lobbying on the banana issue which makes a trifling issue such as the green rate for monetary compensatory amounts an absolute doddle compared with trying to sort out the future of the banana regime in the Community.

I must also point out to my hon. Friend that there is to be a detailed scrutiny debate on this matter shortly in Committee; therefore, there will obviously be the opportunity to discuss the matter in greater detail than, necessarily, is possible in an Adjournment debate.

As I am sure the House will recognise, we have here an extraordinarily difficult problem. We have a series of criteria, each of which is perfectly valid in its own right. We have the obligations under the Lomé convention, and nobody wishes to renege on those. We have the obligations that the existing GATT and the future GATT will impose as to the manner in which people are treated in the marketplace. That is another equally valid criterion. The introduction of the single market has implications for all the traditional arrangements and for the managed markets that have prevailed in many Community countries until now. Nobody pretends that those matters are not difficult to reconcile.

No one is bringing ill will to the debate, and my hon. Friend did not suggest that. Each country has different priorities and interests that best serve its national marketplace, and we must simply find a way through the problem.

It may help the House if I outline the elements of the Commission's proposal. The Commission has had as difficult a job as anyone else. Ultimately, it had to put its money on a particular horse, and it put it on the horse of trying to find a quantitive way of safeguarding the obligations under the Lomé convention.

The first element of the proposal is that there should be a quota on third-country imports, which are essentially dollar bananas. It also introduces the concept of non-traditional ACP imports. The GATT-bound element of that quota would be 2 million tonnes, and an additional unspecified amount would be settled annually or at shorter intervals, which would make up for the margin in the marketplace. Thus, the total size of the quota is not known. To take 1991 as an example, one would expect the dollar banana quota to be in the order of 2·3 million to 2·4 million tonnes.

Secondly, the proposal introduces a partnership concept in which 70 per cent. of the total quota would go to traders on the basis of their past trade in dollar fruit, but the remaining 30 per cent. would be allocated to companies on condition that they also imported ACP fruit. So a company could have dollar, ACP and additional dollar fruit within the 30 per cent. bracket. Three categories of bananas could thus be imported by the same company.

It is not yet clear how the licence system would work. Would it be for primary importers into the Community or for secondary importers—people who buy a surplus of bananas in the Community? The entrepot markets for bananas in Antwerp and Hamburg operate a bit like the stock market for oil and other commodities.

Because of the United Kingdom's links with its traditional suppliers, the volume of dollar fruit appearing on the market is relatively small, although it is certainly present in the marketplace, as we tend to import from supplies that have been delivered into the Community market.

The next element of the proposal concerns what happens to the ACP bananas. The proposal limits them to traditional quantities at 1990 volumes and, beyond that, they must take pot luck in the dollar quota. There is pressure from the Commission to revise those ceilings, because Jamaica, for example, is recovering from a hurricane, so her ability to supply the marketplace has been affected. Moreover, significant investments in fruit made by countries such as Belize and Surinam have not yet borne fruit in production, so they do not want to find that that investment is rendered nugatory because it is not included in the Community proposal.

There is a proposal for income support and structural assistance for the Community and ACP producers, and for aid for Community producer organisations. A limited number of licences will be issued to newcomers—3·5 per cent. of the total quota—and quality standards are envisaged. That is the shape of the proposal on the table.

The present position is much as my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South described. Some countries have traditionally managed their markets in favour of particular suppliers. For instance, France has domestic producers in its overseas territories and some traditional producers in Cameroon and the Ivory Coast; Spain has a Canary Islands production; Portugal has a production in Madeira; and Greece has producers in Crete. Italy used to supply itself significantly from Somalia, but, because of what has happened in that unfortunate country, it now buys far more dollar fruit, so its position has slightly changed. The United Kingdom has her traditional suppliers.

The Community proposals are fiercely and passionately opposed by Germany, the Benelux countries and Denmark. Some countries that rarely mention the word "consumer" in the majority of their debates on agricultural matters have become sensitive to consumer needs when the issue of bananas is raised. While we may not necessarily agree with those countries about bananas, we hope that their approach sets an example that they will follow in their discussions of future problems relating to the common agricultural policy.

As my hon. Friend said, the Germans import bananas quota-free and tariff-free, and do not like the idea of quotas or partnership—both of which would mean much more restricted access than they presently enjoy.

The United Kingdom has long-standing commitments to provide preferential access for bananas from our traditional suppliers in the Commonwealth Caribbean-Jamaica and the Windward Islands. That goes back to 1932, when imperial preference was given on imports of bananas from Jamaica. My Department works closely with those producers in a programme to improve the quality of those bananas. A few months ago, I met the organisations from Jamaica, and one of the topics that we discussed was the extent to which Jamaica—which is making good progress—was meeting the quality norms. The Windward Islands are also making efforts, although they are a little behind Jamaica in their ability to upgrade the quality of some of their fruit.

That commitment is now embodied in protocol 5 of the fourth Community ACP convention—the Lomé convention—which states:

> "In respect of its banana exports to the Community markets, no ACP state shall be placed, as regards access to its traditional markets and its advantages on those markets, in a less favourable situation than in the past or at present."

That represents an obligation in international law on all EC member states.

The commitment recognises the importance of the banana industry to the Commonwealth Caribbean. Bananas account for more than 50 per cent. of export earnings in the Windwards, and the industry employs about 40 per cent. of the work force. Bananas are therefore vital to the economic, social and thus political stability of the islands.

Caribbean producers suffer several disadvantages compared to Latin American or dollar competitors. One must be careful not to lump all those producers together, as Honduras has a production that is very much in the hands of smallholders and is not the same scale of enterprise as is found in some of the other dollar producers. Caribbean producers suffer disadvantages in terms of terrain, soil type, climate, farm size, wage levels and economies of scale. They are unlikely to be able to compete on equal terms with the dollar producers, given their natural handicaps. Diversification options for Caribbean producers are limited. No product has yet been identified that would offer the same benefits as the banana industry.

The national market arrangements must be replaced by harmonised Communitywide arrangements in order to complete the single market. The mechanisms that have permitted the markets to be divided up simply will not exist once the single market comes into existence. We are condemned to find some agreement.

We have recognised the difficulty of the task, and must reconcile the objectives that I have listed. Those objectives include the obligation to the Community and ACP producers, under the treaty of Rome and the Lomé convention respectively—they are both international treaties; commitments in the GATT—nobody could not, at present, be conscious of their importance. Clearly, if the Community were to adopt the sort of formula I outlined in the proposal, that would require a waiver. We must observe the need for competition, efficiency and the aims of the single market. We have in mind the interests of consumers, as we do throughout debates on agricultural issues. We are also aware of the need to ensure that the Community uses its money sensibly. The United Kingdom has always been somewhat suspicious about the notion of substituting financial aid for trade opportunity. We do not feel that that is necessarily the right way to help developing countries. It is better to give them more access than to buy them off in a sort of banana decommissioning scheme. Striking a balance between them will be difficult.

The Commission and the presidency, as we would expect, have to reflect on how to take the matter forward. We are gridlocked, as it were, on the negotiations. There is a powerful body of states that believe passionately in one formula and another powerful body of states that believe just as passionately in the opposite formula. It is an occasion when it is difficult, by doing a little tweaking or finessing, to bring one group into line with the other. We have to find a way forward. It will be for the Commission to propose that way, although the presidency will lend all the assistance it can, as we are duty bound to do.

The United Kingdom has to honour its commitment. We are not hooked on one mechanism or another. The mechanism is a subsidiary aspect. The primary aspect is to fulfil commitments that we have entered into voluntarily because of historical ties and the nature of the supplies we receive. The United Kingdom cannot and would not wish

[Mr. David Curry]

to walk away from that. We have to find a way through difficult circumstances. We will examine any mechanism which delivers that.

We have said to the member states that object to the proposal, "What is your alternative? We assume that you are not saying that the commitment does not apply. Therefore, how do you square the circle? How do you meet that commitment and at the same time deal with the problems in the present proposal?" There was a working party under the Council yesterday which was examining the problem again and placing the challenge before member states.

Many people have come to my office and to the office of my right hon. Friend to discuss the matter. We welcome all representations.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Is not the problem the fact that, if the matter is not resolved in a way that works in the interests of the dollar producers, from 1 January Sainsbury and Tesco could send a truck to Frankfurt to pick up dollar bananas and bring them back?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman will be reassured to know that our reflections on the way forward cover any lacuna that might emerge at the end of the year as we move into 1993. Therefore, we and the Commission wish to make appropriate proposals that would address that eventuality. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will excuse me if I am not too precise, because the whole negotiation is difficult, but we are anxious to find a solution.

We welcome all representations on the matter. We are acutely conscious of the representations and the lobby from the dollar fruit producers as well as from those with a place in the British market already. We have not had a selective doorway. We will seek a way through.

My hon. Friend has an interest and I gladly undertake to keep him informed of progress and, of course, to report to the House. The next opportunity for that will be in the scrutiny debate which, I think, will be in a couple of weeks. I hope that, by that time, things will have moved forward a little. The problem commands great urgency because of the deadline referred to by the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant). We cannot stop clocks indefinitely, and we have to get a solution. As I said, we are condemned to agree and, for once, we hope to be able to come out of the condemnation rejoicing.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 25 November 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ALLIANCE AND LEICESTER (GIROBANK) BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

MIDLAND METRO BILL *[Lords]*
Read a Second time, and committed.

CITY OF BRISTOL (PORTISHEAD DOCKS) BILL *[Lords]*
(By Order)
Order for Third Reading read.
Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.
To be read the Third time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Kosovo

1. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's policy towards Kosovo.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): The special group on Kosovo within the international conference on the former Yugoslavia is working intensively with both Serbian and Kosovar representatives. We strongly support its efforts. We believe that the Serbian authorities should grant the Kosovars autonomy with full civil rights, and that the Kosovars should accept that.

Mr. Waterson: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that Kosovo could be the next victim of Serb expansionism? What other measures does he think could be taken, as a matter of urgency, to reduce tension in the area and to protect the 90 per cent. of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo who are being oppressed and denied their civil liberties?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend has made an important point. The issue of the Kosovars was addressed directly by the London conference, and it is now being discussed by the working group in Geneva. It has also been the subject of talks in Kosovo itself. As my hon. Friend may know, there is now a Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe team in Kosovo, whose primary function is to try to defuse tension. We shall explore other possibilities in our attempts to reduce the risk of violence breaking out.

Mr. Wareing: Will the Minister give an assurance, on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, that on no account will the Government permit the export of arms and military equipment to Albania—equipment that could be used to create a conflagration in Kosovo, thus giving support to the extreme nationalists on both sides of the divide in that troubled province?

Mr. Hogg: We would be very disturbed if we saw any evidence that the Albanian Government were seeking in any way to foment trouble in Kosovo. That would be a very serious development.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the way in which the vast majority of the population in Kosovo are treated is utterly inexcusable and unacceptable? Does he further accept that many of us feel that, if the west had taken rather firmer and more united action last year, the tragedy of Bosnia could perhaps have been prevented? We now face possible tragedies not only in Kosovo, but in Macedonia. Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure me that Her Majesty's Government are well aware of that?

Mr. Hogg: Repressive action by the Serbian forces in Kosovo would indeed be a serious escalation of what is already a very grave situation—not least because of the risk that such action could pose to adjoining states. That fact would certainly be in the minds of Security Council members if they had to determine what might be the appropriate response to an outbreak of violence in Kosovo.

Sir Russell Johnston: At the end of his answer to the original question, the Minister said that the people in Kosovo must accept Serbian rule, given certain conditions on human rights. That, surely, is an indefensible position. If 90 per cent. of the population in a defined area want to assert self-determination, that is their right, and that is what we have signed up to in the United Nations. Will the Minister change his view?

Mr. Hogg: That is not what we signed up to in the United Nations; nor is it a correct summary of what we signed up to in the CSCE. There is a serious problem: whether or not one is prepared to unstitch frontiers that have already been agreed and that have been in existence for a very long time. If we embarked on that policy, we would create many greater difficulties in central and eastern Europe more generally. We believe that the proper way to address the position of the Kosovars is by way of autonomy. That is what we are working towards.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the only way to guarantee true peace to the people of Kosovo is to ensure that there are genuinely free and fair elections in Belgrade on 20 December? In that way, Mr. Milosevic could be toppled in his endeavours to carry on with his oppression. Will my right hon. and learned Friend therefore consider giving wholehearted support to Mr. Panic?

Mr. Hogg: I certainly agree that it is important that there should be fair and free elections on 20 December in Serbia, but one should not assume that such elections would not be won by Mr. Milosevic. He might well win them.

Mr. George Robertson: The Minister was careful not to answer the question about the sale to Albania of arms which might be used in Kosovo. Could he possibly give a straight answer now to what was a straight question? Did not the British ambassador to Albania send back a message and make it public that he believed that the situation in Kosovo was extremely dangerous? Today, the *Financial Times* says that the Minister of State

> "has not yet instilled into those working under him a strong sense of urgency."

What can the right hon. and learned Gentleman say to reassure the House that Kosovo will not be the next Bosnia?

Mr. Hogg: I have made it plain, in answer to a variety of questions, that we attach great importance to trying to defuse the tension in Kosovo. If there were to be an outbreak of violence, it could involve a number of adjoining states. That is why we placed such a high priority on that subject at the London conference, why we are so firmly behind the talks now going on in Geneva and why we welcome the deployment of the CSCE team in Kosovo. We most certainly will seek to explore other ways of reducing the risk of an outbreak of violence in Kosovo.

Cuba

2. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Cuba.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): We maintain normal diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba.

Mr. Ross: Following yesterday's decision by the General Assembly that it did not accept the extension of extra-territorial jurisdiction by the United States and given that there have been 30 years of stick for Cuba, is it not time that the Government and our European partners began to extend a little carrot? For example, should they not support the decision of the national assembly in Cuba to hold, for the first time in 30 years, direct and secret elections for the municipalities and the national assembly? Is it not time that the Minister overcame his personal aggro against Cuba and got down to normalising relations with that country?

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are strongly opposed to the extra-territorial provisions in the Cuban Democracy Act. In company with the majority of our European partners, we abstained in the vote on the Cuban resolution. The hon. Gentleman must not be deceived, in his enthusiasm for supporting Fidel Castro, by the recent electoral reforms regarding multiple-candidate elections to the national assembly. They are purely cosmetic. President Castro has made it clear that there will be no change to the one-party system in Cuba. I do admire the hon. Gentleman—even the Soviet Union has now abandoned Fidel Castro's regime, yet he remains constant to it.

Bosnia

3. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his EC colleagues regarding the situation in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The situation in Bosnia has been discussed at every recent meeting of European Community Foreign Ministers, most recently in Brussels on 9 November and with Western European Union partners in Rome on 20 November.

Mr. Mullin: No one would wish to pretend that the situation in Bosnia is simple; far from it. Although we are arming dictatorships as far apart as Indonesia and Saudi Arabia—we were secretly training terrorists in Cambodia until the autumn of 1989—is there nothing that we can do to help the people of Bosnia to resist the ethnic cleansers?

Mr. Hurd: Not by relaxing the arms embargo; but of course we must help. There are four things that we should do. One is to keep up the pressures to end the war, and the hon. Gentleman will have seen the increase in sanctions and last week's Adriatic stop-and-search resolution. Another is to get the humanitarian help through, including food and medicines, which is what the Cheshires are doing. We can also provide that help; the United Kingdom's assistance to the former Yugoslavia is £79 million to date. We must also create the basis for a political settlement, which is what Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance are doing all the time on our behalf. Those are the four main pressures that we must continue to apply.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend ensure that, in his discussions with our EC partners, he has their agreement that, in seeking a solution to the problem in Bosnia, partitioning of that country is completely ruled out, as that would only marginalise the Muslim population and could lead to a holy war, which would drag in other countries?

Mr. Hurd: It is, I hope, clearly understood that our European partners, the United States and the United Nations will not accept the partitioning of Bosnia-Herzegovina between Serbia and Croatia.

Mr. Macdonald: Does the Foreign Secretary recall the Minister of State, the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), telling the House on 16 November that the Government had no evidence of any breaches of the air exclusion zone over Bosnia? Has the Foreign Secretary seen the report in *The Times* yesterday where Mr. Cedric Thornberry, the deputy head of the United Nations protection force, says that there have been more than 100 breaches of the exclusion zone in the past month? Were the Government aware of those breaches? Now that they are aware of them, will they return to the Security Council and get effective action to stop them?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. and learned Friend and the hon. Gentleman are talking about two separate things. My right hon. and learned Friend was talking about attack missions—the use of planes based on airfields for attack. The hon. Gentleman is talking about a different category. If there are Serb air attacks from those fields, the hon. Gentleman is right—we will have to go back to the Security Council for further measures.

Mr. Churchill: Is it not unprecedented that the victims of aggression—the Bosnian Muslims—should be subjected to a United Nations arms embargo? Is it not the inevitable consequence of that policy that they will relentlessly be driven out of the positions that they hold and their positions will be overrun, adding to the number of refugees on the move in Europe which has been unprecedented since the second world war?

Mr. Hurd: The arms embargo applies to all parties. If the embargo is relaxed for one party, in practice it will have to be relaxed for all. I do not believe that that would be a step forward in the search for either peace or justice in the former Yugoslavia.

Dr. John Cunningham: As the whole case of the European Community and the United Nations in seeking a solution to the tragedy in Bosnia is based on the peace process and is buttressed by mandatory arms embargos and economic sanctions against Serbia, will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that none of our European Community partners is breaching that embargo? Why are at least some of our European partners breaking the economic sanctions and turning a blind eye to the embargo? Will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that he will take urgent steps to stop the breaches?

Finally, in connection with the tragedy in the former Yugoslavia, is it not ominous that on three occasions this afternoon the Minister of State, the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), refused to rule out the sale of arms to Albania?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's first point. Where there is evidence that either part of the mandatory embargo—the supply of arms to any of the parties, or trade in embargoed items to Serbia and Montenegro—has been broken, that evidence must be followed through, whoever pointed the finger, and those breaches must be stopped. I shall not add to what my right hon. and learned Friend said about the supply of arms.

Mr. Marlow: Can we be a little less diplomatic and a little more blunt? Is not the reality that the Serbs are swimming in the arms of the Yugoslav army? They have the arms and they are the aggressors. The Bosnians are the victims and they have no arms. If there were any justice in this world, we would offer our support to the victims and allow them to defend themselves with arms, rather than sustaining the aggressors. Have we in this country lost our courage?

Mr. Hurd: That is not what would happen. The whole country of Bosnia-Herzegovina is awash with arms. The arms are in the hands of central commands and warlords throughout the country and the various denominations who are not under any control. We would not do any service to the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, whatever their origins, if we increased the supply of arms into that chaotic country. That is the view of all our partners in the European Community and of the United States.

Russia

4. **Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had with President Yeltsin, during his recent visit to the United Kingdom, about the changes in Russian foreign policy which were announced in his speech to the Collegium of the Russian Foreign Ministry on 27 October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister discussed a wide range of current international questions with President Yeltsin on 9 November. Various foreign policy issues were also discussed during my meeting with the Russian Foreign Minister on 10 November.

Mr. Elletson: Will my right hon. and learned Friend make it clear to the Russian Government that any toughening of Russian foreign policy in the Baltic states, such as was envisaged in President Yeltsin's speech to the Collegium of the Russian Foreign Ministry, will be viewed with grave concern by Her Majesty's Government? Will he also assure the House that the Government will continue to press the Russian Government for the complete withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic states as quickly as possible?

Mr. Hogg: I always pay considerable attention to what my hon. Friend says about Russia. He is one of the few Members of Parliament who speaks Russian and has a long-standing knowledge of that country. The answer to his question is yes. We attach great importance to the early withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic states. That matter was raised on several occasions by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and others. We shall continue to press the Russian Government on that point. Their response is that they intend to withdraw and the process of withdrawal has only been suspended.

Mr. Winnick: Is there common agreement between Russia and the United Kingdom on combating racism and fascism in Europe? When the Minister meets his colleagues, including the Russian Foreign Minister, will there be an opportunity to demonstrate our horror at what happened in Germany at the weekend? A 51-year-old woman, a 10-year-old child and a 15-year-old child were burned to death for no other reason than that they happened to be Turkish. Is it not necessary for us to demonstrate once again that fascism and racism must be fought from the start, or we shall pay the penalty, as we have done recently?

Mr. Hogg: The events to which the hon. Gentleman refers were indeed dreadful. That fact is fully appreciated by the German Government, who condemned the events as strongly as the hon. Gentleman does. Fighting fascism and racism are major priorities of any civilised Government, including the Russian Government. Those principles are clearly enshrined in the CSCE agreements to which the Russian Government and, I am glad to say, the British Government fully subscribed.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the most potentially destabilising regimes in the middle east is Iran, which is building up its military arsenal, especially with submarines, which come primarily from Russia? Does he agree that Boris Yeltsin must take every possible action to ensure that that flow of arms is stopped, so that what is already a hotbed in the region is not further destabilised?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend makes an important point. There is no doubt that the Government of Iran have ambitions to become the dominant power in the Gulf region. It is also certain that they are in the process of acquiring arms to foster that strategic objective. My hon. Friend referred to the sale of Russian submarines. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister explicitly raised that question with the Russian President, Mr. Yeltsin.

Iraq (Exports)

5. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the dates of each meeting held by the former Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), with private sector companies concerning exports to Iraq, during his tenure of office.

Mr. Hurd: So far as I am aware, the only official meeting that my right hon. Friend held with a private company about exports to Iraq was a presentation by British Aerospace on 8 June 1989 at the Ministry of Defence on a proposal for the sale of Hawk to Iraq. Permission for the sale was later refused.

Mr. Dalyell: Is it not clear from the interdepartmental committee meeting of 1 November 1989 between the right hon. Member for Bristol, West, Alan Clark and Lord Trefgarne that, although the right hon. Gentleman tried to impose the condition that he did not want to have to answer awkward questions in Parliament, he was absolutely immersed in the problems of Matrix Churchill? In view of what he knew, how can it have been proper to allow the prosecution of three directors whom the right hon. Gentleman and many other people in the Government must have known had acted in concert with Government opinions and policy? How could those directors have been allowed to get very near to gaol?

Mr. Hurd: Those matters were fully discussed in the House on Monday, and everything that the hon. Gentleman has said falls within the scope of Lord Justice Scott's inquiry. That is the right place to carry those points further.

Miss Emma Nicholson: I have seen many Russian armaments in southern Iraq and, given the potential for conflict in Iraq, does my right hon. Friend agree that the European Community would be best placed to make early decisions on peacekeeping missions to Iraq and other areas of the world once the Maastricht treaty has been accepted?

Mr. Hurd: We shall certainly be better able to act together in the areas—this may be one—in which we all have a common purpose and can agree on a common way of achieving it. For exercises such as those to which my hon. Friend referred to have any validity, they would also need the support of the Security Council. Meanwhile, there is a crisis in southern Iraq, to which my hon. Friend has often drawn attention, which requires the kind of effort which we have been able to mount so far.

Dr. John Cunningham: Everyone knows that, as Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the right hon. Gentleman had overall responsibility for the arms sales guidelines. We know that when those guidelines were fundamentally and importantly changed, he did not inform the House of Commons. Did he tell the Prime Minister of that important and fundamental change?

Mr. Hurd: The guidelines were not changed. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade took the House through the sequence of events—the meeting in July 1990 and the fact that the decision was never implemented.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory cop-out of the Foreign Secretary's reply, I hope to raise the matter on the Adjournment of the House.

Middle East Peace Talks

6. **Mr. Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives he has taken to assist the middle east peace talks; and if he will make a statement.

12. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current status of the middle east peace process.

14. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress towards peace in the middle east.

Mr. Hurd: The seventh round of bilateral negotiations between Israeli and Arab delegations ended in Washington on the 20 of November. The negotiations tackled substance. All sides are, in our view, seriously engaged. Our objective has been, and remains, to support the process. We have had detailed meetings with all the parties and have played an active role, through teams at each of the bilateral rounds and in all the multilateral working groups.

Mr. Hicks: As the incoming United States Administration will understandably require time in order to formulate their position and policy, does that not make it all the more incumbent on European Community nations to ensure the momentum of the talks, not least to safeguard the requirements and position of the Palestinians?

Mr. Hurd: Certainly, we must try to ensure that the impetus of the talks is maintained even through the change in the United States Administration. The Israelis and Palestinians are now talking substance together and that is a huge advance. It is difficult for the Palestinians; they are being asked to discuss proposals for an interim self-governing authority. We hope that they will do that and that the discussions will succeed.

Mr. Day: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that it remains British policy to seek an end to the Arab boycott? Will he impart that information to Mr. Rabin when he makes his very welcome visit to this country? When will my right hon. Friend be able to report to the House about the response from the Arab states to British overtures on that point? If no progress has been made, will he be willing to raise the matter at European level?

Mr. Hurd: We look forward to Mr. Rabin's visit which will be an important and welcome occasion. We are in action with our EC partners in Arab capitals to secure an end to the boycott. We think that that is justified, partly in response to the action of the Israeli Government in suspending settlements. That action has been only partial and it would be very helpful if they could completely suspend settlement activities, including those in eastern Jerusalem.

Mr. Carrington: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the President of the United States plays a vital role in brokering an agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians? Will my right hon. Friend have urgent discussions with President-elect Clinton's transitional team to ensure that it is aware of the vital importance of obtaining a just settlement for the Palestinians without which no lasting peace is possible in the middle east?

Mr. Hurd: Yes. We will increasingly be in touch with Governor Clinton's transitional team and we will certainly want to discuss the need to keep up the impetus in the peace process and continue what President Bush and Secretary Baker have done in trying to strike, when preparing the meetings, a reasonable balance between the requirements of Israel, the Palestinians and other Arabs.

Mr. Janner: May I thank the right hon. Gentleman for what he has said about the Arab boycott? He is certainly right. Will he tell us what steps he has taken to achieve an end to the boycott and what results he has obtained?

Mr. Hurd: We have pointed out to our Arab friends that we believe that the time has come to end the boycott and we await their reply.

Mr. Skinner: Why should anyone in the middle east believe a word that the Foreign Secretary says when the guidelines regarding the Matrix Churchill affair were changed and when, in the House today, both the Foreign Secretary and his junior Minister refused to answer questions about whether they will sell arms to Albania? If he will not come clean on that and uses the weasel words, why should anyone in the middle east believe him?

Mr. Hurd: We have dealt with arms for Albania to the extent that they are relevant. The other matter is a matter for Lord Justice Scott.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Before the debate on the Arab boycott gets out of hand, will the Secretary of State remind the House that there is an absolute difference between international law which says that the settlements on the west bank are illegal, as are deportations, and relations between countries no matter where they are? The two things are not exactly the same.

Mr. Hurd: I am sorry, but I do not follow the hon. Gentleman. Either I am particularly slow, or the hon. Gentleman is not as lucid as he usually is.

We believe that the settlements are illegal—we have said that—and that, quite apart from their legality or illegality, they have clearly proved over the years to be one of the main obstacles to the peace process.

Mr. Batiste: Has my right hon. Friend discussed with our partners in the European Community his initiative to end the Arab boycott? Does he have their unanimous support in seeking that objective as well?

Mr. Hurd: The answer to both parts of that question is yes.

Gibraltar

7. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on deciding which elements of EC legislation applicable to Gibraltar are internal matters for the Gibraltarian Government.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The United Kingdom is responsible before the European Court of Justice for Gibraltar's compliance with EC law. In practice, the bulk of EC legislation is implemented by local legislation in Gibraltar after consultations between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Gibraltar.

Dr. Marek: Does the Minister accept that the Gibraltar Constitution Order 1969 led Gibraltar and a lot of us to believe that more self-government in respect of defined domestic matters would be given to the people of Gibraltar over the course of time and that it would be wholly wrong if such matters were prevented from being decided in Gibraltar simply because of Gibraltar's membership of the European Community as a colony of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman makes a very fair point, but he will be aware that the 1969 constitution pre-dates not only the accession of the United Kingdom and, through it, Gibraltar into the European Community but the accession of Spain into the European Community. It is for that reason that the Chief Minister agrees that the present situation is unsatisfactory. We are having fruitful discussions with him to see how we can define those matters in a way that gives Gibraltar the widest autonomy possible consistent with meeting the EC obligations for which we are responsible before the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. Friend agree that these are complex issues because of the EC status of Gibraltar and the United Kingdom constitution, and that those items will have to be discussed with very great care, step by step on their own merits?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Yes. I agree with my hon. Friend. The cornerstone of our discussions with the Chief Minister must be that Gibraltar's membership of the European Community, to which the Gibraltar Government and the Gibraltar people are very strongly attached, cannot be called into question.

Mr. Beggs: Has the Secretary of State considered whether, under EC legislation, internal legislation in Gibraltar or United Kingdom legislation, the circumstances of the collapse of International Investments Ltd. (Gibraltar) can be investigated, bearing in mind the fact that the vast majority of those who were defrauded were British citizens? Will he undertake to ensure that they ultimately achieve justice?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I can give the hon. Gentleman the undertaking that the standards of financial propriety in Gibraltar are of the very highest. Indeed, the discussions that we are now having with the Chief Minister are to ensure that Gibraltar is able to implement the necessary standards of control of those matters that the single market will demand. I know that that is the intention of the Gibraltar Government and of Her Majesty's Government. I am sure that the protections that flow from that for investors will be properly seen to by the Government of Gibraltar.

Mr. Adley: Does my right hon. Friend accept that—I have not precisely checked the mathematics—the total electorate of Gibraltar is rather fewer than the number of people in my constituency who voted for me? There are more than 80 million people in Britain and Spain, many of whose interests, together with those in the rest of Europe, are often obstructed by the Gibraltar Government's dogmatic views on issues such as the airport. Will my right hon. Friend please bear it in mind that the people of Europe in general and the people of Britain and Spain in particular also have an interest in the matter?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not accept my hon. Friend's point. The position of Gibraltar inside the Community, as I have said, pre-dates Spanish entry. We have suffered in recent months, through the external frontiers convention, from an inability of Spain to accept that fact. It is fact which we are determined to uphold.

Public Immunity Certificates

8. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his Department's signing of public immunity certificates.

Mr. Hurd: As my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has made clear, public interest immunity must be claimed for departmental papers if they fall within a recognised class or contain material which it would in principle be contrary to the public interest to disclose. A Minister will only sign a certificate after he has personally considered whether papers fall within the claim. It is for the court to determine whether the claim is valid and, if so, to balance the public interest in confidentiality against the interest of justice in the particular case.

Mr. Michie: In this intriguing "Who dun it?"—the inquiry taking place which has fairly serious consequences—does it not seem strange that the signing of the immunity certificates was left to what one could describe as a junior Minister, and that they were not signed by the Secretary of State or the Minister of State? We have to assume that either the Secretary of State and his side-kick were not very au fait with what was happening, that they did not want to know about it, or that they wanted a scapegoat if something went wrong. Those certificates were signed and could have sent innocent people to prison.

Mr. Hurd: What the hon. Gentleman might assume is that I was abroad at the relevant time.

Mr. Allason: Will my right hon. Friend tell the House how many times he has signed public interest immunity certificates in criminal and civil cases and how many have been overturned, as in the example of Mr. Justice Smedley?

Mr. Hurd: Not without notice. I signed some as Home Secretary and some in my present position. I signed one relevant to my hon. Friend about which he has written to me over the years and I have explained to him that the basis on which I signed it, as Home Secretary, was similar to, and after taking similar advice, the action taken by my right hon. Friends in the present case.

Mr. Trimble: The Foreign Secretary is in danger of misleading the House by his reply to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) that Ministers must sign certificates. The Foreign Secretary is not an automaton and is under no obligation to sign automatically a certificate the minute that someone tells him that it comes within an area that might be covered by public interest immunity. Surely, he has to exercise his judgment as to whether he should claim public interest immunity in the circumstances of each case. There is a particular obligation on him to exercise his discretion when the people involved are in danger of being sent to prison for carrying out the Government's wishes.

Mr. Hurd: That is not the position as explained by the Attorney-General. Of course, Ministers have to read personally and carefully the papers involved in the proposal that they should sign a certificate. They do so in order that they can certify whether, in their judgment, the papers fall within a recognised class or contain material which it would be contrary to the public interest to disclose.

Council of Europe

9. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what he hopes to achieve during his period as chairman in office of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The House will know that the United Kingdom assumed the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe following the ministerial meeting on 5 November in Strasbourg. During the six months of our chairmanship, we intend to give priority to the programmes for assistance to the new democracies of eastern Europe, and to the reform of the human rights machinery. We shall also encourage an objective look at the operation of the Council, in terms of its internal structures, its relationships with other organisations and its management procedures.

Mr. Atkinson: I hope that my right hon. Friend and his colleagues will find that new role less onerous than the presidency of the European Community has proved to be. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is nonsense to establish a new pan-European institution with a parliamentary assembly as part of the process of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, when the Council of Europe already has proven experience and is an almost identical body? Will he use his period as chairman in office to seek to convince his non-European counterparts—the United States and Canada—of the common sense of the Council of Europe being the parliamentary assembly of the CSCE?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I appreciate the point that my hon. Friend has made. It certainly is the case that the Council of Europe is already helping the CSCE on the human dimension and with its own technical expertise. However, the remit of the Council of Europe goes much wider than that of the CSCE and my hon. Friend will be aware that the memberships of the two are not wholly compatible. Although I have great sympathy with my hon. Friend's point about the proliferation of international organisations, I am not sure that his suggestion is ripe for taking forward at this stage.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Minister give particular encouragement and assistance to the new member states and guest member states during the next six months to see whether we can secure implementation of some of the more important Council of Europe conventions? During that time will he also seek to ensure that those states give proper respect and support to the Vance-Owen initiatives, including those member states through which arms are still flowing today?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Yes. I can give the hon. Gentleman the undertakings that he seeks.

Mr. John Marshall: My right hon. Friend referred to the problems faced by the countries of eastern Europe. Does he agree that unless we indulge in much more liberal trading practices with the former dictatorships of eastern Europe, then, following the elections in Lithuania and Romania, there is a real risk that they will return to communism?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I agree with my hon. Friend, but he will be aware that we deal with that matter through the association agreements of the European Community. In a sense those agreements were invented by Britain, and through those agreements we press strongly for the most liberal treatment possible in trade with the new eastern European democracies.

Sir Russell Johnston: Given the importance that the Minister rightly attributes to the Council of Europe and the fact that its plenary sessions are known one year in advance—as indeed are those of the Western European Union assembly—does he agree that it is insulting to our partners and inconvenient for hon. Members to arrange European debates in the House during those plenary sessions?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point, but the way in which the House chooses to run its business is a matter for the House. I know that a report has been produced by the Procedure Committee and all Members should look at it on a non-party basis.

Southern Africa

10. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit southern Africa to assess the political situation in the region.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development may visit the region early next year.

Mr. Hutton: Does the Minister agree that the present situation in Angola is a cause of genuine concern and has the potential to destabilise all southern Africa? Can the Minister tell the House what steps he intends to take to ensure that UNITA not only accepts the result of the September general election, but abides by the terms of the peace agreement?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As the hon. Gentleman may be aware, two days ago Mr. Savimbi said that the country must move forward on the basis of the election. That represents some progress. The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the grave difficulties in that country. The important thing is to encourage both sides to refrain from violence and to continue to implement the peace agreement embodied in the earlier agreements.

The United Nations Angola verification mission has had its mandate in that country extended until 30 November and it is important to note that the United Nations Secretary-General will again put proposals before the Security Council to carry forward the peace process in Angola before 30 November.

Sir George Gardiner: When our right hon. and noble Friend next visits southern Africa does she have in mind a visit to Mozambique? In the meantime, would my hon. Friend care to comment on the progress made by the two sides, the Government of Mozambique and Renamo, in moving towards the goal set in the accords that they signed in Rome? Furthermore, will the British Government do their utmost to help both sides achieve a reconciliation that is in accordance with democratic principle?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes, Madam Speaker. The United Kingdom fully supports the general peace agreement that was signed on 4 October in Rome. We will be playing an active part in the process in future months because we will have representation on the peace process commissions established to monitor the implementation of the agreement.

Mr. Robert Hughes: As a partner in the United Nations brokering of the election agreement in Angola, do the Government accept that they must do much more than simply adumbrate the novel constitutional theory that those who lose an election are entitled to a coalition government? Does not that encourage Dr. Savimbi in his recalcitrance? Is it not time for the Government to stop pussyfooting about with even-handedness, saying that each side must refrain from violence, when the clear responsibility lies with UNITA to accept the election result and carry on a democratic Government?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has accepted the significance of what Mr. Savimbi said two days ago when he said that the country must move forward on the basis of the election result. Surely that is a great step forward.

Mr. Garnier: My hon. Friend may know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has written to me recently about British training of the South African police. Can my hon. Friend say whether any steps will be taken in the near future to offer such training? Does he accept that training in Britain would enhance the move towards full democracy in South Africa?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am afraid that I am not in a position to give my hon. Friend any further information on the subject. There are several British policemen in South Africa as members of both the European Community observer teams—the one for the Goldstone commission and the European Community observer team generally. I am afraid that I cannot answer my hon. Friend's specific point this afternoon.

Mr. Donald Anderson: The Minister will be aware that the multi-racial Commonwealth, which encompasses most of the states in the region, has much credibility in South Africa among all the key players and can be a great force for good in South Africa. In those circumstances why do the Government continue to exclude themselves from the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on southern Africa?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have no intention at present of joining the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on southern Africa.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my hon. Friend agree that we should have an even-handed policy towards all groups in South Africa and southern Africa? To that end does he accept in his position within the Foreign Office that when President Lucas Mangope of Bophuthatswana comes to this country—a man who has sought to establish meaningful democracy in his part of southern Africa—he should have the opportunity, like members of the ANC and other groups in South Africa, of meeting members of the United Kingdom Government?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The gentleman will be able to make his request in the usual way.

Sir David Steel: Is the Foreign and Commonwealth Office aware of the important statement made the other day in Angola by the director-general of elections himself that in his view there were not enough international observers to make sure that irregularities did not take place? That is a moral which the Government should pass on to other African countries, notably Kenya, where elections are pending.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The right hon. Gentleman refers to Kenya. Of course there are a large number of countries where the moral should be considered further. As he will know, the election on 29 December will be observed by monitors and observers from the European Community, from the Commonwealth, and from the United States of America.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Minister take the opportunity in the House today to acknowledge the verdict of all the observers to the Angolan elections that those elections were free and fair? Will he pay tribute to the Angolan people for conducting those elections after so many years of tragic violence? Will he now take steps, through the international community, to ensure that UNITA accepts the election results and the fact that it must obey the terms of the peace accord? In particular, will he ensure that UNITA attends the newly elected Parliament and that its deputies are there to play a full part in the new Angola?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As I have said, UNITA has accepted the elections in the form that I have indicated. We hope that the peace process will continue, but I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the elections. We fully support the determination of the United Nations special representative in Angola that both the legislative and presidential elections were generally free and fair.

Hong Kong

11. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will next be visiting Hong Kong to discuss relations with China.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alistair Goodlad): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans at present to visit Hong Kong. However, my right hon. Friend was able to discuss a wide range of Hong Kong issues with the Governor during his recent visit to London.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why unnecessarily antagonise the Chinese by adopting such a beligerent tone during the course of negotiations with China? Would not a little bit of subtle diplomacy in the historic tradition of this great country be far more beneficial to British and Hong Kong interests?

Mr. Goodlad: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told Vice Premier Zhu Rongji in London last week, the Government fully support the Governor's proposals. We consider that they reflect the wishes of the Hong Kong people and are consistent with the joint declaration of 1984 and the Basic Law. The Governor's aim is to make the Hong Kong Administration more effective and accountable and the electoral system as fair, open and broadly based as possible. He is proposing a modest extension of democracy, consistent with the agreements that we have reached with China. Our policy in dealing with China over Hong Kong has remained the same. We want co-operation and a smooth transition in 1997. We remain ready to discuss the Governor's proposals and it will then be for the Legislative Council in Hong Kong to take a decision.

Mr. Sims: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the Governor's proposals have been warmly endorsed by the Legislative Council and that opinion polls show that they are fully supported by the people of Hong Kong? If the Government and the People's Republic of China believe that those proposals are in any way incompatible with the joint declaration and the Basic Law, could they be invited to point out where those incompatibilities occur?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is extremely knowledgeable about Hong Kong and what he says is absolutely right. It is now time for calm discussion.

Mr. Rogers: Putting aside the issues of the Governor's style and timing, will the Minister assure the House that the Government will stand firm and support him against the substantial pressures that are being put on him? Does he accept that there is much support within the House for the proposals which, as the Minister said, extend the democratic process in Hong Kong?

Mr. Goodlad: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he has said. Of course, the Governor has the full support of the British Government and of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. David Howell: Given that the Beijing Government are showing the minimum possible understanding of what the Governor of Hong Kong is trying to achieve through his reforms, will my right hon. Friend encourage the Governor to explain to the Beijing Government that the moderate democratic reforms proposed are not just consistent—the word that my right hon. Friend used—with the Basic Law but necessary to make Hong Kong operate now and, after 1997, as a special administrative region as part of two systems within one country? Without those reforms, the success of Hong Kong will be jeopardised, to the great detriment of the world and the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend is right. It is in the interests of Britain, China and the people of Hong Kong that Hong Kong remains successful until 1997 and beyond. The best way to achieve that is through co-operation based on the joint declaration, which is what we are seeking to achieve in the proposals.

Arms Sales (Iraq)

15. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions were held with the United States about the sales of arms to Iraq in the 12 months preceding the invasion of Kuwait; and what information on the United Kingdom sales of arms to Iraq was volunteered to the United Kingdom's allies following the invasion.

Mr. Hurd: There were discussions at various levels with United States authorities on issues arising from the Iraqi arms procurement programme in the year leading up to the invasion of Kuwait. As part of the preparations for the liberation of Kuwait, there was a full exchange of information on all aspects of Iraq's military strength.

Mr. Mackinlay: Is it not a fact that in June and July 1990 the United States Administration requested that the British Government should co-operate in halting the export of two furnaces being constructed in Strathclyde on behalf of the Consarc Engineering Corporation of America? The request was made as the United States intelligence services advised the British Government that the furnaces were to be used to help in the construction of missile components in Iraq.

Mr. Hurd: I would need notice of that question.

Citizens Charter (White Paper)

3.30 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): With permission, I should like to make a statement about the citizens charter.

The citizens charter White Paper, presented to the House in July 1991 by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, launched a radical and far-reaching programme of reform and improvement of public services. I am pleased to be able to report today that we are delivering that programme and now developing it still further.

The White Paper "Citizen's Charter First Report: 1992", published today—copies of which are available in the Vote Office—reports much more progress than I can list in this statement. Just 16 months into the 10-year programme, more than 90 per cent. of the 150 or so initial commitments in the citizens charter White Paper have been met or are in hand; and there is a substantial future agenda of more than 80 pledges of further action. This is a formidable record.

I would like to give the House one or two examples of what the charter is delivering. In health, we set maximum waiting times of two years for admission to hospital. That target is being met virtually everywhere. In England, in the year to March 1992, the number of people on waiting lists for more than two years had fallen from more than 51,000 to less than 1,700.

In education, the parents charter is providing parents with more information than ever before about their children's schools, starting with written reports and league tables of exam results, and going on to national curriculum results and truancy rates. We have set up the Office for Standards in Education to ensure that schools are regularly inspected, that parents receive inspectors' reports and that inspection teams include people from outside the education profession who can look at the school from the parent's point of view.

British Rail now publishes punctuality and reliability targets, and performance against them. There is compensation when those standards are not met. Privatisation will open up opportunities for competition and innovation, and will make best use of the railways for the benefit of its passengers.

On motorways, private developers are being encouraged, through relaxation of the regulations, to build more service areas to give drivers more choice and more competitive services.

Services are being improved to meet what users say that they want: driving tests available on Saturdays; evening sittings in some courts; tax inquiry centres to provide local point of contact for taxpayers; utility companies moving towards fixed appointment systems.

We have brought in legislation where necessary to meet our objectives—for example, the Education (Schools) Act 1992, and the Competition and Service (Utilities) Act 1992 —and we will continue to do so where there is need. For example, the Local Government Bill currently before the House will, if approved, give council tenants a new right to repair and a new right to improve and to get compensation if they improve their own homes and then move. It will also extend compulsory competitive tendering to improve local authority housing management.

Many of those standards of service are set out—often for the first time—in the 28 charters now published for users of the key areas of public service—for patients, parents, passengers, council house tenants, job-seekers, Benefits Agency claimants. The latest of these is the courts charter, announced today by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor.

Setting out the initial baseline of standards is therefore virtually complete for many of the main public services. This is part of the wider transformation of the way public services are run, moving away from the old command structures to more open, responsive management by clear and published contracts, which empower managers with the authority to run their organisations in the way that best suits the needs of those who actually use the service.

The emphasis will now shift to ensuring the delivery of standards and progressively improving them. We will do that in a number of ways. Performance-related pay is being introduced to make sure that good performance is recognised and poor performance identified. Many agency chief executives, for example, are on terms which include a performance-related element. Published information of performance against standards will be backed up by regular systematic surveys of the public's views of their public services.

Next, it is vital that public services be provided by the most competitive supplier—public or private—which offers the best quality of service and value for money for the user and the taxpayer. Wherever it is feasible and desirable, we will therefore continue to privatise services.

Where responsibility for services remains in-house, we shall market test them. I am pleased to announce today a fiftyfold increase in the targets set for the market testing of activities by central Government. In previous years, an average £25 million-worth of services were tested against the market. By next September, we plan to test services worth £1·5 billion.

We have made a formidable start on the objectives that we set ourselves, and the programme will continue to develop. The White Paper published today sets out a further extensive agenda of future action, including extending the patients charter into primary care; tightening targets from April 1993 to a maximum of 18 months for admission times to hospitals for treatment of hips, knees and cataracts; and publishing a further and higher education charter setting out for the first time the standards of service which students can expect when they attend university or college. Further action will also include updating and reissuing the parents charter later next year; setting new standards for British Rail; publishing of league tables so that people know how well their local authority is performing; and piloting a charterline telephone information service aimed to lead to a national service.

Good public services are essential for those who rely on them, and it is vital—never more so than today—that no money be wasted in their provision. The citizens charter programme of public service reform and improvement is at the heart of the Government's agenda for the 1990s. The White Paper will be a baseline from which to chart future progress. I commend it to the House.

Ms Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): If the Minister were serious about quality public services, he would have announced a long-term commitment to the public sector. He has failed to do so. Instead, he has given us another glossy document full of regurgitated facts, many of them published a number of times already. The Government have already spent £7,500,000 on the publication of the citizens charter and its departmental progeny, and I seriously question whether yet another glossy document represents value for money.

The Minister got one thing right in his statement—that consumers' and citizens' rights are crucial. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] I am pleased that Conservative Members agree. Their problem is that the public agree too, but they view the Government's citizens charter as farce and hype. The bottom line is that that is all it is.

Does the Minister agree that people's daily experience of British Rail is not, contrary to what he has just stated, satisfaction with published punctuality and reliability targets but a slashing of the budget of the Department of Transport which has resulted in declining standards and, as we learned this morning, a question mark over safety?

The Chancellor of the Duchy has had the cheek to mention targets. Targets were set below the level that many train services were already achieving, yet the Government hold up the targets as an example of the charter's success.

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that people's day-to-day experience of the health service is, again, a cut in spending? There is the two-year target for waiting lists, but the right hon. Gentleman has failed to tell the House that the number of people waiting for one year has increased phenomenally. The Government are playing with statistics. The people's experience is different from the picture that the Government paint, and they know it.

Will the right hon. Gentleman agree also that people's day-to-day experience of public utilities is not one of deep and sustained pleasure as a result of having appointment times and meeting people with name tags, important and helpful though those things are? Instead, there is deep dislike and distrust because the chairmen of public utilities have been having pay increases of 20, 30 and 40 per cent., yet the Government expect public sector workers to take a cut in pay. At the same time, they expect public services to improve. The right hon. Gentleman acknowledged last week at Question Time that the morale of staff is crucial. When the Government are cutting wages of public sector workers, how can the right hon. Gentleman expect morale to be high?

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that our citizens need basic rights—for example, access to information and to opportunity—that the charter does not deliver? The Government have greatly cut legal aid budgets, and as a result 10 million people no longer have the ability to use legal aid to appeal for their rights. The Government have cut the funding of citizens' advice bureaux and of voluntary centres that give people the chance to appeal and make complaints. That is the reality of what the Government have done.

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the public's sceptical view of the charter is a sad outcome because, as I have said, the basic idea is a good one? [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] I am pleased that Conservative Members agree. It is a good idea for the simple reason that the Labour party proposed the citizens charter first.

I have recently completed a survey of all local authorities. I have found that more than a third of them had implemented many of the quality management aspects of the charter before the Prime Minister ever dreamed of making it the centre of his domestic policy. It is the only policy that he has left.

Does the Chancellor of the Duchy agree that the Government have twisted the idea of the charter to provide another instrument or means of attacking local authorities and local democracy? The Government are against local democracy and public services. As the right hon. Gentleman made clear this afternoon, they are interested in privatisation and contracting out. That is the ideological dogma that drives the Government to say that the private sector is good and that the public sector, whatever it does, is bad.

Privatisation and contracting out was the agenda of the 1980s. We want to see quality public services, and that is the agenda of the 1990s.

Mr. Waldegrave: I warmly thank the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) for having had the courage to say—we do not often hear it said by Opposition Members—that we have a good idea and that she supports the principles of it. She even referred indirectly to President Reagan, who always liked to say, "If your opponents have a good idea, claim you invented it." I am extremely grateful to her.

The hon. Lady made the important point that both sides of the House are united in the campaign for better public services. Again, I am grateful to the hon. Lady for that. I am delighted that she shares the Government's long-term commitment to good public service.

I welcomed the hon. Lady's commitment to consumer rights. That is not the view expressed so eloquently by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) when I was last at the Dispatch Box, when he referred to "consumerist crap", if I may use the phrase. I apologise, Madam Speaker, but it is a direct quotation.

The hon. Lady talked about the daily experience of British Rail. I agree that it is unsatisfactory for too many of our fellow citizens. The way to get things put right, however, is to acknowledge honestly where the problems are, to put the spotlight on them and to drive up standards. That must be the first approach, and that is what the passengers charter is all about. There have been no spending cuts: there has been a major increase in spending. Total waiting lists and the two-year waiting list are down.

I agree with the hon. Lady, although her party has not shown much sign of agreeing with her and me on this, that information is absolutely vital for the consumer. That is why the campaign to publish education information is welcomed by my hon. Friends. I do not know whether Labour has done a U-turn on that or whether it has turned full circle. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), who is seated beside the hon. Lady, has a good record on information issues. For that reason we welcome the hon. Lady's support, if that is what it is, for the publication of education information last week by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education.

The hon. Lady said that legal aid had been cut. It has doubled over the past four years and will increase by 10 per cent. a year in the years ahead. Unfortunately, the hon. Lady was wrong about that, but let us not concentrate on the small elements that were wrong. We must welcome the lamb that joins the flock and say that we are grateful for her support for this campaign.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, despite the Opposition's sour grapes, many people recognise the significant advances that have been made as a result of the charter? Some of

[Sir Dudley Smith]

those advances have been better than others. Speaking from personal experience—I am sure that my experience can be replicated elsewhere—I know that the South Warwickshire health authority has had a considerable reduction in waiting times. It also has the appreciation of patients and a recognition by the staff that even greater targets will be achieved in the early part of next year.

Mr. Waldegrave: In my present job and in my previous one I was impressed by the way in which the health service was taking ownership of the patients charter. The best of the public services want to make their services better. In setting the standards, we have sought to find best practice wherever we can—for example, in South Warwickshire—and have then said that such standards should be spread across the service. That is the principle behind the setting of standards in the citizens charter.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The Minister spoke about waiting times in the health service over two years up to March this year. What has happened to those times since the general election?

The right hon. Gentleman also spoke about the rail charter and new rail targets. Can he confirm that British Rail has asked for a relaxation of the original targets and say whether he will respond to that request?

The right hon. Gentleman spoke about his support for open information on Government activities. I understand that he pressed Lord Trefgarne and Alan Clark to make available the information on the revised guidelines on Iraqi arms sales. Why did that not happen and, as assistant citizens charter Minister, what does he propose to do to make sure that it happens in future?

Mr. Waldegrave: On the first point, I can report further good news that will please the hon. Gentleman, who is a fair-minded person. The over-two-year waits in the regional health authorities as opposed to the special health authorities, which have a particular problem at Hammersmith hospital, are now down to five. Therefore, there have been major further improvements since April.

British Rail standards are being negotiated for next year with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. The Government presume that the standards will rise and not fall. That should be made clear.

On the hon. Gentleman's final point, I am sure that he will agree that it is far better to leave such matters to Lord Justice Scott.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): The Secretary of State said that announcements were being made today about the legal system. Given the intolerably high costs of that system, does my right hon. Friend not realise that some parts of the citizens charter seem fairly hollow to those of modest means who fail to qualify for legal aid and who find themselves confronted on the one hand by people with massively greater means, or on the other by people who get considerable assistance through legal aid?

Mr. Waldegrave: The courts charter, which my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor published today, addresses in an extremely practical and sensible way a whole range of issues which, on my experience of constituency cases, greatly worry and upset people occasionally. Those include, for example, long waits in court, unpredictability and opaqueness of procedures. It is important to deal with those matters.

My right hon. Friend asked about legal aid. The figures for public expenditure on all programmes in recent years show the extraordinary way in which the legal aid programme has expanded faster than almost any other. My right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor is right to look with a radical eye at the growth of that programme.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The basic, fundamental citizens' right on which all other citizens' rights depend in a democracy is the right to vote. Why is there nothing in the citizens charter about the disgraceful state of electoral registration? Why have we not been fully informed of how many people are on the register, and of how many should be on it?

If we are serious about charters, let us return to the charters of the 19th century, which were intended to extend the franchise and to ensure that everyone had a say in a developing democracy.

Mr. Waldegrave: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise particular points about how the registers are kept, it is perfectly legitimate for him to do so. If the subject is raised, however, some Conservative Members may wish to consider whether it is sometimes a bit too easy to get names on to the list without their being properly checked. Such matters should be examined from time to time, and they are examined.

Sir Paul Beresford (Croydon, Central): I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement. I especially welcome the line about competitive tendering. It is likely to prompt a small fracas of complaint, especially from some sectors of local government—although other sectors will be murmuring that it is about time, and asking why the move did not come a little earlier.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Is this a question?

Sir Paul Beresford: It will be, if the hon. Gentleman sits tight.

Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of the complaints that will come from local government will relate to the responsibilities of the client side and its failure to put contracts in order rather than to the competitive tendering system? When he considers the length of contracts, will he seriously consider leaving the contracts long enough to justify the investment of contractors in both capital and training? I am thinking of a norm of five to seven years.

Mr. Waldegrave: Having led a well-known local authority not far from here, my hon. Friend has considerable experience of these issues. He was very successful in achieving better value for money from both public and private sectors, thus benefiting the citizens of Wandsworth.

My hon. Friend's final point is very important. Whether contracts are run by outside contractors or by an in-house team, there should be enough security in terms of length to allow capital and training investment when that is right. The length of contracts will vary from function to function.

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the drastic reductions in funding for urban programme inner-city projects—it is down to £176 million for next year, and will decrease further for the following year—will have a fundamental effect on access to information and advice about welfare benefits for people in deprived inner-city communities? Will not that increase the scepticism and cynicism with which poor people view the so-called citizens charter?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not think that there is scepticism and cynicism about a campaign to raise the standards of public service. The hon. Lady failed to mention the large increase in resources for city challenge. I was in Bolton and Wigan yesterday, and there was great rejoicing in both towns about the arrival of large quantities of city challenge money.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): The public will welcome the continued progress of the citizens charter, while recognising that there is still a long way to go. Employees in the public service will also welcome it, because they are also consumers and because they will derive job satisfaction from the improvement in the quality of services.

The announcement of the courts charter is also welcome, but what can my right hon. Friend tell us about the 52 police forces? Are they included in the citizens charter?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is quite right: all the evidence that I have received when meeting the staff of many organisations up and down the country shows that our ideas are very welcome. I acknowledge that we are taking those ideas from the staff of such organisations, and then spreading high standards throughout the public service.

The police are not directly accountable to Ministers as the civil service is, and it is for them to produce their own charters locally. Some police forces have already done so: I am happy to say that my own, the Avon and Somerset force, has produced a very good charter. I was present at its launch.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the Minister accept that this is a PR gloss to cover the looting of public services by Tory business men who contributed to Tory party coffers? Does he not think that it lacks credibility when it comes from a Minister who talks about the need for information but who wanted to prevent information from going to the courts by signing a public interest immunity certificate? When does the Minister intend to produce a charter that defines the difference between the public interest and Tory party interest when Ministers sign public interest immunity certificates?

Will the right hon. Gentleman produce a charter that results in performance-related pay applying not just to chief executives but to Tory Ministers as well? Or would they not do very well?

Mr. Waldegrave: I think three out of 10, according to the hon. Gentleman's usual sneer score.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): As the grateful recipient of a refund from British Rail for a severely delayed train, may I congratulate my right hon. Friend on a charter that delivers the goods to one and all, including Members of Parliament? I urge him to continue with the progress that he has already made. Can he say what percentage of the initial charter commitments has been completed before we embark on the second phase?

Mr. Waldegrave: I would much rather that there was no requirement for refunds and that all trains ran on time. In the meantime, however, it seems to me that refunds are a good way of signalling to the management of British Rail that services should improve and of bringing some help to people who have been inconvenienced.

The answer to my hon. Friend's second point is, about 90 per cent.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): I have written to the Secretary of State today on behalf of a constituent who feels that, in the case of British Rail, the citizens charter is a sham. A year ago, there were six trains an hour that could take him to work; now there are three. The citizens charter, he believes, means that British Rail will devise a timetable to suit the trains rather than the trains to suit the timetable, and that people will be unable to get discounts.

Mr. Waldegrave: No, the latter technique would not be a satisfactory way of meeting targets and that is not how it will be done. I shall of course look at the hon. Lady's letter to me. I cannot guarantee, nor can the chairman of British Rail, that all British Rail services will remain at exactly the same frequency for the rest of time. It would be foolish of me to commit myself to that.

We should stop knocking British Rail. It is trying to raise standards and is being entirely honest about where it is not meeting proper standards at the moment. Investment in British Rail is at a record level—far greater than when the Labour party was last in power. Services should therefore improve.

Mr. Iain Sproat (Harwich): I warmly welcome the tremendous list of achievements that the citizens charter has already brought about. I welcome also the increasing momentum for citizens charter aims for the future. In particular, I warmly welcome what my right hon. Friend said about market testing. Does he agree that the result will be that the public as taxpayers will get better value for money and that the public as consumers will get better services?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Having taken money from hard-pressed taxpayers, it must be our duty to ensure that we spend it in such a way as to obtain the right quality and quantity of services, at the right price. That is what market testing is all about. In many cases, as the smaller programme showed, the contracts will be won by the in-house team. Major efficiency gains of up to 25 per cent. have been made. Therefore, the citizen, both as taxpayer and as the user of services, will welcome the policy.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Minister aware that, on page 25 of the citizens charter, we are told that, when telephoning the Employment Service, the average time taken to answer the phone is half a minute and that, if it takes longer, than that we can complain? Yesterday, while I was dealing with a constituent's case, it took a quarter of an hour for the Department of Social Security office, just down the road, to answer my phone call. The reason is that the number of staff has been cut and that

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there are so many people with complaints against the DSS and the Employment Service. Nearly 4 million people are out of work. That is why they cannot answer the phone.

As for the consumer crap to which the Minister referred, yes, pensioners want money, the homeless want houses and schools need to be repaired. That is what the Government should be doing instead of trotting out these glossy documents that do not add up to a row of beans.

Mr. Waldegrave: I give that perhaps five out of 10.

On the substantial point, I believe that the hon. Gentleman now has a standard against which to measure complaints. If the service is not good enough, I think that he has a measurable complaint to make. The hon. Gentleman has obviously read the White Paper closely up to page 25, which reports on the client satisfaction rating of the benefit services in integrated offices, benefit services in non-integrated services and jobcentre services. They all have high levels of satisfaction.

Mr Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the establishment of arm's-length service providers is an opportunity for the Government to control the quality of services? Such control does not exist for in-house providers. Does he agree that the difference between him and Opposition Members is that he is concerned about the consumer, not the provider of public services?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend, as a former chairman of the Association of District Councils, has great experience in such matters. It was not only on his side of the local government divide that people believed what he has said. I quote Sir Jeremy Beecham, the leader of the Newcastle city council:

> "The drawing up of specifications and tender documentation gave a fresh insight to members and officers alike in the consideration of what had often been taken for granted and, in terms of financing, dealt with on an incremental basis. Though it would be a mistake to push the argument too far, the purchaser-provider split and the development of Service Level Agreements between the provider of central services within authorities and client departments have caused a re-examination of performance, with generally beneficial results."

None of the Opposition Members I am looking at has run things for a long time. Those hon. Members on the Labour side who have run things know the truth of what I am saying.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): Does the Minister agree that the panoply of citizens charters is rather short on those which enable members of the public to complain about the effects of Government actions on their lives?

I received a letter from a constituent who runs an organisation called Belle Isle Elderly Winter Aid. It provides much help for the elderly in the area. It was encouraged to put in a detailed bid for work which needed to be done for the elderly through the urban programme. The bid was accepted by the city council as one of the new starts in the urban programme. The organisation wrote to me and asked me to bring to the attention of the Government its concern that the work which it does among the elderly has been short-changed by the decision of the Secretary of State for the Environment to stop new work on the urban programme.

Does the Minister think that there should be some mechanism in the form of a citizens charter to enable those people who have done the work to bring to the Government's attention their anger and concern for the elderly who are their responsibility?

Mr. Waldegrave: I exempt the hon. Gentleman from my previous remarks about not running things; he was a distinguished leader of a local authority.

I said earlier that the huge additional resources which are being provided through city challenge to many of the same areas and objectives had perhaps been underestimated. Of course, that has meant a restriction on the growth of the main traditional urban programme. I will draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to what the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the ethos of what he has announced today, and especially his statement that he will provide us soon with an opportunity to compare the performance of local authorities on a like-for-like spending basis.

Will my right hon. Friend focus on the courts charter? There is a feeling among our people that access to the courts is now for the very rich or the very poor. People believe that justice delayed is injustice—and there is far too much delay; that lawyers seem to make large sums of money by causing delay; that crooks can too easily intimidate witnesses and that those witnesses who have the courage to go to court often come away feeling bruised and shaken by the whole experience. We are talking about the rule of law. I am sure that my right hon. Friend recognises the rule of law as a top priority for his charter.

Mr. Waldegrave: I welcome both parts of what my hon. Friend said. First, the Audit Commission's work on comparative indicators for local authorities is essential and it will be strengthened. I predict with absolute certainty that, when the comparative tables are published, we shall have exactly the same uproar from all the provider groups represented by Opposition Members as we had about the education information. It will be as wrong then as it was on education.

My hon. Friend touched on important matters with regard to the courts. The charter attempts to deal with some of the difficult issues that he raised, such as explanation of what will happen before people act as witnesses. I have had constituency cases in which a great deal more could have been done in that respect. The charter also sets standards for some of the very matters to which my hon. Friend referred.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Will the right hon. Gentleman please tell us about the plans for an inspectorate of magistrates courts? We should like to know about the personnel and the control of that inspectorate. Is he aware that in Wales tens of thousands of people will lose their access to free legal aid? That is in a country of low pay and major pockets of poverty. When it is proposed to close magistrates courts, will the consumer —the community—be allowed to give a view? If courts are closed in large counties such as Clwyd, Dyfed and Gwynedd, that will impose long travelling times and great expense on people who have to go to the court. We need answers; I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will give some.

Mr. Waldegrave: The inspectorate of magistrates courts will be responsible to the Lord Chancellor. It will attempt to carry across best practice from magistrates courts around the country and ensure that standards are levelled up. That is a sensible way of proceeding. The magistrates courts are a pluralistic world.

On the second point, it is sometimes necessary to centralise courts. It is almost always unwelcome. Yesterday in Bolton—I draw this to the attention of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department—I was shown an example of courts which are out of date and difficult to use. It is sometimes necessary to build new courts and sometimes to centralise them, if the services which modern standards require are to be available in those courts.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): The Government are moving forward at an acceptable pace with this policy. That contrasts with the groaning and giggling that we have heard this afternoon from Opposition Members. How many Labour local authorities reached the necessary standard for a charter mark? Will he amplify what he said this afternoon about the pilot charterline?

Mr. Waldegrave: The South Yorkshire police is one authority that immediately comes to mind which reached charter standards.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): Kent county council.

Mr. Waldegrave: Kent is not by any stretch of the imagination a Labour council, but it won a charter mark.

The charterline is an important initiative. I was asked about complaints being effective. A charterline with a single number which will key people into information and complaints systems across the public service will be a major gain for accessibility of the public service to the ordinary citizen.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): The Chancellor will recall from his time as a Foreign Office Minister that people have to pay for visas to come to Britain. The visa service in many overseas posts is indifferent and 20 per cent. of all appeals against decisions of visa officers are upheld. How is it consistent with the citizens charter to remove the right of appeal against the refusal of a visa, as the Government will do under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill?

Mr. Waldegrave: As far as I can remember, the right of appeal was removed in cases where the right was technical and there was no chance within the rules of the appeal succeeding.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his announcement, representing as it does a fiftyfold increase in market testing. Does he agree that the new arrangements represent as profound a beneficial change in the delivery of our great public services in the 1990s as did those which we brought about in the private sector in the 1980s?

Mr. Waldegrave: What my hon. Friend says is right. The revolution in the method and standards of delivery for public services is not confined to this country. Most countries are addressing that agenda, but I genuinely believe that the United Kingdom is ahead, and that we have a more coherent and thoroughgoing philosophy in that respect. The international conference which we intend to hold next week in the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre will bring together people from all over the world to discuss those issues, and it will show that that is true.

Ms. Mowlam: As the Minister has in some senses shown this afternoon, the reality behind the charter is that he has lowered the aspirations and has not secured the achievements. He has also misled the House: he said that 90 per cent. of the original charter aims had been met, yet he has no basis for that statement. He has not polled the consumers; nor has he written to all the local authorities, health authorities or police authorities so as to have any measure of the Government's success. We can answer the question whether Labour local authorities have delivered, because we have written to every body mentioned in the charter. We have a fund of information on what has and has not been achieved. The Minister has not even bothered to talk to many of the organisations.

Mr. Waldegrave: Many local authorities have sent me copies of the letter which the hon. Lady sent to them.

The whole basis of the operation is consultation with users and services. That is the principle on which we are working.

On the subject of our pledges, the original White Paper contains a range of things which we said we would do—and those are what we have done. I by no means say that every standard has been met. If that were so, it would prove only that the standards were too easy. In many respects, as with British Rail, there must now be a drive to correct the situation in areas where our work has shown that the standards are not being properly met.

Fuel Cost Credits

4.11 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to allow fuel cost credits to be paid from the National Insurance Fund in order to assist those who are on low incomes, or who are otherwise vulnerable, with fuel costs; and for connected purposes.

My Bill would mean that all householders on benefit would receive a weekly fuel credit towards heating costs from 1 December to 31 March. The value of the credit would be graded into four zones according to climatic conditions. The Bill is identical to the Cold Weather Credits Bill introduced last year by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall). I agree with him and with the Campaign for Cold Weather Credits that such a system, linked to the urgently needed expansion of the home energy efficiency scheme, would begin to tackle fuel poverty. It would be a massive improvement on the present miserable scheme which can help only 200,000 people, not the millions who need help.

Later today, there will be much talk about pay freezes. Many Tory Members who earn three times their salaries by moonlighting will pontificate at length on the need to freeze the pay of low-paid employees. However, the freeze that I am talking about is of far more concern to my constituents—it is the cold this winter which many people, mainly the elderly, dread.

As I seek leave to bring in my Bill, it is warm and comfortable in the Chamber. When hon. Members leave the House tonight, they will go home to warm, comfortable flats and houses. That is not the case for the 7 million households in Britain where people live in fuel poverty, unable to keep themselves at the minimum standard for healthy living recommended by the World Health Organisation. The £50 million which the Government found so easily at the beginning of this week for the restoration of Windsor castle would have insulated about 250,000 of those households.

I ask hon. Members to consider how many death certificates in England and Wales mention hypothermia as a main or contributory cause of death. In 1991, there were 534—almost a 50 per cent. increase on the previous year. That is a shameful statistic. However, shocking as it is, it does not tell the full story. We should be asking how many people died for cold-related reasons, because often that does not appear on death certificates. However, it is clear from Government statistics that, between April 1990 and 31 March 1991, almost 500,000 people aged over 60 died. Of those, 230,000 died in the summer months from April to September and 270,000 died in the winter months from October to March. It is clear that there is a much higher death rate among that age group in the winter.

The Department of Social Security has created what it calls an "excess winter deaths" measure. In a comparative survey of winter deaths in 10 countries with similar cold climates, it was established that the number of deaths in January is generally 10 per cent. higher than average. In Scotland, it is 16 per cent. higher and in England and Wales it is a staggering 19 per cent. higher. By comparison, in Germany the increase in the number of deaths in January is only 4 per cent. In Sweden and Norway, countries that are known for their cold climates, the number of deaths in January is only 7 per cent. above average.

From the Government's evidence, I conclude that elderly people in Britain are at greater risk of dying in winter than elderly people living in other EC countries. I wonder how the Prime Minister will explain that to Ministers when they meet in Edinburgh in December. People who long for a white Christmas should reflect on the fact that, with Britain's current fuel poverty, for every degree celsius a winter is colder than average, there are another 8,000 "excess" deaths of old people.

Cold not only kills; it also causes disease and illness. The national health service spent £800 million on treatment for avoidable conditions—bronchitis, respiratory diseases, pneumonia and illnesses associated with, and created by, people living in cold damp conditions.

The causes of those avoidable deaths and diseases are simple: low incomes and poor quality housing. It is a disgrace that, on the day when I have the opportunity to introduce my Bill, the Minister for Housing and Planning has refused to visit a group of people living in system-built houses, whom my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) and I visited and who are suffering particularly from inadequate housing, which causes so many problems.

There is a huge problem, but what do the Government do about it? They offer a totally inadequate cold weather payments scheme. If one is lucky, that scheme will provide a couple of £7 payments. The scheme costs 50p to administer for every £1 paid in benefit. It comes into operation once it has been triggered by a very complex system, which actually cheated 7,000 claimants in Calderdale last year because the weather station was situated 15 miles away.

The payments go only to some people on income support—not to all. In 1990-91, only 1·4 million households shared just £8·6 million of benefits. That should be compared to the £800 million spent by the national health service on cold-related diseases, and we should ask ourselves whether the Government spend our money wisely.

The Government have tried to sell what is, in fact, the Prime Minister's scheme, as it was introduced when he was at the Department of Health and Social Security. That scheme is a failure. It is simply a glossy public relations exercise. The Government overrule the trigger and make payments automatic only when it is cold on the Embankment and they are ashamed and embarrassed and forced to act. They then believe that the problem has gone away, but it has not if one is old and cold and relies on the benefits that the Government believe are adequate for people to live on.

My Bill is an opportunity to do something now rather than do too little, too late, as happens so often with the Government. Why was not reducing winter deaths and the number of people dying from hypothermia a target area in the "Health of the Nation" White Paper? It is appropriate that I should call for that matter to be included with special targets. For example, let us try to achieve the EC average by the year 2000. That is not too much to ask. We should also call for an interdepartmental committee of Social Security, Health, Energy and Housing Ministers —that is, if the Minister for Housing and Planning deems it appropriate to turn up—so that a concerted and co-ordinated effort can be made to tackle the problems of being old and cold.

I should also ask the question that thousands, if not millions, of people are asking at present. With the current dispute in the coal industry, how can anybody justify one cold-related death when we have so much coal in the ground? We should aim to keep miners in work and let them dig the coal to stop the tragic and unnecessary cull of the elderly.

If the Department of Health, with its "Keep Warm This Winter" telephone helpline, which last year received more than 21,000 calls—mainly from elderly people asking for help with fuel bills and insulation costs—is serious, it will add its considerable weight to supporting the Bill. For all its public relations, the Department knows that not one person who called could obtain help with a fuel bill or with insulation costs, which is what the majority of them asked for.

We want real help for elderly people. We do not want what the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) offered when she was at the Department of Health—advice that pensioners should knit woolly hats. We want real help. I call upon the Government to accept my Bill and to stop those outrageously unnecessary deaths.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to brought in by Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. John McFall, Mr. Bob Cryer, Mr. Malcolm Chisholm, Ms. Ann Coffey, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mrs. Helen Jackson, Mr. David Winnick, Mr. Bill Michie, Mr. John Battle, Mr. Eddie Loyden and Mr. Dennis Skinner.

FUEL COST CREDITS

Mrs. Alice Mahon accordingly presented a Bill to allow fuel cost credits to be paid from the National Insurance Fund in order to assist those who are on low incomes, or who are otherwise vulnerable, with fuel costs; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 90.]

House of Commons (Members' Salaries)

Madam Speaker: We now come to motion No. 1 on Members' salaries. May I remind the House that I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris)?

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A question arises over the absence of the Register of Members' Interests. During the debate, as in other debates, hon. Members will have to declare their financial interests outside the House. However, page 386 of "Erskine May" says:

> "So far as voting in the House or a committee is concerned, and for this purpose only, the recording of an interest in the Register of Members' Interests is by itself regarded as sufficient disclosure"

to follow the resolution of June 1975 requiring disclosure. As no register is available, it is not open to hon. Members to rely on that.

Therefore, I ask you, Madam Speaker, to guide the House and to suggest to hon. Members that, on this occasion when we are dealing with Members' salaries, hon. Members who take part in the debate should actually declare the amount of their outside earnings, and that, if any hon. Member should so wish to do, they make their position clear on a point of order because there is no Register of Members' Interests, which is entirely due to the incompetence or ill will of the Government. That might help to remedy the position sketched out on page 386 of "Erskine May".

Madam Speaker: I expect all hon. Members who speak in the debate to declare their interests, but I cannot expect hon. Members to declare the amount of that interest. Should they wish to do so, of course they are perfectly at liberty so to do. It does not, of course, in a debate such as this, affect the way in which an hon. Member votes in the Division Lobby. I would expect hon. Members to declare their interests in the usual way.

4.23 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That the following provision should be made with respect to the salaries of Members of this House—

(a) the salaries of Members not falling within paragraph (b) shall, in respect of service in 1993, be £30,854; and

(b) the salaries of Officers of this House and Members receiving a salary under the Ministerial and other Salaries Act 1975 or a pension under section 26 of the Parliamentary and other Pensions Act 1972 shall, in respect of service in 1993, be £23,227.

I do not need to detain the House for a speech of great length. The motion is clear in content and in intention. It deals with 1993 only, and it provides for all hon. Members to receive the same pay next year as this. Thus, the full parliamentary salary would remain at the level in force since January 1992 of £30,854. That will also be the case for Members of the European Parliament, who are paid the same as Members of the House.

The motion specifically includes all those in receipt of a reduced parliamentary salary, because they also receive an official salary under the Ministerial and Other Salaries Act 1985. That covers all Ministers, the Leader of the Opposition and his Chief Whip and Deputy Chief Whip,

[Mr. Tony Newton]

and those whom the Act describes as Officers of the House—Madam Speaker, the Chairman of Ways and Means and both you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the other Deputy.

The motion also includes those receiving a reduced parliamentary salary because they are also in receipt of a pension under section 26 of the Parliamentary and Other Pensions Act 1972, although the only person covered by that part of the motion is my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), the Father of the House, as a former Prime Minister who is still a Member of the House.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Have any representations been made by MEPs on that matter? What power have they to resist such a regulation?

Mr. Newton: I have taken steps to ensure that the position is known. The hon. Gentleman will know that it has been well established that the pay of MEPs is linked to that of Members of Parliament, and I think that that is understood and accepted by all concerned.

The reduced parliamentary salary for Ministers will remain at the level in force since January 1992, which is £23,227.

For completeness, although it does not arise directly from the motion, I should of course add that, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made clear in his autumn statement, Ministers will also not receive an increase in their official ministerial salary in 1993. As Madam Speaker is already aware, I can confirm that the Government will not be bringing forward for 1993 an order under the Ministerial and Other Salaries Act 1975. So, for all those in receipt of the reduced parliamentary salary, there will also be no increase in 1993 in their official salaries.

The House is well aware of the context in which these propositions are put before it, and I will therefore touch on them only briefly. The Government's policy as regards public sector pay was clearly set out by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his autumn statement. Settlements in the year ahead across the whole of the public sector will be constrained within the range 0 per cent. to 1·5 per cent.

As my right hon. Friend made clear, restraint in current expenditure, of which pay forms so large a part, is a necessary condition of our ability to direct resources at areas of spending which should rightly have priority, including spending on capital projects. Only by exercising restraint on current expenditure can the inescapable pressures elsewhere in spending programmes be accommodated, and capital spending in particular be given the emphasis widely urged, while keeping to our published plans for public spending as a whole. Those plans form part of a coherent and responsible fiscal and economic strategy, and they were debated and endorsed by the House last week.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Can the right hon. Gentleman tell the House what amount will be saved to the Treasury if the motion is passed?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will be well aware that the sum involved is small. For reasons that I shall touch on, our recommendation is important.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Was that not a remarkably trivial intervention from the Liberal Benches? It is the principle that is at stake and not the actual cash.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is clear that we believe that it is right—I sense that she believes so too—for the Government and the House to give a lead in exercising restraint. I am grateful to the many hon. Members who have indicated their support for that view by signing early-day motion 834.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that I would support him and vote for the motion if he could guarantee that the cash which should have gone to my pay rise would go to Oxfam or the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and not to the Treasury. If not, I shall vote against it.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he said in the first half of his intervention. The Government have looked at what could be spent in certain areas of public expenditure, including those to which the hon. Gentleman referred, and we felt that it was right to ask for the exercise of restraint on forms of current expenditure, including the pay that is under debate. In that sense, it could be said that that request is part of a range of decisions that have enabled more money to be spent in ways that the hon. Gentleman might prefer.

Hon. Members would expect me to say something about the Government's view of what should happen in future years. It has become clear that, in any event, a new resolution would be likely to have been needed because of the substantial changes that have taken place in the structure of civil service pay arrangements with the move to a much greater emphasis on performance-related pay.

The existing resolution defines Members pay in terms of

> "89% of the rate which on 1 January in that year represents the maximum point on the main national pay scale for Grade 6 officers in the Home Civil Service, or if that scale ceases to exist, on the scale which for the time being replaces it (disregarding, in either case, any discretionary pay point on that scale)".

The last point, which is in parenthesis, is particularly important in this context because, by comparison with the previous structure, which provided a scale maximum and a higher range maximum—access to which was discretionary and performance related—the new structure, which has been in place since last August, no longer has a scale maximum, but a pay range defined by minimum and maximum points, with no fixed points in between. Individuals' pay within that range depends entirely on annual assessments of performance. In other words, in relation to the resolution passed by the House in 1987, the word "maximum" has, in effect, changed its meaning—having previously specifically excluded performance-related payments, it now includes such payments, and at the highest possible level.

In those circumstances, there appear to be two possible interpretations of the existing resolution. One is that it has simply become inoperable, with the result that it would provide no power for Members to have any pay at all, let alone an increase. The other is that its references to excluding performance-related pay should be ignored. That would produce an increase of more than 20 per cent. While there can be little doubt which interpretation the House would have preferred, I think there will be few who would wish to argue that that would have been an appropriate outcome, against the current economic background.

In the light of this, and the fact that, in any event, we cannot know how any civil service pay settlement next year will affect the performance element of the new structure—that structure is in a state of transition itself—the Government's clear recommendation to the House is that it would be neither practical nor right to seek to decide, now, the precise terms for future linkage. That is why the resolution deals only with 1993. We should return to the position for 1994 and beyond towards the end of next year when the position is clearer. I can, however, give the House two clear assurances.

First, the Government entirely accept the case for re-establishing a clear and automatic linkage with the civil service, comparable with what the House intended when it passed the existing resolution. We have no wish to return to the situation in which the House has to decide on Members' pay each and every year. Rightly, that is, I think, a very important point for the House.

Secondly, we do not intend that Members should forgo the pay increase which civil servants already have—the 3·9 per cent. for 1992 paid in August, which would, in normal circumstances, have been expected to carry through to Members pay in January—as well as have no increase in respect of the forthcoming year. In other words, we do not intend that Members should be permanently disadvantaged by 3·9 per cent. in comparison with the civil service.

I turn lastly to pensions, about which I am aware that some concern has been expressed, and which are indeed the subject of an amendment by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), to whom I shall of course listen with care.

Before making some comment on that, however, I should first make it quite clear that the motion before the House has no effect whatever on pensions already in payment. Those pensions, and the arrangements for increasing them, remain precisely as they are. Parliamentary pensions in payment, like other pensions with the same uprating formula, will increase by 3·6 per cent. from April 1993, as announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security in his uprating statement two weeks ago.

However, I recognise, of course, that the amendment is directed at a different point, which is the effect on future pensions of the proposed restraint on pay. As I have said, I shall listen to the right hon. Gentleman with care, not least because I note that his proposal does not go down the path of seeking to draw a contribution from the taxpayer, which would not be available to other groups affected by restraint, in respect of payments related to a notional salary. It provides rather for Members to be able to make additional payments entirely at their own expense, to offset the effects of restraint. Perhaps though, I might make two observations which he, the House and other Members of the fund who have put their names to his amendment may wish to bear in mind.

First, since the parliamentary pension scheme is a defined benefit scheme—that is to say, benefits are based on the salary payable at the time of retirement—and since the longer-term position will not become clear until the House has debated and decided it at a later stage, hon. Members would not find it at all easy to determine whether and to what extent they wished to take advantage of what is proposed in the amendment, without some risk of making payments which brought them no benefit. Secondly, taking account of that, it could be better to examine the alternative possibility of building on the general provisions introduced by the Government for additional voluntary contributions in pension schemes generally.

There are two ways in which that can be done. There is what is called in the occupational pension trade a free-standing additional voluntary contribution—that is, paying such contributions, which are tax-relieved within the Inland Revenue limits, to one of the many schemes available commercially. Secondly, there are AVC schemes which are provided through the occupational pension scheme, in this case the parliamentary scheme, which have advantages in simplifying administration and keeping costs down.

Should the trustees, or Members generally, feel that it would be helpful in the spirit of the amendment to explore the other possibilities more fully, I want to make it clear that I would be happy to assist. I hope that that is a constructive thought for the House and for the right hon. Gentleman. In ending with that thought, I commend the main motion to the House.

4.37 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): The debate is a matter for the House of Commons as a body and for Members to make their decision on a free vote. For that reason, it is essential that, in the fairly short time allowed to us, as many hon. Members as possible should have a chance to speak. Accordingly, I shall seek to curtail my remarks.

What we are debating is not a small part of a coherent policy for pay, not even in the public sector. Like most matters to which the Government set their hand, it is a mess. Nor is the specific proposal as it relates to Members of Parliament a policy even for our pay. It is not a policy; it is a smokescreen. The Government have announced a wholly arbitrary limit for public sector pay and they hope, by including Members of Parliament in its provisions, to create an illusion of fairness and the impression that the highest paid are taking their fair share of a concept that is usually completely absent from their thinking or policy.

The highest-paid, even in the public sector, will not be affected by the proposal. Next year, the senior ranks of the civil service, judges and so on will, I understand, receive more than Members of Parliament and more than the 1·5 per cent. which is supposed to be the general limit. We on these Benches object to the proposals for public sector pay.

During the election campaign some six months ago, the Conservative party, from the Prime Minister down, swore to the people that, because our economy was fundamentally sound, cuts in income tax could be afforded, as well as increases in public spending and improvements in public services, and that no cost-cutting measures and no revenue-raising measures, such as increases in other taxes or charges, would be needed.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): The hon. Lady has just said that there should not be a limit on public sector pay. Is that correct, or does she believe that there should be a limit—in which case, what does she think that limit should be?

Mrs. Beckett: There should be a proper and fair—seen to be fair—policy for working out public sector pay along

[Mrs. Beckett]

the lines of the pay review bodies and other existing bodies. That is the Labour party's policy. Did the Conservative party manifesto tell people in the public sector what the Government's policy would be?

Now that the election is over, the Conservative party claims, as the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) just did, that public spending plans can be preserved only at the expense of pay levels and jobs in the public sector. For a married public sector worker on £10,000 a year, even an increase of 1·5 per cent. is equivalent to a reduction in income, equivalent to an increase in the basic rate of tax of 7p in the pound. So much for the argument that income tax cuts could be afforded and that there would be no penalty after the election.

Let there be no mistake: the Government's overall proposals will mean not pay cuts to save jobs, but pay cuts and job losses. It is no accident that the proposal for Members' salaries is not for a 1·5 per cent. increase—as many hon. Members thought after the first publicity—in place of the increase in payment from last August for the civil service grade with which our pay is linked, but for a pay freeze. A freeze is exactly what the Government's proposals imply for many low-paid workers in the public sector.

Local authorities have costed the effects on their pay bill of pay awards for the police, the fire service, the teaching profession and other services, already made and in payment. The combined effect of those existing awards and other employment costs leaves local authorities some £200 million short of the money that they already need to meet next year's pay bill—that is without an increase under the formula. With universal capping of expenditure, job and service cuts are likely to have to be made to balance the books.

Moreover, we already know that, where incremental pay scales are in place, by law those increments must and will be paid. If funding is geared to 1·5 per cent. of the total bill, increments for some will mean a pay freeze for others. That is why Members of Parliament are to have a pay freeze. If we had been given 1·5 per cent. and it later emerged that many public sector workers were facing a pay freeze, the Government would rightly be accused of sleight of hand on their own pay.

That is why I cannot support the Government motion tonight. Members of Parliament are being used not to set an example but as a stalking horse. It is not only in the matter of a freeze that I fear that we are being used to help set a precedent that I deplore. By moving the motion, the Government are breaking, at least temporarily, a linkage with a particular civil service grade. The House has voted for the principle of a linkage on no less than three occasions—a vote and a principle which the Government finally and reluctantly accepted.

Opposition Members are well aware that the history of the Government's term of office shows that there is nothing that they would like better than to break every pay formula and linkage, and to dissolve every pay review body and every independent and fair system of pay assessment in the public and private sectors. They would love to move away from any form of national pay bargaining or concept of a rate for the job. They tried repeatedly to persuade pay review bodies for nurses, doctors and dentists to abandon national pay bargaining. They tried to break the pay formulae for the police and the fire service. The motion is all part of the same approach.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Will the hon. Lady try to persuade Labour-controlled local authorities to comply with the pay restraint, or will she encourage them to make whatever pay deals they care to arrange?

Mrs. Beckett: Either the hon. Gentleman was not listening or he did not understand the purport of what he heard. Local authorities are already underfunded for the pay settlements that have already been awarded and are now in payment. They will have a horrendously difficult job—*[Interruption.]* What is the hon. Gentleman's message and that of his Government? The Government are cheating local authorities on the funding that they have already given for the pay settlements to which they have agreed. Local authorities will have a horrendous job, and I do not propose to try to second-guess them in their difficulties.

The Government would love to break all pay formulae and abandon all pay review bodies. Most recently, in a move which I presume, from his remarks, the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) will not support, the Government are moving towards abolishing even the wages councils, the only protection still available to 2 million low-paid women in work.

At the outset, I reminded hon. Members that this was a matter for the House and individual Members. Each hon. Member has a duty to make up his or her mind—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members have a duty to take account of the overall income and circumstances of their household.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I presume that the hon. Lady is doing that for hers.

Mrs. Beckett: I most certainly am, and my husband does not earn the salaries paid in the European Parliament.

Each of us has a duty to make up his or her mind on the matter. I presume that press reports that Conservative Members are on a two-line Whip are mistaken, as this is clearly a matter for the House. As it is a matter for individuals, I hope that all hon. Members will consider their individual responsibility.

I deplore and oppose the Government's policy, so I shall not vote for their motion. But I do not seek a special privilege for hon. Members which I cannot secure for other, often low-paid, public sector workers. Consequently, I cannot and shall not vote against the Government motion that we should be treated as others will be treated, and I shall not vote on the main amendment.

However, I have observed that many Conservative Members, including the hon. Member for Ribble Valley, who I believe is a member of Lloyd's, have signed an early-day motion supporting Government policy, something which the Minister understandably applauded in his speech.

It is an unfortunate coincidence that the Government have found it necessary to stage this debate just before—I believe only days before—the setting up of a Select Committee on Members' Interests. We lack up-to-date information on the other earnings, fees or emoluments of Conservative Members. If they are new Members, like the hon. Member for Ribble Valley, we lack any information at all about their personal financial circumstances. It must therefore be a matter of personal honour. As Madam Speaker said before she left the Chair, no honourable Member should speak or vote in this debate to support a pay freeze for others——

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. There is a wonderful smell of cooking coming from underneath the Benches. I do not know whether we now have to cook our own meals as well as listen to debates, but can you help by arranging for whoever is cooking to stop, because the smell of eggs, bacon and fried bread is rather appetising?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I am not sure that that matter falls within my competence, but I can certainly ensure that the message is relayed.

Mrs. Beckett: I hope that no hon. Member will speak or vote in this debate to support a pay freeze for others without declaring in full the extent to which they depend on the salary which they intend to freeze.

Among the Tory Back Benchers who signed the early-day motion to which the Lord President referred are more than 50 who have declared interests, but there are many new Members of whom we know nothing. Between them, the 50 share more than 120 directorships and consultancies. Some Back-Bench Conservative Members are fortunate enough to have inherited wealth and others —all credit to them—have made money. But we should be spared the lectures about our duty to set an example on such matters from those who have the means to evade the difficulties.

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): A reference to the Tory Whips Office might be helpful. Does my hon. Friend remember that, before the last election, the Whips were busy distributing largesse to their colleagues in the form of consultancies so that they could sustain themselves in the manner to which they appear to be accustomed?

Mrs. Beckett: I shall not be drawn further on that matter.

I do not know whether the Lord President of the Council intends to speak again, but one issue that is of concern to me and, I believe, the House became apparent when I looked into the background of today's debate. The right hon. Gentleman said that there had been a change in the arrangements of pay for the civil service grade with which Members' pay was previously linked, and that there was now a pay scale. I understand that the Treasury has refused to give the Fees Office any information about that pay scale. It has certainly refused to identify the point on the scale to which Members' pay might be linked.

Today, the Lord President did not even give us the minimum and the maximum of the pay scale to which Members' pay was previously linked; he merely said that the maximum would be far above our reach. It is important that we have any available information. The right hon. Gentleman referred to the relevant resolution, and some hon. Members may wish to look at the impact of the change on their pension contributions. It may be difficult for them to do so if they lack the basic information. The figure in the measure is based on the average of 3·9 per cent. quoted for all public sector settlements. It does not necessarily bear any relationship to the grade to which Members' pay was linked.

I should be glad if the Lord President would clarify his further comments. We are talking about the consequences of last year's pay increase, and there is concern that, if civil service pay for the relevant grade is frozen for the year ahead, Members' pay might be frozen for two years. That is a source of particular anxiety to hon. Members who are nearing retirement, because of the impact on their pensions.

We deplore the Government's policy whereby cuts and savings will fall entirely arbitrarily across the public sector, affecting low-paid people in particular. We utterly reject the notion that what is happening to Members' pay should be used as a precedent to attack and undermine the position of other workers in the public sector. Above all, we reject the notion that the Government are saving jobs.

Jobs directly related to the public sector will be lost because the Government cheat on the funding, even of today's package. More generally, their pay policy is intended to remove £1·5 billion from the economy. It has been estimated that cutting current Government expenditure by £1·5 billion will mean that almost 90,000 jobs will be lost across the public and private sectors as demand in the economy is reduced. That is not even a coherent or consistent pay policy; it is an ill-thought-out shambles— gesture politics.

The only way in which the motion relates to the wider problems of the country and the economy is that it is one small part of the process whereby the Government demonstrate their incompetence, break their promises and betray the trust that so many have placed in them.

4.55 pm

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): This is essentially a domestic debate—it is our only forum in which to discuss our pay and conditions and, I note from the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), pensions. Although it is largely a private debate on the dealings of the House, I am delighted that it is open to public scrutiny.

I shall speak of a subject that, during my years in the House, I have never heard voiced. If my proposition is accepted, it will mean a reduction not in hon. Members' pay but in their disposable income. Today I am compelled to outline a policy that I pray will receive the constructive support of all hon. Members. It relates to the death of a Member in the service of the House.

I remember, as will other hon. Members, Sir Anthony Berry, who was killed in the Grand hotel by an IRA bomb, and William Roberts, who all but died at the Dispatch Box as he addressed the House. Liberal Members, like everyone else, mourn the tragic Saturday morning when David Penhaligon suffered a fatal and horrific car crash. We also remember John Spence and Eric Heffer, who were loved by all hon. Members.

I see that the leader of the Ulster Unionists is present. The House mourned when Rev. Robert Bradford was shot dead in church while conducting his surgery as a Member of Parliament. We remember Donald Coleman, Spencer Le Marchant and a man whose spirit still pervades the place, Sir John Stradling Thomas, who was loved by all.

What is the response of the House towards the death of hon. Members in such circumstances? I do not think that

[Dr. John G. Blackburn]

the response is very good—and I say that as an hon. Member. Even worse, we treat the death of our colleagues in an off-hand way. We perhaps think about them for a short period, then dismiss them from our memories.

I am open to correction, and shall give my interpretation of how we treat the death of other hon. Members—I am not talking about using funds from the Chancellor's purse. We do so by perhaps writing to the family, or attending funerals and memorial services at which we pay tribute. Seldom, if ever, are we asked to exercise benevolence to the bereaved families—I have never been asked.

Every day for the past 40 years I have read a book which describes the gifts and states:

"the greatest of these is charity".

I want the House to share and support my vision of benevolence. When a Member dies in the service of the House, we should be corporately invited to authorise the Fees Office in writing to deduct £20 at source from Members' salaries. In that way, we would exercise charity to the families of dead Members of the House, in the form of a sum of about £13,000. That is my proposition—and I believe that it could be done. It would be a practical expression of sympathy and affection for the family of a colleague who had served in the House.

I am conscious that I will not receive a positive response from Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen or from Ministers, but I am entitled to my vision. I intend to sow the seed of an idea this evening. I hope that the Leader of the House will consider it and that it will be discussed—to use the mystic expression—through the usual channels. I shall not lay down my sword on this issue. I believe that we should exercise this benevolence, within the community of the House of Commons, for the benefit of the widows and children left behind by Members who die in the service of the House.

5.1 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I beg to move, as an amendment to the Motion, at the end to add

'and that the Leader of the House should make regulations to provide that any pension which may become payable to or in respect of any Member of this House under the Parliamentary and other Pensions Act 1987 should be calculated as if—

(i) the salary specified in paragraph (a) were £32,057; and

(ii) the salary specified in paragraph (b) were £24,132;

if that Member pays supplementary voluntary contributions in 1993 of an amount which in the opinion of the Government Actuary is the average amount necessary to meet the full additional cost of the pensions so enhanced.'.

The amendment is tabled, as the House will have noted, in the names of all the managing trustees of the parliamentary contributory pension fund. Our purpose is to give Members the opportunity to make an extra contribution to the fund, so that any pension benefits payable either to them or to their dependants, if they leave the House during the period 1 January 1993 to 31 December 1994, will be calculated by reference to the notional salary of £32,057. The amendment will also help widows and other dependants of Members who die between those dates.

With regard to the first substantive point made by the Leader of the House—about the parliamentary scheme being a defined benefit scheme—the amendment provides an option for Members to ensure that they or their widows and other dependants are not penalised if their service ends at any time in the period between 1 January 1993 and 31 December 1994. This is an insurance against that contingency which it will be for each Member to decide in his or her case. Our submission is that they should not be denied that choice.

As for the second point that the right hon. Gentleman put to me this afternoon, it calls, in effect, for a separate and freestanding scheme for additional voluntary contributions—AVCs. While the right hon. Gentleman may argue that this would be desirable, I believe that our existing parliamentary scheme should itself provide all reasonable facilities for the protection of its members and their dependants. That is the basic rationale of, and justification for, the amendment before the House. In my view, all benefits should be integral to the scheme itself.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): I should just like to be certain about the right hon. Gentleman's point on additional voluntary contributions. Is he as clear as I am that it would be perfectly proper for the existing parliamentary scheme to take additional voluntary contributions, as that was the point that I think my right hon. Friend was making? If so, it is the most desirable outcome that we could hope to achieve.

Mr. Morris: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. My advice is that we need a separate and free-standing scheme to provide AVCs—that it would not be possible to make that provision within the parliamentary scheme as it stands, and that new regulations would be required.

It might assist right hon. and hon. Members for me now to explain how the calculation of salary for pension purposes is made. Benefits are based on the amount of gross salary due to a Member during his or her last year of service. For example, if a Member left the House on 30 June 1993, his or her salary for pension purposes would be the amount of gross salary due for the period 1 July 1992 to 30 June 1993. Thus, the calculation of the pension or any other pension benefits would be based on the salary of £31,455·50, rather than the current salary of £30,854. My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) fully understood that point.

The lump sum payable in the event of the death of a current Member is twice the Member's annual salary. Members will note that this figure will be higher if the notional salary of £32,057 is used in the calculation. I must also point out that, under our nomination procedures, this payment is often made directly to the widow or widower and without the need for grant of probate. Thus, financial help can be made available fairly quickly at a most difficult time for the bereaved family. Any widow's, widower's or children's pensions calculated by reference to the notional salary of £32,057 will also be higher.

I must emphasise that the cost of this facility will not fall on the public purse, in that Members who wish to avail themselves of it will bear the full actuarially calculated cost themselves. Speaking as chairman of the managing trustees and on behalf of all my colleagues, I am sure that all Members will agree that this is a reasonable proposition for the House to consider.

The fate of the Government's proposal to the House will be decided in the Division Lobbies this evening by Members themselves; but we must recognise that the interests of widows and other dependants will also be affected by the proposals, and according to whether our amendment is accepted or rejected. Although their entitlements to benefit are clearly at stake, they cannot directly affect the outcome of the debate, and the managing trustees seek, by means of their amendment, to protect their interests.

Mr. Ashton: Can my right hon. Friend give me any quick, rule-of-thumb figures for the effect of the amendment not being carried on, say, a Member who spent 10 years in retirement drawing his pension, who was outlived by his wife by five years—women tend to marry younger and live longer—and who I believe might forfeit about £10,000 if this settlement is not agreed to?

Mr. Morris: There can be no definitive answer to that; it would depend on the last year's salary of the Member who had died or had to leave the House because of ill health. Our essential point is that Members and their dependants will be at risk, as between 1 January 1993 and 31 November 1994, unless we provide the opportunity for insurance that the amendment offers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) is right to say that we should not limit our consideration of the amendment to the immediate future. The pension is based on the final year's salary of the individual Member who dies or for some other reason is no longer in the service of the House. We have heard this afternoon of Members who have died in circumstances of some hardship, and we have heard a proposal for helping them further by voluntary means. As my hon. Friend fears, the effect of not carrying the amendment could be long-term.

I hope that the House will agree that the amendment is a safeguard that we have a duty to provide. The additional cost if the option is used, will be voluntary. The amendment is aimed solely at protecting Members and their dependents who, because of ill health or death in service, end their service to the House between 1 January 1993 and 31 December 1994.

5.10 pm

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): I shall speak in favour of the amendment. Before I do so, I welcome the assurance given by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that we shall reconsider linkage before the end of 1993. I am sure that no hon. Member wants to return to what I would term the obscene practice of voting on our own salary, and inevitably coming face to face with media criticism every year. That was an invidious procedure for everyone. I am delighted that my right hon. Friend clarified the matter.

I am a relatively new trustee, and I wish to pay tribute to the chairman of the managing trustees of the parliamentary contributory pension scheme, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), for the way in which he conducts our affairs. I am currently on a learning curve, but I support what he has said about the situation that could apply between 1 January 1993 and the end of 1994.

Perhaps it is morbid to dwell on the subject, but I am told that, in an average year, 12 Members will leave the House in one way or another. We have now been sitting for about five or six months in this Session and we are way behind our quota for the year. It would be intolerable if, between now and the end of 1994, a Member were disadvantaged financially, as a result of death or retirement, in terms of the grant paid at the end of his or her period of service. A widow's rights for the rest of her life and the ex-Member's retirement life should come within the same category.

The amendment is well based and deserves support. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House should consider it a bird in the hand. He said that there might be further discussions, but it seems that the amendment sets out the way forward. It is something tangible, and I urge all right hon. and hon. Members to support it.

5.13 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Like the hon. Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer), I shall declare an interest. I too am a new pension fund trustee. Again taking up the remarks of the hon. Gentleman, I commend the chairman of the trustees, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), on his work.

I hope that the House will consider the amendment with sympathy. It relates to the impact that the motion will have on the pension fund, the beneficiaries and others. It should be understood that the motion will have effect over a two-year period, all the way through to 31 December 1994, if it is accepted as it stands.

It is not impossible, for example, that there will be a general election between now and 31 December 1994. If that were to happen, the severance pay of any Member on leaving the House because of retirement or defeat at the polls would be affected. There would be some impact on the amount of money that he or she would be able to claim under the current schemes. If we make any changes, we should do so only after a great deal of careful consideration. Right hon. and hon. Members should understand the importance of——

Dr. Godman: Have the trustees received any representations from representatives of Members of the European Parliament on these matters? It seems that we have before us a curious form of the application of subsidiarity. It appears that the House is determining the pension rights of MEPs, their widows—God forgive me for saying so—and their widowers. It is a most curious form of the application of subsidiarity if MEPs have not been involved in the discussions.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am sure that those who occupy the Government Front Bench have heard the point made so succinctly by the hon. Gentleman. I am not aware of any representations coming to the Committee that deals with the trustees of the pension fund. If any representations were made, they should have been made directly by MEPs to the Government.

Mr. Dicks: The hon. Gentleman said that there would be a freeze for two years. I was under the impression, wrongly, that it was for one year. Perhaps he will explain.

Mr. Kirkwood: I knew that I should not have become involved in this. I am a new trustee. Calculations for severance pay are based on the two years of previous service. Until 31 December 1994, the calculation will take into account the period of the freeze that we are discussing in the light of the motion.

I have taken some advice—I did not just make up what I said—and I believe that I am right. The effect would not

[Mr. Kirkwood]

be great, but there would be an impact on severance pay. It seems that the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) is already contemplating defeat at the next general election, and perhaps before 31 December 1994. He should not worry too much, because, if this Parliament lasts until then, the effect will not be great.

I have one or two additional——

Mr. Dicks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kirkwood: I am not the best person to deal with these matters.

I have one or two further comments to make on the substantive motion. First, like everyone else, I am extremely nervous about breaking the link. Any breakage of the linkage that we have established would be unfortunate. I understood the Leader of the House to say that he was not really breaking the link, because he was holding fast to the principle. He said, in effect, that he was uncoupling it for 12 months.

I do not understand why the Government did not say, "We shall have a 1·5 per cent. increase just like everyone else." How did a freeze suddenly emerge? The small print in the autumn statement suggested that we were facing a 1·5 per cent. increase as a matter of pay restraint. I can understand that, but I do not understand—the Leader of the House will help me a great deal if he will explain—why we have moved from that restraint to a full-blown freeze.

When I intervened in the speech of the Leader of the House, he made it clear that not much money would be saved. That must be so. It seems that we are talking about saving £1,000 per Member under the terms of the substantive motion. That is about £700,000-worth of public expenditure. That is a flea-bite when set against public expenditure totals. The Government could look at many other areas, such as Ministers' country houses, if they want to save money on that scale.

I am a new member of the Liaison Committee which is working out how to spend £500,000 or £600,000 of taxpayers' money to inform Select Committees by sending Members abroad. I am in favour of travelling abroad, especially in relation to some of the reports about Europe. It is entirely reasonable for members of Select Committees involved in the study of detailed subjects to be able to travel when absolutely necessary. However, members of the Select Committees on Trade and Industry, on Home Affairs and on Defence travel to Washington and such places. A great deal of money could be saved there.

The hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) raised an important matter when he asked what was to happen to the money. The answer given by the Leader of the House was unconvincing—it seems that it will return to the maw of the Treasury. Some of it may find its way to the Bosnian refugees or Somalia or to the miners' benevolent fund, and perhaps some of it will be used to supply arms to Saddam Hussein. The motion is a mere gesture and it would be far more effective to earmark the money. I thought that the hon. Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) would have suggested putting the £1,000 per head into the Members' benevolent fund. That commends itself much more to me than allowing money to flow back to the Treasury.

The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) spoke persuasively about the Government setting an example by freezing our pay. I shall listen carefully to the Leader of the House. If he is to gain my vote, he will have to guarantee that such freezing will not be used as a precedent in the formation of Government policy on public sector pay. It would be easy for the Government and the Chancellor to say that a pay freeze at Westminster is biting the bullet and that public sector employees will have to accept the same medicine. If that is in the Government's mind, it is iniquitous. If it is not their thinking, the Leader of the House should say so clearly in winding up.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Like many other hon. Members, I have not been present for most of the debate because of other commitments. The hon. Gentleman raises important matters and, in coal industry terms, he is on what would be regarded as a good seam. What precedents are being established in the debate and what will be the link with civil service pay? It would be unsatisfactory for the House to decide Members' pay every year. Members' pay should be linked to a group in the civil service, although I entirely accept that the present group may be in the process of being phased out and that we will have to look at the arrangements again. The freeze should be temporary and we should look at these matters again soon so that we can quickly establish an automatic link.

Mr. Kirkwood: I think that in future I shall adopt the hon. Gentleman's technique of arriving late and making a speech without being called. I entirely support the thrust of his comments, but he may not have had the benefit of hearing the Leader of the House at the beginning of the debate.

This is a complicated matter, and some hon. Members are uncertain about precisely what is to happen. The motion states that, from 1 January 1993, pay will be frozen. I understood the Leader of the House to say that he intended to cling to the principle of establishing a link. I am not clear about what is to happen in 1993 to produce a pay level for 1 January 1994. The right hon. Gentleman seemed to suggest that the reference group was no longer suitable for calculating pay. However, he did not outline the consequences that flow from that or how he would cope. Will he review the method of assessing Members' pay? If he does, he will be turning over ground that has already been ploughed by the Top Salaries Review Body, which studied all the comparators at great length.

The Leader of the House is aware of the pay of Senators and Congressmen in the United States of America and the pay of public representatives in France, Germany or even Italy, who all receive substantially more than we do. I hope that he will look at all these matters afresh, give them the fullest consideration and take evidence and publish reports rather than picking a figure out of the air.

The reference group that the Leader of the House mentioned may be subject to a 1·5 per cent. pay freeze, which may be increased or reduced. As Opposition Members have said, we do not even know the reference points in the civil service group. The right hon. Gentleman's only positive statement was that we would not lose twice. As far as it goes, that is reassuring; but does it mean that, if the average restraint is 1·5 per cent. in the calendar year commencing 1 January 1993, we can expect to lose the 3·9 per cent. civil service pay award that has already been made? The only way to make up that ground is by increasing our salaries by 5·4 per cent. from 1 January next year. The Leader of the House will have to answer that question in specific terms before he can be confident that people will understand the full implications of the Government motion.

I suspect that there has been some gesture politics by the Government, and that is no substitute for an effective economic policy. Since 1979, the Government have had a £100 billion windfall in oil and gas revenues and have received £60 billion from privatisation. They are in a sorry mess if their only effective action on the economy is to freeze Members' pay.

I am much less concerned about rates of pay than about House facilities to enable hon. Members to do the job for which we were elected. That has been a hobby horse of mine since I was elected in 1983. The people whom we scrutinise in the civil service and elsewhere have the benefit of access to high-tech equipment. The sooner that the Leader of the House and the House authorities start to provide such facilities for Members to do their job effectively, the better it will be for us all. I hope that the Leader of the House will try to answer some of my questions, especially the one about what is to happen after 1 January 1994.

5.27 pm

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Much has been said about Members' pay since it was first granted in 1911, which was a little before my time, and I am sure that much more will be said about it in future. It is an emotive subject that is often clouded by Opposition Members who are far more interested in the incomes of Conservative Members than those of hon. Members generally. That typifies socialist thinking—if that is not a contradiction in terms —and flies in the face of a common acceptance over the years, as stated in the 1983 Top Salaries Review Body report, that hon. Members should not be driven to take on additional paid employment simply because of financial pressures. For their own reasons, many hon. Members take additional paid employment. Some Opposition Members have a fixation, driven by dogma and stirred by envy, that levelling is the name of the game. As usual, the levelling is downwards.

As the Leader of the House said, there is a problem with the current pay settlement, because a productivity element is being introduced into civil service remuneration. It has been suggested that that should apply to the pay of hon. Members.

Mr. Dicks: I hope that my hon. Friend will point out that civil servants receive both a non-contributory pension and a lump-sum gratuity when they retire. The Government never took that into account when Members' pay was linked to that of civil servants and we received 89 per cent. of grade 6 pay.

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friend has made his point admirably, but I was going to make another point, in connection with performance-related pay. Who would judge the performance of Members of Parliament? I think that the electors would be the best judges: given that they supported the Conservatives in 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1992, and will do so again at the next general election, Conservative Members should feel quite safe about being paid according to performance—although I would feel extremely concerned about the prospect were I an Opposition Member.

The debate, however, is not about the remuneration of Members of Parliament in general; it is about their remuneration during a period of pay restraint. This year, I voted—along with some Conservative Members and most Opposition Members—for an increase in office cost allowances. That was not a particularly popular move, but I felt that it had to be made. As has been said, Members of Parliament need to have the tools for the job, and those tools are very expensive—especially for new Members, who incur the start-off costs of all the new equipment that they must acquire. Pay, however, is an entirely different matter; I do not think that Members' pay should be differentiated from that of other people.

My constituency has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, but I cannot be complacent. This week one of our major cement companies, Castle Cement, announced 70 redundancies. Other job losses, short working, pay freezes and—in certain circumstances, in the private sector—pay reductions have been commonplace for the past two years, and have become more so as the world recession has gripped. How would it look to the country at large if we, as a group, voted ourselves a pay rise while others suffered pay cuts? We should look worse than pickpockets, taking from others and hoping that they were looking the other way. The public, however, are not looking the other way; they are looking at the House.

I believe that the autumn statement was imaginative, realistic and a boost to confidence. It sent the nation a determined message that all possible measures would be taken to speed our journey to recovery. The public sector, which has enjoyed a real improvement in living standards since 1979, has been asked to restrict wage rises to 1·5 per cent. this year. That will help to ensure that resources are available for the capital projects that we have all pressed the Government to continue; it will also allow social security uprating, which the House will applaud.

This debate is not about gesture politics; it is about sending the public a message about the need for restraint on the part of the public sector, Members of Parliament and the private sector. The private sector has taken the brunt of the knocks from the recession: frozen pay is no stranger to companies whose profits have slumped and whose markets have shrunk. In a recent speech, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister asked for pay restraint in the boardroom as well as in the toolroom. I echo those sentiments, along with the message that has been sent to the captains of our newly privatised companies and, of course, to the rest of us: there can be no conscientious objectors in the fight against recession.

Too many bosses of late have been grabbing double-figure pay increases. Some water bosses seem oblivious to what is happening around them. While other workers are forced to forgo their jobs, let alone pay increases, water bosses have been heaping riches on themselves. They should hand those riches back.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): The hon. Gentleman has raised an interesting point. May I draw his attention to the behaviour of the chairman of Yorkshire Water, who has just taken a substantial pay increase? I wonder what advice the hon. Gentleman would offer his hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), who is a paid director of Yorkshire Water—that constitutes part of his outside earnings. Would he advise his hon. Friend to tell the Yorkshire Water chairman not to take a pay increase at all?

Mr. Evans: According to figures that I have before me, the Yorkshire Water boss received a 40 per cent. pay rise this year. I shall comment on that but I shall leave it to hon. Members to decide what they ought to do with their own incomes.

As I have said, there should be no conscientious objectors in the battle against the recession, whether the battle is fought in the boardroom or in the toolroom. When the foot soldiers are in the firing line, the captains can be found in the mess swigging down the brandy and stuffing their pockets with cigars; but everyone must make a sacrifice for the country, and the sight of some top people raiding the war chest is certainly an unpalatable one. I hope that shareholders, in Yorkshire and elsewhere, will take note of that.

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman seems to have missed the essential point. What advice will he give his hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey, who is a director of Yorkshire Water?

Mr. Evans: I have already responded to that question. As I have said, such companies have shareholders, and I hope that they will note exactly what bosses and others are being paid. I repeat that there can be no conscientious objectors.

In 1983, the Top Salaries Review Body stated that it would damage the national interest if the salary of Members of Parliament was allowed to remain too far below the levels available to able men and women in other walks of life. The current national average pay for men is about £340 a week—I realise, of course, that averages take extremities into account. Clearly, Members of Parliament do worse than some people, but we do a great deal better than others. My real reward will come in heaven; but I fully understand why some Opposition Members may prefer to receive their rewards now, on earth.

It is rumoured that some hon. Members will want to show solidarity with public-sector workers by abstaining this evening, or sitting on their hands. That, however, is hardly the response for which the public sector will look. The way in which to show support for both public and private sectors—the way in which to send clear messages to boardroom bosses and industrial leaders—is to vote for a pay freeze, and to support the Government's economic recovery package.

5.37 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): The House will not be surprised to learn that I do not intend to follow too closely the rather naive speech of the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans). Let me make one point about it, however. The hon. Gentleman described Opposition Members' criticism of moonlighters as the politics of envy; but did he not engage in the politics of envy when he—rightly, in my view—criticised company directors who had accepted huge pay increases? It does not quite add up.

Mr. Nigel Evans: I was asking for pay restraint in all sectors—public and private, boardroom and toolroom—in the next pay round, irrespective of current earnings. We should note, however, that the 49 companies that have been privatised since 1979 now earn the country £2 billion in taxation, year in, year out. Before they were privatised, they cost the Exchequer £50 million a week.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Each intervention has tended to be longer than the last. Sadly, long interventions are not the prerogative of either side of the House.

Mr. Hoyle: As a matter of fact, I was finding the hon. Gentleman's reply quite interesting. I take it from what he said that he will tell his hon. Friends who hold directorships and consultancies not to accept pay increases in the coming year.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Yes.

Mr. Hoyle: Let me make it clear where I stand. I am totally opposed to pay freezes, so I shall vote against the Government motion. The pay freeze for the public sector will not make matters better. As my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said, many people, because of the restrictions on local government, will lose their jobs. Far from improving things, the pay freeze will make matters worse. The restrictions on purchasing power will not lead to economic recovery. We shall be shoved deeper into recession.

We are linked to those in grade 6 who received their pay increase last August. We ought therefore, if there is any natural justice, to have got ours in August. It just so happens that our increase is due next January. We ought to be given that increase, for our pay is linked to grade 6. The Leader of the House was ambiguous. He referred to the link having been maintained. With whom is the link being maintained? It will be difficult to maintain that link, for the Leader of the House went on to say that those in grade 6 are to go on to performance-related pay. If Cabinet members were on performance-related pay, they would have to pay money to the Treasury for years to come. To whom, therefore, shall we be linked? Can the Leader of the House assure us that pay restraint will apply for only 12 months?

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): What repayments were made by the Labour Government to the Treasury for their performance between 1974 and 1979?

Mr. Hoyle: That is a pathetic question. When we left office, the economy was in good shape. *[Laughter.]* I shall take the smile off the face of the man who hails taxis. When we left office, unemployment was very low and it was continuing to go down.

Dr. Godman: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hoyle: More than 30 per cent. of manufacturing industry has been destroyed by the Government's economic policies since 1979.

Mr. Richards: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hoyle: I shall not give way to any other hon. Members——

Dr. Godman *rose*——

Mr. Hoyle: —because it is very unfair to my hon. Friends.

Dr. Godman: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hoyle: I shall give way with pleasure to one of my hon. Friends.

Dr. Godman: Can I remind my hon. Friend that, in his motion, the Leader of the House appeals to my hon. Friend and to the rest of us to behave in a decent and fair-minded way by refusing a pay increase? Does my hon. Friend agree that the Leader of the House could respond in a decent and fair-minded way by ensuring that the money saved is given to those non-governmental organisations that seek to help people in the developing world who at this moment are starving?

Mr. Hoyle: My hon. Friend makes a powerful point, which I hope the Leader of the House will take on board, though I doubt whether he will. My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) asked a similar question, but he received no reply.

Mr. Richards: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hoyle: No, I am afraid that I am not going to give way to the hon. Member.

Mr. Richards: He is afraid.

Mr. Hoyle: That's a laugh, isn't it? A Whitehall farce, if ever I heard one.

We are being used as a stalking horse to justify the public sector pay freeze—people who are among the lowest paid in the country. The Government want to be able to say, "Look, now that we've frozen MPs' pay, we expect you to restrict your pay demands." The Government are playing gesture politics. That is entirely unfair and will not work.

The Leader of the House said that he would listen carefully to what my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) had to say when he moved his amendment. I do not understand why the Leader of the House did not accept the amendment, particularly as my right hon. Friend said that it would be up to hon. Members to make supplementary voluntary contributions. Now that the Leader of the House has listened to my right hon. Friend's speech, I hope that he will say when he replies to the debate that he accepts the amendment.

To turn to the stench that is coming from the other side of the House and to the hypocrisy of those who signed early-day motion 834, it is difficult to get at the exact truth, for the new Register of Members' Interests will not be published until next January. However, only three of those who signed the early-day motion have no outside interests in the form of consultancies or directorships. All the others have, on average, four. I have informed all these hon. Members that I might refer to them, so I have complied with the conventions of the House.

The hon. Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) signed the motion. His directorships are Kenton and Middlesex building society and Global Satellite Communications (Scotland) plc. He has an office—John Watts and Co., Chartered Accountants. He is parliamentary adviser to the Institute of Actuaries and consultant to Rank Hovis McDougall and Wisdom Securities Ltd. There is one interest for which he might not be paid quite so much—as adviser to the Working Men's Club and Institute Union. That really is going down market, but he goes up market after that. He is also parliamentary adviser to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. By playing at gesture politics, I do not think that the hon. Gentleman will suffer too much.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): He is too busy to be here.

Mr. Hoyle: Yes.

The hon. Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) has 13 outside interests. He is the managing partner in Marshall Consultants and the chairman of Direct Business Satellite Systems. He is also a non-executive director of Integrated Information Technology Ltd. He is parliamentary adviser to British Aerospace—and, by God, it needs an adviser. He is also parliamentary adviser to Cable and Wireless, Comsat, Dynamic Engineering Inc., the Society of West End Theatres and Williams Holdings. Would you believe it, the hon. Gentleman is also a member of Lloyd's.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hoyle: No. I am sorry if this is upsetting the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls) has a few nice little earners. He is a director of Le Carbone Lorraine, Stirling Winthrop, the Small Business Bureau and Cape plc, whatever that means. It may have South African connections, but I am not sure. The hon. Gentleman is consultant to Digital Equipment Company Ltd., the Association of Authorised Public Accountants, Bywater Group Ltd., the Unitary Tax Campaign, Humphreys and Glasgow Ltd., Harlingspear Ltd., Allied Partnership Group plc and Freight Complex Development and Management Ltd. One of his clients—he lists this because of questions that were asked in the Select Committee—is Ian Greer Associates.

I do not think that the right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) will feel the pinch. He signed the early-day motion. He has directorships with Nexus Marketing, Fairey Group, Leica plc, GEC Marconi and Carroll Group. He is a partner in Terrington Management, and he lists other clients. I do not think that he will go too short in 12 months.

I now refer to the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter). At least he has—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There is an increasing tendency for dialogue to take place between Conservative and Opposition Members, which is not acceptable.

Mr. Hoyle: I assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it is not dialogue. Government Members are all directors and consultants of different companies. It is certainly not a dialogue. I am simply trying to make the point——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I think perhaps the hon. Member misunderstood me. I was referring to sedentary comments being thrown across the Floor while the hon. Member is making his speech.

Mr. Hoyle: I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for that comment. I refer now to the hon. Member for Wirral, South. He has directorships of County Seeds Ltd. and Decision Makers Ltd. He is employed as parliamentary adviser to the Hearing Aid Association Wang (UK) Ltd. and Impac plc. He is a consultant to Air Boss Ltd. and Groen Ltd. He is also a solicitor with Fanshaw Porter and Hazelhurst.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman for his unfailing courtesy in giving me notice that he would put the stiletto between my ribs. Perhaps he might accept that my great failing in life is that no one has asked me to be president of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs. I have no

[Mr. Barry Porter]

doubt that the job would take a great deal of time outside the House, but I do not know whether there is much money in it.

The hon. Gentleman should note that my interests are properly declared. He should also accept that some of my interests in the manufacturing and service industries keep my feet on the ground while his head is in the clouds.

Mr. Hoyle: The simple reason why the hon. Gentleman has not been asked to be the president of the ASTMS is that, as I understand it, he is not a member of a trade union. I must remind him that the ASTMS no longer exists so it is not possible for him to be the president. The ASTMS has become a new union, and is still growing, with more than 6,000 members. So he could not possibly be the president of ASTMS.

Mr. Porter: I apologise, but I must go now, not to a board meeting but to attend a lobby of my constituents.

Mr. Hoyle: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is going. When I gave way to him I thought that he might have told us what these nice little earners bring in for him.

I am sure that there is one thing missing from the register: it does not say what people earn from their interests. What I am saying is that it is hypocritical for those hon. Members who signed the early-day motion and whom I have mentioned—I could mention more of them —to support the Government's motion. They still have nice little earnings from moonlighting. The register does not tell us how much they earn. My point is that they certainly will not suffer by giving up the increase. The Government are asking us to give up the increase.

The hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) said from a sedentary position that some Opposition Members may have outside jobs. All I am saying is that all hon. Members should declare what they earn. If the hon. Member has any interests, I hope that he will register them. Perhaps alongside those interests he should show what they bring in for him. We can only guess what Conservative Members earn from their interests. However, it is clear from the register that many hon. Members must earn more from their interests than their parliamentary salary.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hoyle: No, because many other hon. Members want to speak. It is a case of playing politics tonight so that the Government can impose pay restraint on many of the lowest paid in the country. I for one will have no part of it.

5.55 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I start by declaring my interest in the Hill and Smith Group, the Federation of Associations of Specialists and Sub Contractors, Port Enterprises Ltd, the Waterfront Partnership, Howard de Walden Estates, MinOtels and Dunn and Baker. [HON. MEMBERS: "How much do you earn?"] I earn considerably less than I deserve.

The debate has thrown up one aspect which I had not expected to examine but I think that it is useful. It is not so much the question whether the gesture should be made —I will not fight shy of that phrase—but it has thrown into debate the whole process by which hon. Members salaries are fixed.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) and others said that there cannot be a Member in the House who wants to go through the invidious business each year of debating our pay rise. It is unpleasant, it is uncomfortable, it is demeaning, and it does not serve any purpose.

Shortly after I became a Member of the House I was pleased to see a linkage established. We could all ask whether the linkage was appropriate. It certainly made the position of senior principal in the civil service one of the most unpopular positions that any civil servant would ever want to hold. To my knowledge, many civil servants hoped that it was a grade that they might be able to overstep at some stage. It is obviously a good idea to have the automatic linkage, whatever level is chosen.

As I understood my right hon. Friend, there seems to be an element of doubt about whether the linkage can exist in the future. I certainly hope that, when the matter is examined next year, the principle of linkage will be there and that the Government will honour, as it were, the spirit of it, if not the letter. So whatever grade we are linked to, I hope that it will not simply be a lower grade with a view to making savings.

There is nothing wrong in the Government expecting Members of Parliament to make a gesture on this occasion. However, I will be slightly saddened if, in the years to come, the principle of linkage is accepted but the link is made to some other grade which is even less than 87 per cent. of, to give one example, the deputy chef in the Members' Dining Room.

It is difficult to get any fix on what the level of pay should be. It is interesting that the Library has produced a paper which I think is one of the most helpful pieces of information that I have seen on the matter. The paper sets out the level of Members' pay from 1911 to the present day, but the levels are adjusted at 1992 prices. That shows that the pay in August 1911, adjusted to today's prices, was £21,300 as against today's figure of £30,900— obviously, I am rounding out the figures. So it looks as though the level of pay in real terms for a Member of Parliament in 1911 was about two thirds of the level today. Hon. Members should bear in mind the fact that we are going back 80 years and that there has been enormous social change, both in the profile of people elected and, indeed, in those who put themselves forward for election to the House. If that sort of differential has been maintained, it shows that we have probably been getting it right. I should like to think that we will bear that in mind when the linkage is restored in some shape or form.

This is an appropriate time to mention my next point; the nexus is fairly clear. Even if I take the view that the level of Members' salaries is about right, I certainly could not say the same for ministerial pay with which it is closely connected. A few years ago, the then Solicitor-General went to the 100th anniversary of a Conservative club in the west country. In his speech, he said that his salary in the 1980s was virtually the same as that of his predecessor 100 years before when he had opened the same Conservative club.

I do not say that we should restore ministerial salaries to what the Solicitor-General was earning then, relatively speaking, but something has gone wrong with the system. It is all very well to expect people who accept ministerial office not to go into it for profit, but there comes a time when the gap between what Ministers are paid and what able people might expect to command in the outside market becomes so vast that the public interest is not served. I would say that whether the Conservative or the Labour party were in office.

There are former Labour Ministers in the House too, and they will know that a Minister receives a reduced salary in his capacity as a Member of Parliament. I do not understand how we can justify paying a Minister of the Crown less than a Member of Parliament simply because he is a Minister. There is no reason in principle for that.

There is never an ideal time to make such alterations —to restore ministerial salaries to what they should be and to stop the reduction in their salary as Members of Parliament—but it is clear that over the past 10 years, to take no longer period, there will have been opportunities for the problem to be addressed, and that those opportunities were not taken. I should like to think that at some time in the future they will be taken—although I have been in the House long enough to believe that it is highly unlikely that that disparity will ever be dealt with as it should be. To coin a recent royal euphemism, ministerial salaries are relatively insubstantial, bearing in mind the task that Ministers are expected to perform.

It is probably about right that in due course there should be a linkage for Members' pay. But what about the gesture which is being requested? There is a difference between gestures and gesture politics. It is difficult enough to say to a low-paid worker, "Here am I on £30,000 a year" —that may seem a relatively modest sum, but it is hugely more than the average constituent of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) earns—"but I think I should have my 3·9 per cent. this year, because that is what the linkage will be." I do not think that that would go down very well, and I can understand that.

The hon. Lady might say to her constituent, "I have struck a real blow for you today. I have really done something for low-paid workers in my constituency: I am prepared to abstain." She did not say whether she would take the money if her abstention meant that the money would be paid. Probably for reasons of malice and cynicism, I should like to see the hon. Lady say to a low-paid worker in her constituency, "Vote for me; I am the one who did not take a percentage increase on £30,000 a year." For many of our constituents, that is a huge amount of money, and I think that she would find that gesture difficult to sustain.

Sometimes gestures have to be made, even if they engender cynicism. It is fair to say that there is a limit to what the country can afford. We have been told in the autumn statement that the Government believe 1·5 per cent. to be the appropriate maximum increase in the public sector. I cannot prove that the Government are right or that they are wrong. Perhaps the figure should be 1·4 per cent. or 1·8 per cent.—none of us can say—but every penny that goes into the pockets of public sector workers such as ourselves has to come out of somebody else's pay packet, either through taxation or by borrowing, which in turn has to be paid for out of taxation. The Government have to estimate what the country can afford in recession.

Some may say, "I do not agree with that; I do not agree with pay policies at all." Fine. I do not agree with rain in summer, but it happens, and one has to cope with it. Members of Parliament constantly make a whole range of demands to Ministers on behalf of their constituents and find, inevitably, that those demands cannot be satisfied. Against such a background, I do not see how the Government can do anything but set a fairly strict level, nor how Members of Parliament can expect not to make some contribution.

I accept that some Labour Members do not agree with the policy—I think they are wrong, but that is their view —but I do not understand how, even if he believes the policy to be wrong, an Opposition Member on £30,000 a year can say to a public sector worker who may earn £8,000, £9,000 or £10,000 a year that he opposed the Government because he believed the policy to be wrong. One cannot abstain on the issue. That does not work; it is an issue on which one has to make some judgment.

Debates on Members' pay tend to follow a ritual pattern, as those who have listened to them over the years know. One idea, as expressed by the hon. Member for Derby, South and the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), is that there is something hypocritical in a Member of Parliament with outside interests taking a view on the matter, or signing an early-day motion— *[Interruption.]* We hear the chorus of abuse again. One would have a little more confidence in the sincerity of that chorus if the hon. Member for Warrington, North, in his rambling researches, had hit upon the relatively few Labour Members who are employable in any other context. There are many who serve in such positions with great distinction——

Mr. Bryan Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nicholls: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

I fully understand why the hon. Member for Great Grimsbly (Mr. Mitchell) might not be here today: he has other things to attend to. He is a highly effective Member of Parliament, and so long as he declares his interests in the proper way, there is no reason why he should not be entitled to earn those sums. That makes him a rarity on the Labour Benches. So many Labour Members are unemployable in any capacity but that of former members of the polytechnocracy.

When reading reports of debates such as this one, it is interesting to examine the comments of those whose reflections on the way in which Conservative Members earn money are the sternest. Let us consider the comments of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). There is a man who, now that street cleaning has been thoroughly mechanised, is totally unemployable anywhere other than in this House. As recently as 13 July the hon. Gentleman made clear his attitude to being a Member of Parliament. In fairness to the hon. Gentleman, I must tell the House that his remarks, which are recorded at column 835 of *Hansard*, were made on one of the relatively rare occasions when he was here after prime time television had finished at 4.30 pm. He made it clear that he saw the job of a Member of Parliament as a nine-to-five job, for which he was obviously quite content to receive £30,000 a year. If that is someone's attitude to his work, it is understandable why nobody would employ him to do anything else.

The fact is that what many Conservative Members— and all too few Opposition Members—bring to the Chamber is some knowledge of what goes on in the outside world. There is something thoroughly unsatisfactory about Members who have never gainfully earned their living in their lives, other than perhaps——

Mr. Bryan Davies *rose*——

Mr. Nicholls: I do not want to forget the hon. Gentleman. I know that we have a lot of time, so I shall be able to give way to him in a moment.

There is something thoroughly unsatisfactory about hon. Members who bring nothing to the Chamber but bile, biliousness, class hatred and a certain distaste for those of their colleagues who are capable of earning anything other than a Member's salary. It is thoroughly distasteful that the contributions which those few—and we many—can bring to the House should not be heard.

Mr. Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman clarify two matters? First, does he include his list of consultancies and outside occupations in his election address and tell his constituents that those must be taken into account while he is fulfilling his duties as their Member of Parliament? Secondly, when he talks about the sacrifices that we should all make, is he prepared to quantify the sacrifice, in terms of his income, that he will make if the motion is passed?

Mr. Nicholls: I assume—although one should not always make such assumptions when dealing with interjections from Labour Members—that the hon. Gentleman is capable of working out 3·8 per cent., or 1·5 per cent., or 0 per cent., of the existing parliamentary salary. So he will be able to work out—at a stroke, given sufficient time—the amount of income which I would forgo. The hon. Gentleman may say that it does not sound very much. Frankly, on £30,000 a year, it is not very much —but every little helps.

The hon. Member for Derby, South was making the same point when she said that people had to assess the worth of the pay rise in the light of their own personal circumstances. There may be many Opposition Members who, in their personal circumstances, see no necessity to seek additional employment. I have no objection to that, but Members should be entitled to make that judgment for themselves.

The hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) wanted to know what was in my election address. I am flattered about that. I certainly mentioned in my election address the fact that I was a practising solicitor and that was publicised as I went through the selection process. I made it clear that I worked for a living and that I had not come up through the more traditional avenues with which the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton will be familiar. I had not come up through the unions, the polytechnocracy or the Labour party research department. I made it clear that I continued to work for a living and that I believed that I would bring to the House of Commons—and to that rarefied atmosphere in which hon. Members worked—experience of work in the outside world.

To cheer up the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton, I can tell him that a local newspaper produced a detailed profile of the various parliamentary candidates and listed their outside activities and consultancies. To confirm what I hope was the hon. Gentleman's assumption, I am delighted to tell him that I had a great deal more experience of the outside world than any of my opponents. Through my connections, I was able to show that I had a far wider range of knowledge of the issues that affected my constituents than any of the other candidates. I hope that that will reassure them.

I had expected to hear more in this debate about our recent debate on the increase in hon. Members' expenses. The debate was interesting in many ways, because the Government thought that it would be helpful to give a lead about what they thought hon. Members should do. That lead was very helpful and I examined it carefully. Had I been a member of the Government, I would probably have made the recommendation to the House that the Government had made. However, I am not a member of the Government and, in the end, I had to make what I thought was the correct judgment.

While I welcome guidance from the Government in many areas, I decided that I could not welcome guidance from the Government if that guidance told me that the demands that are rightly made on me as an hon. Member were not to be satisfied as I would not have the necessary funds to satisfy them.

Therefore, I thought that the issue should not be expressed, as it was so often expressed, as simply more expenses for hon. Members, but that instead there should be an upper limit against which an hon. Member could draw as necessary. I was one of the relatively few hon. Members to vote for that idea. A great many more, who are conspicuous by their absence today as they were then, did not turn up and vote for the proposal.

There is all the difference in the world between the expenses necessary to provide the kind of services to one's constituents that they are increasingly demanding and an increase in salary. Obviously, cynics in the Press Gallery and the cynics who write to hon. Members will say, "No, it's all the same really. An increase in expenses is the same as an increase in salary." A business man put precisely that point to me. When I asked him whether he thought that every time he gave his secretary a new word processor or an upgraded typewriter that increased his standard of living, I did not receive a reply. Expenses and salaries are entirely different matters.

When we come out of this recession, public pay will be dealt with as it was before. Whatever the complexion of the Government may be, every year they will tell us that times are hard and restraint is necessary. We will always be told that. That has been part of the Treasury abacus and word processor since Adam was a lad. Some people will negotiate, some will bargain, others will have linkages and others will have formulae. That is the normal world.

However, today's world is not a normal world. It is a world of recession. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have friends or relatives who have lost their jobs during the recession. People have suffered greatly. I doubt whether there are any Conservative or Opposition Members who do not have friends or acquaintances who have lost everything in the recession. At the end of the day, with people in that position, we must make a gesture and be prepared to take the lead.

Although 3·8 per cent., or even 1·5 per cent., of £30,000 is not very much, it sets a keynote. We must be prepared to say that that is what we are recommending for the country and that is what we are prepared to take ourselves. That should be agreed on both sides of the House.

6.13 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): The hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) was absolutely correct when he said that the proposal is a gesture. My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) called it a smokescreen. However, the value of the hon. Gentleman's gesture would be greater if we achieved one or two objectives set out in the amendment that I tabled but which Madam Speaker did not select.

The hon. Member for Teignbridge made two points upon which I will comment. He said that we live in a world of recession. Opposition Members remember what Conservative Members were saying only seven months ago. Not one Conservative Member said then that there would be a public sector pay freeze. Did any Conservative Member state in his or her election manifesto that they would support a public sector pay freeze? Not one of them did. They all said that it was possible to have tax cuts and more public spending and that we were coming out of recession. The green shoots were everywhere. They were on every election address——

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: No. The hon. Gentleman spoke for a long time.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way with regard to my election address?

Mr. Fatchett: No. I am sure that that is a very important document and that it will be read by posterity.

Conservative Members made promises, but not one of them has been reproduced in reality because the recession continues. However, the Government are now implementing a public sector pay freeze which is a promise that they did not make.

Conservative Members are now starting to cry crocodile tears for the unemployed and the low-paid. Let us consider what has happened under this Conservative Government. More than 2 million more people are unemployed now than in 1979. In the face of that, Conservative Members supported the Government in the Lobby just a week ago when the Government removed wages council protection from the lowest paid. I do not want to hear arguments from Conservative Members about protecting the low-paid and the unemployed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South was right. The proposal is a smokescreen and the Government are looking for a fig leaf as they stumble from crisis to crisis and policy to policy. The Leader of the House hinted—this point was picked up by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood)—that there will be a restoration of the amount of money that might be lost this year because of the loss of linkage on this occasion. At some time in the future, the pay of hon. Members will be restored in real terms to the value that they might have enjoyed if there had been no freeze on their pay this year.

Is that correct? If so, I point out gently to the Leader of the House that it is worth while re-reading the history of such matters. Every public sector pay freeze has created a dam that burst as the public sector caught up. If the Leader of the House is going to be consistent, can he tell us whether, if hon. Members' pay is to be allowed to catch up in real terms, the same will be true for teachers, nurses, doctors, low-paid public sector workers and school dinner ladies? Will the pay of all those people be allowed to catch up? That is an important message which should come from our debate.

There are two crucial points to be made about our annual debate on Members' pay. First, as hon. Members have said, we need an acceptable system to determine our pay. In many respects, it is not appropriate for the House to have this debate. Not many hon. Members enjoy the debate. We need a system of linkage; in that regard, I agree with the hon. Member for Teignbridge: it should be restored.

The details of that linkage may now be subject to further discussion or, to use the impolite term in this place, negotiation. Nevertheless, there must be a principle of linkage so that we do not go through this process every year. This is not gesture politics today; it is almost macho politics. We are showing whether we are prepared to make a sacrifice, and then we try to lead people into what is obviously an elephant trap in respect of our pay. That is an embarrassment, and it is foolish. If we are to have an orderly public sector pay system, I suggest to the Leader of the House that hon. Members could, as a lead, have an orderly system for their own pay.

Mr. Robathan: I agree entirely that we should have an orderly pay system for Members of Parliament and that it should be linked. I am new to the House, so the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I am wrong, but I understand that we are to vote on the pay increase for the current financial year. I think that I am right in saying that the pay increase for nurses, teachers and civil servants for the current financial year has already been decided and awarded. This is a back-pay increase for us which we are forgoing.

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman is not absolutely correct. He will find that there are many public sector pay increases that have to be determined, and whether they can be fully funded by local government and national health service money is a crucial question. There is an argument about linkage. I hope that we opt for linkage, establish it, keep it, and do not repeat this debate in future.

The second crucial principle for any system of Members' pay is openness. That is why I tabled my amendment. One or two Conservative Members have started to follow my lead. My amendment is a bridge-building, consensual amendment. It would make sure that, in the Register of Members' Interests, people disclosed the finances that they obtained from the outside interests that they pursued.

I am not saying for a moment that people should stop pursuing those interests. I am not saying that they should be unelectable in any sense if they have outside interests: that decision will be taken by the electorate. If electors feel that a Member of Parliament has such tremendous ability, enthusiasm and energy that he or she can hold 12 outside directorships and six consultancies and still do the job of a Member of Parliament and they vote for that person, so be it. I certainly do not object to that, although I might question the judgment of the electorate.

Mr. Nicholls *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: I shall develop my point further and then give way.

I spent a little time looking at the Register of Members' Interests—relating to the previous Parliament, unfortunately—and looked up Conservative Members' interests. My principle applies to all hon. Members. Before the previous election, on the Conservative Benches there were 359 directorships and 222 consultancies. Let us say that each one attracts a fee of £2,000 a year. That might be on the low side——

Mr. Hoyle: Very low.

Mr. Fatchett: I am a reasonable and modest man trying to build bridges across the House. Let us say that it is £2,000 a year. That amounts to £1·2 million going into Conservative Members' pockets.

An important constitutional question needs to be asked: what is that money buying? People who spend money on hon. Members want to buy something, and it is called influence over Government policy. We know that from the American system. The American system is corrupt. That is why they talk about pork barrels and the influence that corporations have on congressmen and senators. My amendment says to each and every Member of Parliament, regardless of where he or she sits in the House of Commons, "Declare all your interests in the register and say how much money is involved." That is a very simple principle.

Mr. Nicholls: I have considerable sympathy with the way in which the hon. Gentleman is putting his point, but it is entirely fair that constituents, if they are interested, should know what interests are declared in hon. Members' entries. The hon. Gentleman will know at once that, the moment it comes out, the register is of great interest to the local press. Our salaries as Members of Parliament should be known to the public, because they are a charge on the public Exchequer. The amount of any other income is a matter between the person concerned and the Inland Revenue.

What extra information does the hon. Gentleman think constituents would get in knowing, in a list of outside interests, how much money was being paid? Surely, according to the hon. Gentleman's logic, they should know that those interests exist. Other than public prurience, what extra will constituents have in knowing what sums, if any—that is important—are paid?

Mr. Fatchett: Electors would know a great deal about our political system. They would know about its openness and genuineness. They would also know—I put it no higher than this—that when people speak in the House of Commons they are either free men or less free men. They would also know—it is the nature of life, and let us accept it as such—that, if people are receiving £100,000-a-year directorships, they might try to act in the interests of those directorships. If that is the case, the public have a right to know. *[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members say, "No, it doesn't happen," let us open the system and see what does happen.

The key to my proposal, which is obviously beginning to attract support among Conservative Members, has the support of the Prime Minister himself. I have not discussed the detailed amendment with the Prime Minister, but I know that he is in favour—*[Laughter.]* I would not discuss it with him because he might not remember it, so there is no point in my discussing it with him. The Prime Minister is in favour because he believes in open government, and this matter is part of an open democracy. We need to ensure that the public know what goes on in this place. That is the purpose of my amendment.

We have heard many arguments about making a sacrifice—a sacrifice that is equal to that of others outside. There are grades of sacrifice. If one is a £5,000-a-year school dinner assistant, there is one level of sacrifice. If one is a £30,000-a-year Member of Parliament with no other income, there is another level of sacrifice. But if one is a £30,000-a-year Member of Parliament with 11 directorships and eight consultancies, there is yet another level of sacrifice. The hon. Member for Teignbridge lectured us about sacrifice. What amount of money is he earning from outside? Will he give a commitment today that he will take no further increase in those interests next year?

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): Has the hon. Gentleman read today's issue of the *Western Mail*, the well-known national newspaper of Wales? It contains an interview with his former colleague, Mr. Leo Abse, who was a Member of Parliament for Torfaen. He expresses the view that the House is devalued by having so few Members of Parliament nowadays with outside interests. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, in a book that was published some years ago, Mr. Abse offered the observation that, throughout the time that he sat on the Labour Benches, he earned more money than the Prime Minister of the day earned and felt that that freed him from the influence of his own Whips?

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman strongly makes my case for my amendment, if it had been selected. My amendment does not relate only to Conservative Members—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: I shall give way to the hon. Lady in a moment, as her interventions are always a treat for the House.

My amendment relates to all hon. Members, regardless of political colour. We need to know whether outside experience has an important bearing on people's judgments of legislation. Let us look at the extent of that and the amount of money involved so that there is no corruption. That is why we need openness—so that we know that there is no corruption and that people are representing the interests of their constituents. That is what my amendment is intended to do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I must remind the hon. Gentleman that, although that subject is relevant to the debate, his amendment was not selected.

Mr. Fatchett: I understand what you are saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I always defer to your judgment, and quite rightly. I was putting forward a principle for a general pay system for Members of Parliament. I hope that what I have offered so far will win widespread acceptance.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) made some scathing references to family income. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) omitted to mention that he has a number of directorships—for example, in West Highland Publishing Co. Ltd.—and very substantial declarable shareholdings. Many Opposition Members have husbands or wives who are highly paid trade union officials. Should such facts be declared as well?

Mr. Fatchett: I have two comments in response. All directorships and consultancies, regardless of political party, would be declared under the system that I think is fair. Spouses and partners are irrelevant to what goes on.

Mr. Nicholls: So the hon. Gentleman's wife is a wealthy girl.

Mr. Fatchett: The answer to that is no. The issue is for the House to decide, but I think that that is an irrelevance.

I have some ideas on how we can achieve a better system for Members' pay. We need to discuss our democracy, openness, the information made available and ways to reduce corruption so that the public can have confidence in the system.

The Government have degraded our constitution and our democracy. Too often, the only characteristic taken into account when someone is appointed to public office, either in the national health service or in other places, is that he or she should be "one of us"—a card-carrying member of the Conservative party.

I believe in openness and democracy. We must end corruption, and that is why we need an open system in the House so that we know what people are paid, where it comes from, and what interests they represent.

6.30 pm

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): I found the speech of the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) interesting. I agree that Members' pay should be linked to some grade. I am not sure that I agree with much more, and I do not agree that Members can be bought. Should I ever have a directorship, I assure the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members that I shall not be bought.

This is a good time to declare that I have no pecuniary interests. I have a small military pension, which I hope Opposition Members will not deny me. It will not buy me much, although I worked for it for 15 years, and I shall get it every day for the rest of my life, whether I am underneath the arches at Charing Cross station or here.

I find it distressing and disappointing that any hon. Member would vote against the motion. Opposition Members should consider their consciences. We all know that Members of Parliament are not overpaid. I have only been a Member for about seven months, and I am astonished at how hard I have worked. I never thought that it would be like this—I find it extraordinarily hard —*[Laughter.]* Hon. Members may laugh, but by God it is hard. We are not overpaid—I know that and Opposition Members know it. My contemporaries from university are generally earning a great deal more than I am, but I do not mind; I chose to come to this place, as did Opposition Members.

The job should be rewarding, and it is. Our salaries should be similarly rewarding and fixed to some other pay scheme and we should not have to face the unedifying spectacle of hon. Members voting on their pay.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central mentioned outside interests, but I do not know how hon. Members find time to do other things. Opposition Members are pointing at the Conservative Benches, but when the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) talked about the "stench" from our Benches, I thought that that showed some hypocrisy on the part of Opposition Members. I have the Register of Members' Interests here and I have made one or two notes. I shall not mention names, as that would be invidious—[HON. MEMBERS: "Go on."] No, I shall not.

The director of West Highland Publications Co. Ltd. is not sitting on the Government Benches, nor is the parliamentary adviser to the National Market Traders Federation, the director of Ladbroke plc or the person who gets the £2,000 consultancy from the National Union of Teachers.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): I am well aware that Members in every corner of the House have outside interests. During the last Parliament, 14 per cent. of Opposition Members had outside interests, but 85 per cent. of eligible Conservative Members had paid outside interests.

Mr. Robathan: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but the question is: who would employ Opposition Members? I do not want to be uncomplimentary about the Opposition Member who is the parliamentary adviser to Merck, Sharp and Dohme, and also a member of the conciliation board of the European Space Agency. As Opposition Members know, there are lawyers and Queen's counsel on both sides of the House.

I believe that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is a Queen's counsel, which I find interesting. I am sure that he gains enormously from the experience of being a good lawyer—or not, as the case may be.

Many hon. Members have union sponsorship and its meaning is indistinct; often, the register states "no pecuniary interest", but I understand that the unions assist greatly in the constituency, by running the office and the political side of things.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my hon. Friend not find it interesting that, the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) said that, because Conservative Members were in receipt of funds from companies, they were somewhat tainted and could not be independent? As my hon. Friend has just intimated, some Opposition Members are sponsored by trade unions. Does that mean that they are tainted, that they are not independent and that they put their unions before their constituents? I have here a list of all Labour Members who are sponsored by trade unions. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that all those Members are tainted?

Mr. Robathan: As I said, should I ever be a director I would be independent, and I hope that Opposition Members who are sponsored by trade unions take the same line.

The work done by Conservative Members is often related to work that they have done in the business world. It is important for us to understand that world, especially at this time of recession. It is no good sitting back with no experience and saying how much hon. Members know about business, when they know nothing. It is important for Members to have up-to-date knowledge of the business world. My up-to-date knowledge of it is not immense, but I try to get out and to learn a little.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): The hon. Gentleman said that it is important to have outside interests and to be aware of the business world. I can fully accept that, but why do not he and his hon. Friends do it for free?

Mr. Robathan: I had better answer that—it is an interesting argument. I do it for free when I am trying to find out what is going on, but hon. Members have a busy life and perhaps they feel that such work should be rewarded.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): With my accent, I do as little as I possibly can for free. Throughout my life I have taken the view that something that is worth nothing, is worth nothing. The worth of an individual—a Member of Parliament or whoever—is the worth that he can earn in the marketplace, and we ought not to be ashamed of that, whatever Opposition Members say.

Mr. Robathan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that interjection and assistance.

Members' interests are not the subject at issue. The motion is important, and Opposition Members degrade it by talking about who is earning threepence for doing what, and who is sponsored by which union or is a director of what company. It is Opposition Members who tell us what terrible trouble the country is in and it is no secret that we are in a severe recession. All of us discover how severe it is when we go around our constituencies.

I have just been sitting on the Employment Select Committee and I apologise for not being here at the beginning of the debate. We were listening to evidence on the problems facing the horse racing and the coal industries, which are costing this country jobs.

I know—as do Opposition Members—what a catastrophe it is to lose one's job. The recession is a catastrophe to people who have lost their jobs and, yes, the motion is a gesture. It is about leadership.

Mr. Kirkwood: Oh.

Mr. Robathan: The hon. Gentleman may scoff, but perhaps that is because the Liberals know nothing about leadership.

The country is looking to us for leadership. *[Laughter.]* The Opposition may laugh, but that is because they never get the opportunity to lead, and I am not surprised. The people look to us for leadership, and it is obvious that they would get the leadership that they deserved if they voted for the Labour party.

The motion is a gesture, but leadership is about the perceptions of being led. We must be seen to lead by forgoing the pay rise that was awarded before I entered the House.

The private sector, of which the Opposition appear to know very little, has made pay cuts—de facto pay cuts through short-term working and a shortage of overtime.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Rubbish.

Mr. Robathan: It is not rubbish. You should go and talk to your constituents, but perhaps you never do.

Those people who have no pay except for unemployment benefit are facing a real disaster, and they are looking to hon. Members to see how we will behave. Those in the private sector are suffering real pain, and it is worth hon. Members sharing that pain, if only a tiny part, by forgoing this pay rise.

In these times, public sector wage restraint is necessary. The Opposition may expose their bleeding hearts to public view when they say how they would deal with nurses and teachers, but tonight we are dealing with our pay, not that of teachers or nurses. We must set an example—that is not a dirty word—and show leadership, for that is what we are paid to do. I am absolutely astonished that the Opposition have never heard about leadership or example. *[Laughter.]* They may laugh, but tomorrow they should go to their constituents, look them in the eye and tell them how they voted tonight.

Public sector pay restraint is linked to the private sector because, surprising as it may be to the Opposition, the private sector provides the money to pay the public sector. Public sector money does not grow on trees—it comes from the toil of those in the private sector. I note that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) appears to be convulsed with laughter once more; he obviously understands little at all. I also note that he is sitting on his own, as usual.

The Opposition do not understand about the link between the public and private sectors because they have no experience of real work. Public sector pay restraint is necessary because the money for that pay comes from the private sector. If the Opposition speak to those of their constituents who work in the private sector, they may come to understand that.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): Before I became a Member, I spent all my working life in the private sector. I should be interested to know how many years the hon. Gentleman spent working in that sector.

Mr. Robathan: I have already said that I have no experience of working in the private sector, which is why I receive a military pension. That is why I do not presume, unlike the Opposition, to lecture the private sector on how to run its businesses. I suggest that British industry has been too much influenced by people who have no experience of working in it, let alone any idea of how to run it.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): My hon. Friend and I represent Leicestershire. Has he taken the opportunity to read the *Leicester Mercury* in the past month, which has singled him out for leading the campaign in the county in favour of the motion? Does my hon. Friend accept from me that the readers of that newspaper, who number several thousand—*[Interruption.]*—support the campaign that has been conducted for pay restraint, led from the front by Members of this House, such as my hon. Friend and myself?

Mr. Robathan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and next-door neighbour. The Opposition may scoff, but each evening about 130,000 people read the *Leicester Mercury*. Many of its readers vote Labour but all of them believe that we should vote in favour of the motion.

I want to be able to go to my constituents and look them in the eye. I hope that Opposition Members will be able to do the same with their constituents. I want to be able to say, "I may still be employed and I may be earning nearly £31,000, but I understand your problems and I shall try my best to make those problems a little better." At least that will show that I understand that my constituents look to the House of Commons for leadership and for example. That is what is sought tonight, and I commend the motion to the House.

6.46 pm

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): I have found tonight's debate interesting, if very confusing.

I apologise to the Leader of the House for not being present when he moved the motion, but, because of Government policies, I seem to spend a lot of time meeting people who come here to lobby hon. Members to let us know how bad things are for them.

It was interesting to listen to Conservative Members telling us about free enterprise. They have sought to explain that it is satisfactory for them to have four or five jobs, but I do not accept that when nearly 3 million people are unemployed. That explanation might be satisfactory legally, but it is not satisfactory morally. Conservative Members should remember that when they cast their vote tonight.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Etherington: No; I shall not give way because I have been listening to you for long enough and I have just 10 minutes for my speech.

Mr. Nicholls: Oh, come on, try.

Mr. Etherington: No.

Mr. Nicholls *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. While I have been in the Chair, the debate has been good-humoured. I appeal to the House to allow the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) a chance to express his views without interruption.

Mr. Etherington: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The attempts by the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) to intervene prove one thing; that the old Chinese proverb

> "He on thin ice shouts loudest"

is appropriate. Tonight, Conservative Members are showing the electorate exactly what they are.

It is all very well to talk about the £31,000 that hon. Members earn. I happen to be one of those who believe that that is more than enough. Before I became a Member, I was a trade union official, and I took a reduction in salary to come here. I would willingly do so again if that would help the people who will suffer most as a result of the 1·5 per cent. pay limit that has been imposed by the Government.

Tonight's motion is about the failure of the Government's economic policies. Since 1979, they have carried on as the handmaidens of the City, the Confederation of British Industry and other similar interest groups. Their policies have been a dismal failure. Instead of asking those who have done extremely well in their 13 years of rule—the top 5 per cent. who have received almost as much in tax relief as has been earned from North sea oil revenues—to make some contribution to the state, now that the country is not doing so well, they expect the lowest-paid in society to bear that burden. That is not on.

I hope that everyone in the country realises just what you are doing and what you are about. You are about what you have been about for the past 13 years—making the wealthy, wealthier and the poor, poorer. You have robbed old age pensioners, you have reduced the standard of living of the unemployed and the disabled and you are now seeking——

Mr. Nicholls: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is launching a grossly unfair attack on you, and I do not believe for one moment that you have done any of those things. If you have, you may feel that you want to clear the air now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but I note that he did not give that advice when his hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) was making the same mistake. I always hesitate to intervene when new Members are speaking, but I remind all hon. Members that it is not the practice in the House to use the word "you" when hon. Members are not addressing the Chair. That applies to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Etherington: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I appreciate that advice.

I was, of course, referring to Conservative Members. I still have a little humility in my soul, unlike many of them. If they had a little humility in their souls, they might realise what was involved in the proposal in the Chancellor's autumn statement. When I heard the first part of the statement, I thought that it was good and that the analysis was excellent. I accept that there are international factors over which the Government have no control, but I also believe that the Government have been responsible for much of their own misfortune by their policies.

It is unfair for Conservative Members to expect the least able in society to bail the Government out, but in many ways that shows what they believe. Many of the people on whom the Government intend to impose a 1·5 per cent. maximum pay rise are among the lowest paid and are living below the subsistence level determined by the EC.

It would have been better if the Government had considered the introduction of progressive income tax. They do not believe in it, but the important thing about progressive income tax is that, if more money is available to the poorer people, it gets back into the economy and is not invested abroad or put into property, thus raising property prices.

The reason I shall vote against the motion is not that I am concerned about my salary. It will make very little difference to me whether I get 0 per cent., 2 per cent., 4 per cent. or 10 per cent. more. I am not concerned about a pay rise. It may concern Conservative Members because they have proved that they are concerned about trying to acquire wealth. That seems to be their main reason for existing. They do not want to distribute wealth; rather, they want to exploit those who create it.

That is what the motion is about. If I were to vote for the motion, I should be betraying the people in the public sector who are poorly paid, those who support the policies that I support, because they are the people who would suffer. *[Laughter.]* It is all very well for Conservative Members to snigger and grin. I do not mind that. I quite enjoy the entertainment which they give me from time to time. I do not want to be churlish about it, but it is time for Conservative Members to think about what they are doing, because the Government will never regenerate the economy as long as they keep to their present policies.

The motion is the precursor to carrying out those policies. I ask Conservative Back Benchers to consider their constituents. We have heard some mealy-mouthed references to looking our electors in the eye. I shall not have any problems in facing my constituents and explaining to them what I have done, because I work on their behalf. We do not need lectures from Conservative Members about how good they are and about how they could be employed when Opposition Members could not.

I know one thing: if I happened to end up on a desert island, I certainly would not be looking to the Government Benches to find the admirable Crichton. If some

[Mr. Etherington]

Conservative Members who are so keen to taunt us when we are genuinely trying to look after our constituents could not find a bank, an estate agent or a solicitor on the desert island, they would have to do what they have done all their lives—look around to see who they could exploit, because they are not capable of doing anything on their own.

6.54 pm

Ms Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I am glad to have the opportunity to say a few words in the debate, both because I support the amendment moved by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and because I share many of the anxieties voiced by my hon. Friends and other Opposition Members about what the Government are doing via the motion.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), I also tabled an amendment, which unfortunately was not selected. However, I am glad that the concerns expressed in my amendment have been covered in the debate. I should like to refer to them in the next few minutes.

My main concern was that the Government, through the motion, were effectively destroying the linkage between our salaries and the salaries of the civil service grade. It is inconsistent of Conservative Members to argue on the one hand that they are in favour of linkage and on the other to support the Government's proposal effectively to break the linkage. They should think about that inconsistency and illogicality in their argument.

I listened carefully to what the Leader of the House said about securing the linkage for the future and to the assurances that he gave us. I would have felt more reassured if he had brought forward for debate an examination of the link in the light of the changes in the civil service and had not simply put the motion forward as part of the measures which the Government had previously announced in the autumn statement. That is the weakness of the Government's position.

I want to make it clear, as my hon. Friends have done, that I do not support what the Government said in the autumn statement about public sector pay. The Government are using us as a smokescreen in order to keep down the pay of the most vulnerable in society. Like many of my hon. Friends, I am not willing to take any lessons from Government Back-Bench Members about concern for low pay when the Government are abolishing wages councils, are refusing to accept Maastricht's social chapter and are presiding over a period when the gap between top earners and the lowest earners has widened so dramatically.

Ministers are out of touch with ordinary Members of Parliament on both sides of the House on the issue. They do not seem to value properly the work of a Member of Parliament who exists on a Member's pay. Recently I came across a flagrant example of that in an article written by the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Lord Ridley, in the *Evening Standard*. In the article he described what it is like when a Minister loses his position or has to resign:

> "Resignation from ministerial office is traumatic. Suddenly you are alone. There is no office, no private secretary, no chauffeur-driven car, no income and nothing to do. Is one's whole political career at an end in one day's fateful decision, and will one have to find a new occupation in life?"

I understood that when a Minister ceased to be a Minister, he or she remained a Member of the House, on the salary of a Member of Parliament and with the job of a Member of Parliament to do. I agree with the Top Salaries Review Body's analysis of an MP's work, which, found that a full-time Member was on average doing 63 to 69 hours of work a week and that the work of a Member is a full-time job. It worries me that Ministers treat a full-time Member's job in such a dismissive way.

Much of the debate has been concerned with outside interests. They are important, but I agree with the view already expressed in the debate that there is no reason for Members to be paid for outside interests. Indeed, many of us have outside interests and have our feet firmly on the ground in our constituencies. We feel very much involved in the life of the community but do not want pay for our outside interests.

I urge the Leader of the House to give us far more assurances about the linkage and timing of our pay decisions in his reply than he did in his opening speech. I hope that he will respond seriously to the concerns expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. It is wrong for the Government, in such a cavalier way, unilaterally to break the consensus on Members' pay, which has been built up over a long time.

6.59 pm

Mr. Newton: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate.

On one or two occasions, I thought that the debate had become one on Members' interests rather than Members' pay. I shall not go into all the arguments that have been expressed, as some of them were fairly partisan. I am glad to say—I hope that the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) was aware of it—that the Select Committee on Members' Interests was reconstituted at the end of last week. I understand that it will meet next Tuesday, which should pave the way for the publication of the Register under aegis of that Committee. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will welcome that.

There has been much discussion about what some Members have termed "gesture politics". That is an unreasonable description of a policy that is concerned with some £1·5 billion of public money and is directed to maintaining priority programmes and giving capital expenditure the emphasis which hon. Members on both sides of the House rightly think it should have.

I make no apology for saying plainly, as some of my hon. Friends have done during the debate, that in circumstances in which, for reasons that I have just explained, the Government think it right to ask for pay restraint in the public sector, it would be wrong if the House were to proceed as if no difference should be made in respect of its own pay. It is not reasonable to describe the Government's proposal as gesture politics.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and others have commented on pensions. I listened carefully to what the right hon. Gentleman said, but I remain convinced, not that he is wrong to wish to deal with the problem that he identified, but that his resolution would not be an effective or justifiable way of seeking to do it. It would be much better if he were willing to accept my offer to undertake discussions about an alternative way of seeking to meet that objective through additional voluntary contributions associated with the parliamentary pension scheme.

May I repeat what I said in my speech in explaining why I doubted whether the amendment was an appropriate way to proceed. I said that, as the long-term position will not become clear until the House has debated and decided the longer-term linkage issues, Members would not find it easy to determine whether and to what extent they wished to take advantage of what is proposed in the amendment without some risk—I think that it is a substantial risk—of making payments from which they would derive no benefit.

I have suggested considering a system of additional voluntary contributions operating through the parliamentary pension scheme, which would not be free standing and separate from the scheme, as some hon. Members seem to have thought. It would have the advantage that any benefits that Members bought with those additional contributions would not be limited to the period of pay restraint but would bring a money sum not linked to such a period. They would therefore be better value for money and could be better tailored to a Member's individual circumstances.

I hope that the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe will agree to withdraw his amendment and allow us to look at what I strongly believe would be a better way to proceed. I do not dismiss the need to which he has drawn attention but suggest that we can and should seek a more satisfactory way of dealing with the need. I cannot advise the House to accept the amendment as it stands.

Mr. Alfred Morris: The Leader of the House is aware that there was detailed consultation among the trustees before the amendment was drafted and tabled in my name and theirs. We seek to ensure that the parliamentary scheme itself provides all reasonable protection that Members seek for themselves and their dependants. I emphasised in reply to the right hon. Gentleman that it will be for the individual Member to decide whether he or she wants the insurance offered by the amendment.

The Government's proposal for a system of additional voluntary contributions will also require regulations. If the Leader of the House wants that provision outside the scheme, I see no reason why he could not discuss with the trustees the possibility of making AVCs an additional provision.

I do not want to let the opportunity pass for making it certain that people who may end their service to the House next year or in 1994, through death or ill health, do not leave their dependants at a disadvantage. Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that the trustees gave very careful consideration to this whole matter before submitting the amendment?

Mr. Newton: I repeat what I have said in the past few minutes. I am not suggesting that it would not be right to see whether a sensible approach to that problem can be identified. However, I do not believe that the right hon. Gentleman's resolution, as distinct from my suggestions about possible alternatives, will achieve effectively what he wants. Hon. Members will find it extremely difficult to make judgments in circumstances in which, to use the right hon. Gentleman's words, they are being offered the chance to make substantial insurance payments, which they might well get. The vast majority would get no return whatever but the money would simply disappear.

I suggest the development of additional voluntary contributions, which would both meet what the right hon. Gentleman wants and ensure that hon Members would get a return for their money. I wish to make that difference between us absolutely clear.

Mr. Ashton: Will the Leader of the House offer to bring the matter back to the House and introduce a scheme which he thinks would be better than the amendment?

Mr. Newton: It was implicit in my opening remarks, and acknowledged by my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), with whom I have also spoken on the matter, that if the trustees and Members generally felt that it would be helpful to explore the possibility that I raised—the one to which I have just adverted—I should be happy to assist. I would be making that point in bad faith were I to rule out—or not rule in—doing something about it if a satisfactory arrangement could be made on the basis of those discussions.

Mr. Alfred Morris: I ask the Leader of the House to accept that this is not a moment for exploring opportunities: it is an occasion when we can provide protection that may be essential to the dependants of hon. Members. If he is giving the House, as it were, a bankable assurance that there will be provision to meet the problem that I documented in my speech, we will consider the position.

Mr. Newton: I think that I made it clear to the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) that there is a better way of achieving what the right hon. Gentleman wants. I should like the opportunity to obtain the necessary further advice, discuss the issue with the trustees and then, if we can find a solution that meets the objectives of the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe, I shall present it to the House in the appropriate form.

Mrs. Beckett: I am closely following the argument of the Leader of the House, but I have some concern. I accept his good faith in suggesting that his proposal would be better for hon. Members. However, if I understood the position correctly, when Lady Thatcher retired, having not taken her full salary, the taxpayer made up her pension. My right hon. Friend is not suggesting that; he is suggesting that each Member should have the right to choose.

I find it hard to envisage a scheme under which it would not be better to maintain the value—the full entitlement —of the underlying pension than to adopt any conceivable system of additional voluntary contributions. I should be surprised if a case could be sustained that a better return for the same money could be obtained through additional voluntary contributions than by maintaining the basic scheme.

Mr. Newton: I think that the hon. Lady and the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe may not have taken in my basic point in a difficult argument. The basis on which the resolution is tabled is that the House will need to return to the issue of long-term linkage with civil service pay at the end of next year. Until that longer term issue is resolved, hon. Members will be unable to judge what it is that they are seeking to protect themselves against.

[Mr. Newton]

Under the right hon. Gentleman's amendment, hon. Members will be offered an opportunity to place significant sums of money—up to £200 or £300—into a scheme from which they may ultimately receive little or no benefit. I sense that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) understands what I am saying. I am talking about a defined benefit and final salary scheme in which the amount that hon. Members receive is determined by their salary in the last 12 months of their term of office.

In order to deal with the problem which, I accept, could arise in the short term, and about which the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe is anxious, hon. Members will be offered the opportunity to invest significant sums of money that they may find will buy them nothing. I am arguing that a proper additional voluntary contributions system, discussed and agreed between us, would be a much better way to solve the problem and would ensure that hon. Members received a return on whatever money they invested.

Sir Jim Spicer: I do not want to prolong the debate more than a few minutes, but the trustees' anxiety is clear —that some people could fall into the trap. They may depart this life, and while discussions are taking place, their dependants will be left without additional benefit and their widows will suffer in the long term. If we can have an assurance on that key issue—the short-term period before discussions are finalised and a resolution found—I shall be happy.

Mr. Newton: In the very short term—some weeks—but not in the long term, it may be necessary to consider the role of the Members' fund in relation to certain circumstances. However, although I acknowledge the purpose of the amendment of the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe, I do not believe that it could achieve its purpose in a way that Members would find helpful. I sense that one or two other Opposition Members are now in agreement with me. I believe that we should find a more satisfactory way of seeking to achieve the right hon. Gentleman's objective. That is the offer that I am extending.

Mrs. Beckett: Now that I am able to follow more clearly the right hon. Gentleman's argument, I shall put it in words of one syllable. The impact of freezing salaries, possibly over a sustained period, will be so serious that, although in normal circumstances it is always true that it is better for someone to place a defined sum of money in a defined benefit scheme, in this case it might be better to use additional voluntary contributions. That is true in this case because the net loss suffered from freezing is greater than the net gain from additional voluntary contributions.

Mr. Newton: That is almost the exact opposite of what I am saying. The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe is offering Members a short-term insurance policy in which the overwhelming majority of hon. Members would invest money for no return. I would rather devise a scheme into which they could place money if they wished and from which they were guaranteed a return. That is a more sensible proposition, which is why I cannot accept the right hon. Gentleman's amendment.

Mr. Alfred Morris: May I take it from the Leader of the House that he is prepared to meet the managing trustees at an early date to determine the timing of the regulations required by his proposals for additional voluntary contributions?

Mr. Newton: I hope that I made it clear in the very last words of my opening speech two to three hours ago that I was suggesting meeting the managing trustees to discuss the issues. Those discussions will have to take place on the basis of seeking to identify an acceptable scheme to deal with the sort of matters raised by the right hon. Gentleman. Clearly, I would take steps to enable the House to take action on any proposal resulting from the discussions. Is that a reasonable suggestion?

The issue of the right hon. Gentleman's amendment has taken much longer than I anticipated and I sense a feeling of impatience among Members. Therefore, I shall simply repeat two crucial issues for the benefit of those hon. Members who were not able to be present when I first spoke. First, the Government entirely accept the case for re-establishing a clear and automatic linkage with the civil service, comparable with what the House intended when it originally passed the resolution. We have no wish to return to the position whereby the House has to decide Members' pay each and every year.

Secondly, we do not intend that Members should forgo the pay increase that civil servants have already received —3·9 per cent. for 1992 paid in August which, in normal circumstances, we would have expected to be carried through to Members' pay in January—as well as receiving no increase for the forthcoming year. I know that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends attach importance to the issue, and we do not intend Members to be permanently disadvantaged by 3·9 per cent. in comparison with the civil service.

I hope that, with those reservations in mind, my right hon. and hon. Friends, in the context of the overall policy for which they voted after the autumn statement, will support the Government tonight.

Amendment negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 321, Noes 103.

Division No. 93] **[7.17 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*

Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Connarty, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Purchase, Ken
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Betts, Clive
Bradley, Keith
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*

Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Livingstone, Ken
McAllion, John
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Mudie, George

Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Terry Lewis and
Mr. Jimmy Hood.

Resolved,

That the following provision should be made with respect to the salaries of Members of this House—

(a) the salaries of Members not falling within paragraph (b) shall, in respect of service in 1993, be £30,854; and

(b) the salaries of Officers of this House and Members receiving a salary under the Ministerial and other Salaries Act 1975 or a pension under section 26 of the Parliamentary and other Pensions Act 1972 shall, in respect of service in 1993, be £23,227.

Orders of the Day

Car Tax (Abolition) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

7.30 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill implements one of the principal measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement—the abolition of car tax.

The Bill continues and completes a measure of tax reform that was begun in the Budget this year, when car tax was reduced from 10 to 5 per cent. It does away with another tax. It will rebalance the taxation of motoring away from the taxation of purchase towards taxation of ownership and use. It ends the discrimination against cars in the indirect tax system whereby previously they alone —apart from the traditional high excise duty goods—were singled out for additional tax on top of value added tax. It will enable the trade to reduce the price of a new car by about 4 per cent., saving the customer about £400 on a typical small family saloon costing about £10,000.

The Bill will help boost the motor industry, and it has been widely welcomed in the industry. It provides a reform that it has long sought. It will benefit business generally, as about half of new cars are bought by businesses.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): It seems that there is some misunderstanding about the sum that accrues to the Exchequer through the car tax. The sum of £750 million has been quoted recently, but I understand that earlier it was thought to be a much higher figure. Why is there confusion?

Mr. Nelson: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I shall deal with that later in my remarks. The receipts this year are affected by the earlier reduction of car tax from 10 to 5 per cent. Clearly that will affect the accrual for this year compared with last year. Also to be considered is the number of cars on which the tax is paid, and the value of those cars. I shall deal in some detail with past and future tax yields—the yield in future, of course, will be nil—and the estimate of the yield forgone.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): The Minister has said that the abolition of the tax will give a boost to the motor car industry. Is he aware that most of those who are involved in the industry—both wholesale and retail—consider that it will be an exercise of damage limitation and not a boost? Can the Minister give us an assurance that there will be a significant increase in car sales over the next year as a consequence of the measure?

Mr. Nelson: Yes, I hope and believe that there will be. The hon. Gentleman need not take my word for it. He need only reflect on the warm welcome that has been given to the abolition by the motor manufacturing and retail industries generally, about which more in a moment.

I shall explain in a little more detail what the Bill does. Clause 1 abolishes car tax with effect from midnight on 12 November 1992. Clause 2 contains a number of consequential amendments to the Car Tax Act 1983. These include allowing traders' car tax registration to be cancelled when Customs and Excise are satisfied that all the tax due has been paid. They restrict Customs' powers relating to car tax for the future by enabling them to be exercised only in respect of cars on which tax became due on or before 12 November, to ensure that such tax is properly accounted for. There are no new powers for Customs and Excise in the Bill.

Clause 3 provides two transitional reliefs. One relieves from car tax vehicles ordered by customers from retailers on or before 12 November, provided they were invoiced to, paid for in full and collected by customers after that date. The other relieves vehicles held by dealers as tax-paid stock and unsold to final consumers on 12 November.

Clause 4 deems never to have been enacted legislation which was due to take effect on 1 January 1993 to enable car tax to be collected on chargeable vehicles brought to the United Kingdom from other member states after that date under the single market transitional arrangements, which is now, of course, unnecessary.

Car tax was introduced in 1973 to compensate for the replacement of the then 25 per cent. rate of purchase tax by the imposition of VAT, which was then 10 per cent. Car tax receipts last year—I answer the question of the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes)—amounted to about £1·24 billion. It is estimated that this year, following the reduction to 5 per cent. and now the abolition, it will amount to about £510 million. The cost of abolition for the rest of the year is estimated at £100 million within that figure and the £750 million for next year.

I am the first to acknowledge that forward estimates—it is to be hoped that they are good estimates—will inevitably be slightly "questimates". We have some indications from the industry of what turnover levels will be. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made clear, the cost of the measure after this year will have to be met by higher motoring taxes in the next Budget. Other motoring taxes include duties on petrol, both leaded and unleaded, and diesel. There is also vehicle excise duty. The House will understand that it would not be right for me to anticipate how the cost will be recouped in that Budget. That will be a matter for my right hon. Friend's Budget strategy.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will the Minister confirm that, if the cost were to be met by vehicle excise duty alone, it would increase from £110 to £135?

Mr. Nelson: Yes, it would be about that. I shall correct myself if I am wrong but I think that the increase would be £31 if the total cost were borne by VED.

It is difficult to forecast accurately the extent to which the measure will stimulate car sales, but retailers put it at about 70,000 cars, or an increase of about 4 per cent. in the United Kingdom market, which now amounts to 1·6 million new registrations.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): If the maximum benefit is to be derived from the abolition of car tax, we must consider the number of cars produced and the production of car components as well as car sales. That benefit must be passed on to the consumer, to ensure that the producers of cars and components similarly enjoy the maximum benefit from the action that the Government are taking.

Mr. Nelson: I agree that that is important. Fortunately, the car industry—especially now—is extremely competitive. I note that some car dealers are already announcing substantial reductions in the offer prices of their cars. They are not mentioning the abolition of car tax but are taking the benefit for themselves. I am happy to enable them to do so by that marketing technique. There are certainly reductions in the price of new cars, which will be invoiced. Clearly no car tax will be added. I imagine that there will be an impact on the second-hand car market, where there is a differential all the way down the line. It decreases the more that the value of a car diminishes.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): I think that the Minister said that retailers within the motor industry predict that sales will increase by about 70,000 a year. Will he confirm that the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders estimate that the increase will be about 60,000? It stresses that it cannot be confident of that until we rid the country of the fear of unemployment. It takes the view that we shall not be able to regenerate the industry until then. People do not buy new cars when they think that they will lose their jobs. Does the Minister accept that we require an industrial strategy of the sort which has been advocated by the Engineering Employers Federation and which the Government, so far, have singularly failed to provide?

Mr. Nelson: The hon. Gentleman says that people will not buy cars until they have job security, but in a sense the converse is more persuasive: revival of the car industry is a necessary precondition for the security of many jobs. I shall later explain the central importance that I and, I think, many hon. Members attach to the car, automotive and components industries, which are crucial.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): The hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) spoke about representations by the Engineering Employers Federation. To the best of my recollection, the federation asked for a reduction in interest rates. The Chancellor has reduced them three times since September. It asked for investment allowances, which were contained in the autumn statement, and it asked for the preservation of capital projects. The industry has done rather well. It is odd for the hon. Gentleman to complain when the representations have been met almost to the letter by the Government.

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is right. The change has been welcomed by industry generally and by the motor industry in particular. The abolition of the car tax was warmly welcomed by the Retail Motor Industry Federation, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, the CBI, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce and many industrial leaders. That warm welcome was in marked contrast to the grudging reaction of the Opposition. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) suggested that the money should have been put towards prizes in the national lottery. That is not the sort of reaction that one would expect from industry, or, indeed, from the Opposition.

I recognise that the industry has been going through a tough time, with lay-offs and short-time working. Following this and other measures, especially the reductions in interest rates, we believe that there is every prospect of a much brighter economic outlook which will benefit the car industry. I think that we all recognise that

[Mr. Nelson]

that industry is of great importance to the United Kingdom's economy. Production of motor vehicles and parts accounts for about 5·5 per cent. of United Kingdom manufacturing output. Producers employ 250,000 people, and distribution and servicing employ a similar number. That means that about 500,000 people are employed in the industry.

Output grew rapidly during the second half of the 1980s but fell with the onset of the recession. The most recent figures show that car production was up by 3·7 per cent. in the first 10 months of this year compared with the same period in 1991. Much of the increase in domestic production can be attributed to Japanese car manufacturers, who were one of the key sources of inward investment in Britain in the 1980s. I remind the House of the central importance of attracting and retaining that inward investment, not just for the car industry but for manufacturing generally. For example, Nissan Motor Manufacturing (UK) Ltd has an investment exceeding £800 million. Planned car production next year is more than twice that of last year and the company has just won a Queen's award for exports.

Toyota has spent £840 million on its United Kingdom operations, and that includes a £140 million engine plant in Shotton in north Wales to produce up to 200,000 engines. Honda is investing £300 million in its car manufacturing plant at Swindon. It currently employs 786 people, and that could rise to 2,000 at full capacity. This is not just a Japanese success story, because British car manufacturers have their successes. For example, in the past two months Land-Rover has increased production of its new model.

None of us must lose sight of the importance of the European dimension. There is much loose talk about the effects of imports on the car industry, but more and more of the components used in the assembly of cars are produced throughout the European Community. One obvious, although high-market, example of car production is Mercedes-Benz. Its current procurement of components from the United Kingdom is valued at £25 million, and it will rise to £75 million. The procurement of the Daimler-Benz group generally is worth about £240 million in addition to that.

That means that procurement by a German manufacturer of United Kingdom components, some of which are then imported to Britain, amounts to almost one third of a billion pounds. Similarly, many British companies have subsidiaries and operations in other parts of the European Community producing components that are used by United Kingdom car manufacturers. As I say, we must remember the European dimension. The legislation will be of material benefit in increasing the car industry's turnover. It has been widely welcomed in the industry, and I hope that it will be welcomed by the House.

7.44 pm

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): The Bill seems to be longer than the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, but I trust that we shall deal with it more quickly and with greater agreement. Labour welcomes the abolition of the car tax, and I have no wish to detain the House unnecessarily on this legislation to carry the abolition into effect.

Motor manufacturers, trade unions in the industry, retailers and component suppliers have said for some time that this tax must go. I and some of my hon. Friends, especially those who represent motor manufacturing constituencies, have said the same. The measure will be especially welcomed by Rover and other United Kingdom producers, because the level of indirect taxation in a producer's home market clearly influences the strength of domestic demand, which is the foundation of company strength and of success in other markets.

The old level of car tax was 10 per cent., but VAT at 17·5 per cent. and the double imposition of VAT on the special car tax itself, an anomaly that was greatly resented, meant that British producers faced total sales taxes of 29·25 per cent. in their main domestic market. That compares with 22 per cent. in France and 14 per cent. in Germany. Therefore, it is good that the tax is to go.

The Opposition have two important concerns. Although the measure is welcome, it will not provide the stimulus that the motor industry needs, but neither will the rest of the autumn statement, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) said. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders has said that consumer confidence remains shaky because of the fear of unemployment and outstanding debt, especially on housing. Car dealers have already been heavily discounting models and offering interest-free finance. The reduction in interest, about which the Economic Secretary spoke, can be beneficial only through its impact on general consumer confidence. We have yet to see that confidence returning.

Even if the abolition of the tax resulted in an extra 70,000 sales a year, it would, as I said in the debate on the autumn statement, still leave sales about 670,000, or 29 per cent., lower than in 1989. That is a measure of the scale and depth of the recession and its adverse consequences for the motor industry, which, as the Economic Secretary conceded, has had to impose lay-offs and short-time working. We clearly need a recovery programme that will reduce unemployment and restore consumer confidence, but the Government are a long way from that.

We welcome the inward investment about which the Economic Secretary spoke. He was right to mention the extent to which the motor industry is pan-European and, indeed, global. In that context, he should have regard to the importance of stability and proper co-ordination and co-operation in our economic relations with Europe. After the devaluation of the pound, the SMMT said:

> "there is great uncertainty . . . over the future direction of Britain's economic and European policy. Inflation is still feared, the pound is regarded as unstable at its present level (which is much too low—the industry was competitive at DM2·90—£1) and there is great concern lest the industry again be subjected to taxation to help the Government fund the PSBR. A two-speed Europe would speedily negate the purpose of the foreign investment so that new capacity would replace rather than add to existing capacity".

I hope that the Government will end the semi-detached attitude that they have been taking in regard to Europe. If they do not, they will damage the prospects for jobs and growth in the motor industry and in other industries.

The Economic Secretary has confirmed the Chancellor's statement that he—or, rather, the motoring public—will pay for the abolition of car tax by means of higher motoring taxes after the end of the financial year. That is the Opposition's second worry. Despite repeated demands from me, the Government have given no answer to our questions about why the cost of abolition is being put at £750 million, and not at a lower figure that would take account of the additional VAT revenue to which extra sales will give rise. Were there to be 70,000 extra sales—as we hope there will be—they would bring in some £122 million extra in VAT, thus reducing the real cost of abolition to £628 million.

Furthermore, as my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) pointed out earlier, recouping the revenue in the way that the Government propose will not give any overall extra fiscal stimulus. It amounts, in effect, simply to shifting the burden of tax from those who can afford to buy new cars to those who cannot.

As the Minister will no doubt confirm, it is unusual for the Chancellor to commit himself to extra motoring taxes in next year's Budget. He would not normally speculate on what was going to happen until he had presented his Budget proposals: indeed, he frequently says as much when he is pressed on different aspects of the Government's overall fiscal stance. Let me make it clear that Labour is not committing itself now to the extra motoring tax; first, we shall want to know exactly what the Chancellor proposes.

As well as telling the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), what it would cost in terms of vehicle excise duty if the Chancellor chose to recoup the cost in that way, perhaps the Minister will tell us by how much petrol duty would rise if he chose that option. Given that the Chancellor has announced that motorists will bear the cost, I feel that the public and the industry have a right to know what he has in store for them.

Although we welcome the abolition of car tax, we do not feel that, in itself, it can provide anything like the boost to confidence that is necessary to stimulate the growth, jobs and future success of the motor components industry, whose future is so vital to this country.

7.53 pm

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): The abolition of any tax is a happy development, and the abolition of car tax is no exception. We should be smiling and throwing our hats in the air—if we were wearing them, that is. The proposal proves, if proof were needed, that the Government and the Conservative party are dedicated to the lowest possible taxation.

Manufacturing industry is enjoying the best of both worlds. The Chancellor has introduced the new investment allowances, albeit on a temporary basis; I believe that we also have the lowest corporation tax in the world. That will enable companies to keep their profits and use them to expand—and the only way in which small and medium-sized firms can expand is generally through the use of their own internally generated profits. The motor industry—not just the distribution side, but the components side—contains many successful small and medium-sized businesses. I wish that there were more, and I think that we should try to encourage such a development.

As I think most hon. Members would agree, a few years ago the components industry was not very competitive; it was fairly flabby. One of the best things that Japanese inward investment has done for this country is to compel the component firms to pull their socks up and become really competitive. Japanese motor representatives have told me that some of our best component manufacturers are among the best in the world. We can be proud of what has been achieved; but there is a long way to go. As the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) pointed out, this is an international industry: throughout Europe, buyers will look to different sources, and we need to win our share of the market.

As my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will recall, some years ago we were in the depths of gloom about the state of our motor industry. The British-owned industry had shrunk as a result of various disasters and incompetences—and, dare I say, intervention by a Labour Government, who had not helped by forming the botched-up company that later became British Leyland. That is all history, but they were depressing days. We had American investment, but no investment from Japan.

Since then, there has been a twofold transformation. First, the British-owned industry—what used to be called British Leyland, and is now Rover—has been successfully returned to the private sector, where it should always have been, and is thriving within the British Aerospace empire. Secondly, there has been massive inward investment by Japanese firms. I think that hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree that that investment has virtually no negative aspects. Not only has it brought much-needed employment to areas where unemployment has been, and still is, high; it has provided a spur for efficiency in our motor car and component firms.

I hope that the House will pass the Bill with enthusiasm. I consider it another sign of the Government's commitment to British manufacturing industry: it is an industry that, with the right encouragement—which the Government are now providing—can beat all comers. The British motor industry has much of which we can be proud, both in British-owned concerns such as Rover and Rolls-Royce and in the smaller component firms and the foreign-owned businesses. Its success is already having a dramatic effect on our balance of payments: exports, for example, rose by 50 per cent. between 1990 and 1991. That will lead Japanese firms to gear up and sell into Europe.

I congratulate the Government on the Bill. I hope that we shall never bring back the car tax, which was an aberration. Admittedly, it was introduced by a Conservative Government, but even Conservative Governments make mistakes occasionally, and we hope that that mistake will never be repeated. I rejoice, and throw my hat in the air.

7.58 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I agree with one thing that was said by the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls) and disagree with another. I shall deal with the disagreement first. It cannot possibly be claimed that the Bill—which I support—shows that the Government believe in the lowest possible taxation; as the Government have made clear, it is a tax-neutral measure. I shall list some ways in which the cost could be recouped, but I do not think that the Government have claimed that the Bill does what the hon. Gentleman suggested. Back Benchers had better stick to the brief.

The Economic Secretary referred to the Japanese motor industry's inward investment in Britain. We hope that it will be one of the beneficiaries of this measure. The north-east takes pride in the success that Nissan has enjoyed there. Not everyone expected that to happen. Old

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

scars, the result of memories of the war with Japan, take a lot of healing, but the arrival of Nissan in the north-east, its great success and the great commitment of its work force are matters in which we take great pride. If one goes into a Nissan plant, one sees few Japanese workers there.

The large north-east work force has adapted to methods brought here from Japan—methods that themselves were adjusted to meet the British climate. They have set new standards, not just for the motor industry but for other industries. The result is that Nissan can claim that it has the best of a large available work force. Many people want to work for that company. They know that it is a good place to be.

The Bill will abolish an indefensible tax—a peculiar left-over from the old purchase tax system. Sooner or later, somebody has to get rid of it. It is arguable whether this is the best measure to choose at this time, but since the motor car industry needs help, it was a reasonable choice to make and therefore counts as one of the better points in the autumn statement.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was at unusual pains to make it clear that there would be a comeback. He was uncharacteristically, as the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) said, able to anticipate his Budget statement by suggesting that the money would be clawed back. In a normal Budget, there is often valorisation of excise duty on petrol or of vehicle excise duty. Although it does not occur in every Budget, the price is normally increased. Even if we ignore the possibility of the Chancellor doing that this year, we have to anticipate that this change will have a significant impact.

The Economic Secretary told us that he thought that vehicle excise duty might be increased by £31, if that route were chosen, which is slightly above my estimate. My estimate of what would happen with petrol was also an understatement. I reckoned that there would be 8p a gallon on petrol, if the increase were to be wholly obtained from petrol duty. It may be 10p a gallon. Opprobrium was heaped on the Liberal Democrats from time to time because we argued that, in order to tackle pollution, it might be necessary to increase the purchase price of petrol; we can now put all those remarks in context. If the Government combine some element of valorisation with recouping the cost of this measure from petrol tax, there will be a significant petrol tax increase in the next Budget.

The Government could consider company car taxation as another way of meeting the costs of this measure. By widespread consent, company car taxation is below the real value of the benefit that many company car users obtain from their car. If the money has to be found from some other form of vehicle taxation, it might be better to find it from company car taxation rather than from those who have the greatest difficulty in affording the cost of motoring.

I think in particular of many of my constituents; they live in a rural area, but the same can be said of people in other areas. They can only just afford to keep their old car going. For them, the annual bill for tax and insurance is the annual decision about whether to keep their car on the road. The decision about whether to keep their car also involves a decision about whether they can keep their job, or whether their wife can continue to work, or whether their son or daughter can continue with further education, because they need transport too. The people who find it hardest to run a car are the ones who most depend on it because of where they live.

The Government must be careful to avoid transferring the tax that they have abolished on new cars, bought by people who can afford them, on to the backs of people who cannot afford it. It would be more logical if the tax were transferred to company cars where under-taxation is significant, as the Government have recognised by seeking to address that problem in recent Budgets.

We hope that this measure will have a significant impact on the future of the car industry. However, several hon. Members have pointed out that many people will not buy cars unless they have confidence in their own economic well-being and that of the country. It would be foolish to assume that this measure will have a dramatic effect. Only the growth of confidence in the economy can bring that about. We all hope that that will happen, but different views have been expressed here regarding whether the autumn statement will bring about a real growth of confidence in the economy.

To return to Nissan, inward investment has been based on the belief that this country will remain within Europe and the single market and, if it ever comes about, the single currency. The choice of this country by Japanese investors was based on our position within Europe, together with the particular advantages that we enjoy. One of those advantages is the English language, which is the primary foreign language for Japan.

Japan will not invest in this country if there is real doubt about our future in Europe. That is why we voted for the Maastricht treaty. That is why we find it difficult to accept the view expressed by the Labour Front Bench that they share our concern regarding the real dangers to the motor industry from a two-speed Europe.

8.6 pm

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): I welcome the measure. We all take pleasure in the abolition of a tax. I understand the point made by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) about the way in which this tax might be recouped in the coming months. His point about company vehicles very much echoes the representations that many hon. Members received only today from Transport 2000, the environmental group. I trust that the Government will seriously consider the impact of their decision on how they choose to recoup their lost revenue.

I hope that the Minister can give us an assurance about the price of new vehicles. We no longer have a special car tax; there will therefore be a consequential decrease in VAT. Should not the price of new vehicles manufactured within the European Community, either in this country or on the continent, be the same, wherever one happens to purchase a new car? The argument about the complications of the British taxation system leading to price differentials will no longer wash. Differences in the rates of exchange mean that, from time to time, there will be differences in the nominal price of vehicles, but that does not alter the real cost of a car. I hope that the Minister will be able to reassure us that there will be an end to customers being pushed into importing their cars in order to take advantage of lower prices for similar vehicles, particularly in Belgium. That will encourage people to return to British car showrooms.

This measure, by itself, will not regenerate the motor car industry, but it is a step in the right direction. I trust that the House will respond enthusiastically to this measure and that it will encourage the Minister to look for other ways to reduce the tax burden. With a request that he examine closely the way in which the revenue will be recouped and for an assurance of equal prices across our open frontier market, I welcome the Bill.

8.9 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I did not intend to participate in the debate. However, on behalf of my constituents, I was legitimately aggrieved when I heard the Minister, supported by the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir. M. Grylls), imply that this measure was a great step forward and would boost motor car sales in this country. I am not aggrieved because the Government are deluding themselves. I should be happy for them to continue to do so, were it not for the fact that their delusion is leading to a continued decline in Britain's manufacturing industry, especially the motor car industry.

I represent an area in which there is a Ford plant. The workers at the Aveley plant face the prospects of job losses, relocation and redundancy; also, many of my constituents work at Dagenham. Workers at Dagenham and other Ford plants have greatly contributed to increased productivity, only to find that their enthusiasm and dedication to promoting their industry has resulted in their being kicked in the teeth by a complacent Government who preside over a recession which has resulted in a significant decline in the motor industry.

I am concerned about the short-term working at many Ford plants. Vauxhall has also introduced short-time working because of the fall-off in demand. Short-time working is an enormous blight on the local economies which surround those plants. There is no doubt that the Dagenham plant and the Ford plant in Aveley were a major stimulant to the local economies in good times. However, short-time working and job losses not only depress the incomes of those who are laid off or put on short-time work; they ricochet through the local economy. We see that not only in the factories and small industries which supply the main plants but in the high street shops and corner shops.

The motor car industry in Britain must compete in a difficult environment to sell its products. That is having a deleterious effect on the economies of Essex and east London and is resulting in job losses for other people in the constituencies in those areas. It is unacceptable that the Government pretend that this measure is a great step forward and a great boost for the motor car industry. At the very most, the measure will limit the damage that has been done to such an important industry.

In case hon. Member twist my words or suggest that I am being ambiguous, I make it clear that I welcome the abolition of the tax. The hon. Member for Surrey, North-West said that the Labour Government had not imposed the tax; indeed, the Conservative Government imposed it. We must ask this question: if the abolition of the tax is to make such a significant contribution in boosting car sales, why was it not abolished weeks or months ago? Since we have fallen into a recession—or perhaps it is a depression—many people in and around my constituency have lost their jobs as a consequence of the decline in the motor car industry.

Many of us had a bruising experience on the night and morning of 9 and 10 April. The Government should bear in mind the fact that many Ford workers and other workers in the motor car industry were persuaded by the lie that to vote Labour would cost them about £1,250 a year. That was a downright electoral lie. It is legitimate tonight to say that, since 9 and 10 April, thousands of workers in the motor industry have lost much more than £1,250 as a result of short-time working. They will lose much more. Unhappily, some people have lost their jobs as a result of the continuing recession.

If the outcome of the election on 9 April had been different, we would have a Government who sought to stimulate demand in the economy. A Labour Government would have paid attention to the necessary promotion of the motor car industry, which would have been stimulated by the public works that that Government would have sponsored to create demand in the economy and get the building and construction industry back to work. Clearly, that would have had an immediate impact on demand in the motor car industry.

I feel most aggrieved on behalf of my constituents that the President of the Board of Trade promised at the Conservative party conference this year to intervene on behalf of manufacturers at breakfast, lunch and tea time. However, we must legitimately charge him this evening with not demonstrating any interest in creating new job opportunities in the motor car manufacturing industry in and around constituencies in Dagenham, east London and Essex, including Thurrock and Basildon, in which there is rising unemployment.

The President of the Board of Trade and the Government seem to be complacent. That has been demonstrated by Conservative Members who paraded this measure as some great breakthrough to create new job opportunities and to stimulate and promote the main industry in east London and Essex. It is nonsense. It would be wrong if I let the Minister get away with introducing the Bill without expressing the concern of my constituents—the Ford workers and workers in other motor manufacturing plants who have done much to increase productivity over the years only to find that they face a loss of income and job losses as we look forward to 1993.

8.18 pm

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): I will not detain the House for long because I know that it wants to make progress. Conservative and Opposition Members are unanimous on one point: we welcome the abolition of the tax. There is no doubt about that, and there is no fudging it.

We welcome the abolition of the tax. Industry in the west midlands, where I come from, has called for this measure for a long time. Trade unions and both major political parties have called for it for some time. So the abolition of the tax is welcome. I have little doubt that it will give a necessary boost to the motor industry. However, the size of that boost is highly debatable. Today a figure of 70,000 cars has been bandied about. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders gave a figure of about 60,000 cars. But they are only estimates.

There is no doubt that the price of a car alone does not determine whether the motor industry thrives. We have already had a substantial reduction in prices. We saw the first reduction in the special car tax in the Budget, and a

[Mr. Richard Burden]

price reduction arose from the VAT on top of that. Many deals were undertaken over the summer. All of them have provided some boost to the industry. I will not deny that, and I am sure that the industry will not deny that. But it is not enough, because in a climate of recession and rising unemployment the idea that the removal of the special car tax, or any other tax, will regenerate either the car industry or manufacturing industry in general is totally misguided.

The car industry has been doing a magnificent job. The investment that Rover has put into the Longbridge plant, in Northfield, is magnificent, as are the efforts of the work force in changing their working practices. The training initiatives are to be applauded, too.

Both sides of the industry are keeping up their end of the bargain. Component manufacturers have been mentioned tonight, and they, too, have been doing what they can to compete and to thrive. But in a climate still dominated by the dead hand of recession, what they can do is limited.

After the autumn statement, growth will still be pitifully low during the coming year. Unemployment will rise; even the recorded level will rise to more than 3 million. Investment has plummeted in recent years, and at best is likely to stagnate next year. In such a climate, the efforts of the industry and of the people who give their lives to that industry can be only partially successful.

In an earlier intervention I mentioned the recent launch of a campaign by the Engineering Employers Federation. I had not intended to mention that again, but I feel that I must, because it is worrying that either Conservative Members have not bothered to read what the federation says, or they have not been able to understand it. So I shall quote from the press release by the director general of the federation—not a body which historically has been over-supportive of the Labour party—about whether his interpretation of the document is the same as that of Conservative Members, who believe that the federation applauded what the Government are doing.

Referring to the Department of Trade and Industry, the press release says:

> "We need a department with vision and a clear commitment to the success of UK plc. We stand ready to give such a department, which should be part of the DTI, our full and enthusiastic support, but in recent weeks industry itself has been doing the job of the DTI—fighting for a voice and fighting for action within Government. I believe we have a right to expect a more effective and committed champion. If the DTI lacks the vision, the competence or the determination, or if it is simply too busy with short-term issues to deal with long-term strategy, perhaps we should look to the creation of a specialist Treasury section to do that vital work".

There are two possible interpretations of that press release. I suppose that it would be possible to say that the Engineering Employers Federation is very unhappy with the DTI, yet totally happy with the performance of the Treasury—but I do not think that that would be correct. It would certainly suggest an unfortunate division in the ranks of the Government. The only other interpretation is that a major representative organisation of manufacturing industry considers that the Government are not delivering or keeping their side of the bargain—that they are not doing what is necessary to stimulate manufacturing industry.

The Government are still obsessed with short termism. They are not developing the kind of long-term strategy which manufacturing industry needs. To continue in that way is a recipe for disaster, not only for big manufacturers such as Rover and Ford but for hundreds and thousands of smaller firms—component manufacturers and so on—which depend on manufacturing industry.

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that the Engineering Employers Federation welcomed the autumn statement as a substantial boost to the economy?

Mr. Burden: I have read the document from the Engineering Employers Federation launch, which took place this week, after the autumn statement. Its purpose was to suggest that the measures in the autumn statement, welcome though they may be—the Opposition have welcomed some of them tonight—were nowhere near enough to provide the boost or, more importantly, the long-term strategy which manufacturing industry needs. That was the message of the Engineering Employers Federation.

There is nothing new in that, although the document is new. The federation has been saying such things for months—in some cases, for years. The trade unions have certainly been saying such things for years. If the Government ever intend to listen to what industry says, they need to start listening now.

If we are to develop such a strategy, it must be done at local, national and European level. I have said something about national strategy, and it is worth recalling that efforts are being made even now by local authorities. My local authority, Birmingham city council, and others are trying to do what they can to work with the component suppliers and with firms such as Rover to improve product development, training and research and development. Those efforts need support from central Government. At the moment there is at best a hands-off approach and at worst something even worse: those are the same local authorities which suffer from Government restrictions on local authority autonomy, and on their spending——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not continue with the local authority dimension, because the subject of the debate is very specific—the removal of car tax.

Mr. Burden: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I shall not dwell much longer on the issue. Work is being done at local authority level to regenerate manufacturing industry, and it is being co-ordinated through organisations such as MILAN—the Motor Industry Local Authority Network. I believe that such organisations deserve support from central Government.

Such a strategy also has to be adopted at European level. Work is going on in the European Parliament—spearheaded by the socialist group. Reports produced by a working party headed by Carole Tongue MEP are aimed at producing the kind of European strategy which the motor industry needs. I hope that our Government do not adopt a hands-off approach but will become involved and will contribute.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) talked about possible ways in which revenue lost as a result of the abolition of the car tax could be recouped, and mention was made of company car taxation. It is fair to say that the overall level of company car taxation in Britain today has still not completely managed to grasp the level of perks, where perks exist. Yet the approach to such taxation in recent years has singularly failed to tackle genuine perks; the people who use company cars as a tool of their trade have been the hardest hit.

The simple reason for that is the way in which the tax has been progressively jacked up on the mere possession of a company car. That is where the biggest tax burden has fallen. Tax on the use of such cars has not increased especially, so that a company director who gets all his private mileage paid for suffers some taxation, but he does reasonably well on his real gains, because he is taxed only at the same level as a sales rep or someone similar who has to pay for every private mile that he does.

If we are to tackle the issue of company car taxation and perks, it is important that our efforts should be targeted on the perks and not on people who happen to have a company car yet who contribute to every private mile that they drive. It would be fair to sort out the company car taxation system to take account of that. The debate is about much more than fairness; it is about effectiveness, efficiency and the regeneration of manufacturing industry.

I shall close as I started. The abolition of the tax is welcome, but it does not go even half far enough. We need a major fundamental change in Government policy to provide the kind of long-term support, the strategy and the intervention that manufacturing industry in the midlands and elsewhere so desperately needs.

8.29 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I will be brief as other hon. Members wish to speak on a range of issues. I do not intend to detain the House for long. However, it is worth pointing out that although the abolition of car tax is welcome, it would be more welcome if the revenue was to be gained by restoring some of the £26 billion of tax concessions that have been given to the wealthy top few per cent. by successive Conservative Governments.

There are difficulties about abolishing car tax. The proposal is designed to stimulate manufacturing industry. Since 1979, we have lost 2·5 million jobs in manufacturing industry. The abolition of the car tax should have been coupled with a 100 per cent. tax allowance in respect of corporation tax on investment in plant and machinery. That was the position under the last Labour Government. This Government are very fond of making comparisons, but they must be aware that we allowed 100 per cent. tax allowances for specific investment. The allowances were therefore targeted.

A problem with abolishing car tax is that it will benefit not only cars manufactured in this country but imported cars. So far this year, we have a balance of trade deficit of approximately £10 billion. The proposal will therefore have an adverse effect as well as a beneficial effect. However, I believe that the beneficial effect will be marginal because there is such a fear of debt in the nation that people are very hesitant about incurring further debt to buy new cars or any new commodity. Fear of mortgage repossession is also widespread. People now realise that an English man or English woman's home is not always their castle if they fall into the hands of the wrong building society.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) referred to Japanese investment and whether the abolition of the car tax would stimulate that investment. The Japanese invested here because of relatively cheap labour. They did not necessarily invest here because of Maastricht. Maastricht has not gained us one extra job —nor will it.

We must recognise the dangers of such an approach. Design and development, which are crucial in our engineering industry, will be left to another nation. The power trains of Japanese cars are designed in Japan, not in this country. Incidentally, the Japanese can invest so heavily in manufacturing industry and in car design and development because they do not waste money on a defence industry as we do. While we spend 4 per cent. of our gross domestic product on defence, the Japanese spend less than 2 per cent.

It is potentially damaging for any country to invest in manufacturing here because the decision making is carried out in the nation state that is investing. In addition, our people are not necessarily trained in design and development, because that may be carried out in the manufacturer's main base. If, as is the case in Japan where car manufacturing companies are retrenching because the investing country is experiencing a recession—although, in comparison to ours, a very minor one—the main manufacturing plants will not be diminished. That will happen to plants held in other countries—for example, in the United Kingdom.

We hope that the abolition of the car tax will stimulate our engineering industry in general. If our engineering industry diminishes, and in particular the machine tool industry, that will affect the machines that make the machines. Our manufacturing ability would therefore be badly damaged.

If overseas companies invest in the United Kingdom, local component manufacture will not be confined to the United Kingdom. It will be extended to all the EC member states. I remind the Minister that there are still many hidden subsidies in those member states which produce unfair competition against which our manufacturers cannot compete.

Although the abolition of the car tax may have a marginal effect, and we will certainly not vote against this modest stimulus, I believe that it will not be sufficient. The engineering industry, which is such an essential part of the car manufacturing industry, will still lie in the doldrums. There is testimony to that virtually every week as there is a haemorrhage of jobs in all kinds of industries—in services, banking, finance, component manufacture and in the car industry itself. Until that trend is reversed, abolition of the car tax will not produce the necessary consumer-led demand, because there is simply not sufficient confidence in the Government.

8.35 pm

Mr. Nelson: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate. Hon. Members have welcomed the proposal. There was a warm welcome from the Conservative Benches and a miserly one from Opposition Members. I regret that, because this proposal is a considerable element of the autumn statement and it has been widely welcomed by industry generally and by representative bodies of the motor industry.

I will try to answer as briefly and as directly as possible a number of the points that have been raised. The hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) has an important car interest in his constituency. He accused the

[Mr. Nelson]

Government of a semi-detached stance on Europe. If the Government's stance is semi-detached, the Opposition's stance is positively schizophrenic. The hard-fought agreement on Maastricht was the agreement that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister sought and wanted and we obtained a majority in the House for it. In the recent debate, the Opposition went back on their commitment for the basest of political, opportunist reasons.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East said that the proposal provided no extra fiscal stimulus. As I said in my opening remarks, the proposal was intended as a transfer towards a tax on use rather than on purchase. The tax yield forgone in the remainder of this financial year is £100 million and that is not being recouped by additional motoring taxes.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East expressed surprise at the novelty of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announcing that he would seek to recoup the revenue in motoring taxes next year. I believe that my right hon. Friend was being responsible. He would not want to give the impression in the current circumstances that fiscal policy can be relaxed unduly. The substantial package of measures that he announced in the autumn statement, including the abolition of car tax, has a cost tag attached to it next year and beyond that will have to be met.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East and the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) wanted to know the cost if the cost of abolition were added to petrol. The answer is 2·2p on leaded petrol and 1·8p on unleaded and diesel.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Is that a litre or a gallon?

Mr. Nelson: A litre.

My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls) gave a warm welcome to the Bill. He referred to the revival of the car industry which has undoubtedly taken place, the importance and size of inward investment and the importance, to which I also referred, of the component sector. He said that the car tax must never return and he, like others, poured some scorn on the existence of the tax.

No tax is welcome. However, it is fair to point out that the car tax has been a fairly cost-effective tax to raise. it cost £700,000 a year to administer and involved the full-time employment of four staff and 20 man years. Considering the yield, in years gone by and even in this year, that is relatively cost-effective.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed referred to the implications of recouping and said that it might be better to put the cost in part or in whole on company car taxation. That point was also made by other hon. Members. That is, of course, a judgment for my right hon. Friend, but what the right hon. Gentleman has said will be noted.

I warmly concur with the sentiments of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed that Britain's future in Europe is essential if we are to maintain and attract inward Japanese investment. There must be no question of that, given the flows of investment, and there really must be division across party lines on the importance of that investment. Despite what the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said about design of manufacture, there must be no doubt that this is a welcome haven for world-wide investment. I mentioned north Wales, but there are other examples, particularly in the north of the country. The extent to which investment has revitalised those areas is very exciting for the future. It has been a great success story, and we should welcome and applaud that investment and succour it for the future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) would like the cost of cars to be on a more similar basis throughout the EC. The Government are currently reviewing car prices throughout the Community and are keen to encourage the industry to co-operate with current European Community initiatives to produce greater price transparency. Abolition of the tax means that we will have almost the lowest rates of tax on cars in the European Community. The rates range from those in Denmark, which has a VAT rate of 25 per cent., plus an additional sales tax of 105 per cent. on the first 34,400 krona, and 180 per cent. tax on the balance, down to those in Germany, which has a 14 per cent. rate of VAT and no additional car tax.

With the minimum rates of VAT that are being introduced, we will see a standardisation of the minimum rates, but at the moment there is considerable variation in those basic rates and in the supplementary additional sales taxes, but we *are* looking at that matter.

Dealing as expeditiously as I can with the remaining important points, the hon. Members for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) and for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) felt that the measure would not boost industry. The hon. Member for Northfield, who has Rover Longbridge in his constituency, felt, as did others, that the measure alone would not suffice and that a broader regeneration and inspiration of manufacturing industry were necessary.

The last thing that industry needs at this time is a public expenditure programme which will increase its burden of taxation and borrowing. Any Chancellor has to make a major judgment about the size of public expenditure. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has come forward with a major package to restore confidence in the housing market, to promote exports, and, in particular, to target the car manufacturing industry.

Mr. Andrew Smith *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Nelson: The hon. Member for Oxford, East shakes his head, but major amounts of public money have been allocated for the revitalisation of British industries. We all hope that they will have the effect we intend.

The hon. Member for Northfield spoke about company car taxation and urged [illegible] to hit the perks rather than continue with the present regime. Again, that is a matter for my right hon. Friend's judgment in the Budget, but what the hon. Gentleman said will have been noted.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South spoke about capital allowances, which he said should have been raised to 100 per cent. He will be aware that, in the statement, tax incentives for investment included an increase in capital allowances in the first year to 40 per cent. for 12 months for most plant and machinery. The Chancellor spelt out very clearly why the Government retain the view that they have held for some years, that they do not wish, by reintroducing capital allowances, to introduce artificialities into the spending and investment decisions that people make. It is far better to keep down the overall burden of taxation and, in a more perfect market, enable people to take decisions about the allocation of capital and investment which will earn sufficient return and promote profitability.

Abolition of the car tax will have a very good stimulus upon the market. If the House does not accept my intentions in that regard, I refer to the statement of Mr. David Gent, director general of the Retail Motor Industry Federation, who said:

> "The motor industry and its customers can now look forward to a more certain future and an increasingly brighter 1993."

Sir Hal Miller, the chief executive of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd., said:

> "we now look forward to leading the way out of recession."

Those are important leaders of a major industry for our country. They welcome the measure that was announced today. I am sure that it will have a beneficial impact, and I hope that the House will approve it.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. —*[Mr. Wood.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee.

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Motion made and Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

8.45 pm

Mr. Andrew Smith: The effect of subsection (5)(1A) will be to require certificates relating to vehicles leased to the handicapped to be retained. Why is that? What does it mean? Will the Minister assure me that that in no way adversely affects access to and use of cars by disabled people?

Mr. Nelson: I can give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. Manufacturers of vehicles which are leased to the handicapped, as is done through Motability, are required to hold a certificate issued by the lessor, which is exclusively Motability, that the vehicle is intended to be supplied zero-rated for VAT purposes, in which case the vehicle can be supplied free of car tax. But if the vehicle is later supplied in other circumstances—for example, within three years—the taxes would become payable. Therefore, it is necessary for the certificate to be retained as proof of the tax-free status of the vehicle. It is really for VAT purposes rather than for car tax purposes and will not have any impact, adverse or otherwise, on the availability of such cars to the disabled.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 3 to 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 75 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

PETITIONS

Pit Closures

8.48 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am delighted to be able to present this petition against pit closures, which has been collected by members of the Bradford, South Labour party and has reached nearly 5,000 signatures. The boxes that have just been brought into the Chamber are not connected with my petition, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

On 31 October, in the centre of Bradford, in just over two hours we collected more than 2,000 signatures from people who willingly signed the petition and enthusiastically supported it as a gesture of support for the miners. It reads:

> To the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of the citizens of the United Kingdom, particularly the citizens of Bradford and the surrounding areas—
>
> Showeth that the closure of more pits in Britain will cause terrible hardship and destroy many mining communities and tens of thousands of jobs in industry; that Britain's manufacturing strength was built upon coal; that coal reserves are available that would last for hundreds of years and are essential for our industrial renewal; and that British coal is the most suitable coal available for the generation of electricity.
>
> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will instruct the Government to reverse the pit closure programme at once, to stop the importation of subsidised coal from abroad, to suspend opencast operations and to adopt new policies that put people before profits and protect the environment and the quality of life that depends upon it.
>
> And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Devonport Dockyard

8.50 pm

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): I wish to present a petition containing 33,661 names of the residents of the Plymouth area. The House will be aware of the uncertainty over the future of the royal dockyards as we await the award of the contract for nuclear submarines. That contract is vital to the maintenance of jobs in Devonport, Plymouth and the south-west of England. The petition reads:

> To the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament Assembled, The humble petition of Plymouth area residents sheweth: Devonport Dockyard is the largest industrial complex in the south west of England and is responsible directly and indirectly for 22,600 jobs in the Plymouth area and as such is crucial to the economic well being of the region. The future survival of the Devonport Dockyard is dependent on the actions of Her Majesty's Government.
>
> Wherefore your humble Petitioners pray that your honourable House urges Her Majesty's Government to guarantee the continued survival of Devonport Dockyard and Naval Base in its present form.
>
> And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Electoral Districts (Shetland)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

8.52 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I am pleased to have the opportunity to raise on the Adjournment the proposed boundary changes in electoral districts in Shetland and the proposal to incorporate the existing Bressay island division into one of the Lerwick burgh wards—a move that has generated resolute opposition among the islanders. It is fair to say that they have enjoyed support for their cause from many people throughout Shetland.

The island of Bressay is opposite Lerwick and is the piece of land that makes Lerwick harbour such a good natural haven. It has a population of 353 and an electorate, on my calculations, of 255. Their case may seem small, given the great affairs of state that are often debated in this Chamber, but local government electoral divisions are a responsibility of the House, and it is not an unreasonable test of the health of our parliamentary democracy to find out how it manages to discharge that responsibility and how sensitive it can be to the legitimate democratic interests of a small community in one of the furthest extremities of the United Kingdom.

First, I give a brief history of the background to the debate. It starts with the review of local government boundaries required by section 16(2) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. That review was initiated by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland, which expressed an initial view that Bressay should be incorporated within the Lerwick division because its electorate was 60 per cent. below average. That view was widely rejected locally and a considerable number of representations were received by the commission in response to it and to some of its other proposals.

Given the contentious nature of the proposals, the assistant commissioner, Mr. Archibald Martin, was appointed. He visited the area and a local meeting was convened in Lerwick in June 1991 when interested parties and organisations—myself included—gave evidence to Mr. Martin.

On that occasion, Shetland Islands council made a formal and reasoned submission against the proposed linkage of electoral divisions, as did the local councillor, Mr. James Irvine. A careful study of today's Order Paper will reveal early-day motion 868, in which he secures an unsought tribute from the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) and another.

Dr. Jonathan Wills gave evidence on behalf of the Bressay community council, as did the chairperson of the Bressay school board, Mrs. Anne Bateson, and the convenor of Shetland Islands council, Edward Thomson; and, significantly, the chairman and vice-chairman of Lerwick community council also voiced their opposition to the proposed change.

Notwithstanding the force of those representations—it is significant that no one was prepared to defend the boundary commission's proposals—the commission unfortunately accepts the assistant commissioner's recommendation that Bressay should be linked with the Lerwick Harbour division.

After the statutory period, during which appeals were made to the Secretary of State for Scotland, he tabled the Shetland Islands Area (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1992, giving effect to the boundary commission's proposals. That order comes into force for all preliminary proceedings in connection with the islands council's elections on 10 October 1993. It will take full effect on the date of the next islands council election on 5 May 1994. It will be apparent that there is ample time for the Minister and the Secretary of State to reconsider the terms of the order without giving rise to any administrative disruption or inconvenience.

I shall summarise the case for Bressay's separate representation, notwithstanding its relatively small electorate. First, Bressay is predominantly a rural area, while Lerwick is a town and obviously an urban area. The interests of a rural division do not necessarily accord with those of a town division. I have no doubt that any councillor elected would work hard to reconcile those competing interests. During the public hearing the councillor to be elected was frequently described as a "hybrid councillor". Nevertheless, a 2:1 weighting of electors in favour of the Lerwick town ward would be a fact of electoral life.

It is not too fanciful to think of an issue that could easily split on a rural-town divide. Housing, economic development and environmental health were all cited at the local inquiry as examples of where there could be ready conflicts of interest. If a councillor chose to side with his or her majority in a town part of the ward, and even if every elector in Bressay voted against that councillor at the ensuing election, they would still find themselves greatly out-voted. That is no recipe for providing local confidence in an effective local democracy.

Secondly, Bressay is a thriving community with a distinctive community identity. The first election for the Bressay ward took place 101 years ago. Although the island's population fell dramatically in the years after the first world war, it retained its separate representation—something which I suspect may have been instrumental in no small way in helping to sustain the islands community's distinctive identity. On local government reorganisation and the inception of the Shetland Islands council in the mid-1970s, Bressay continued to secure its separate representation to the council, albeit that at that time the size of the population and electorate of the island was smaller that it is today.

The island has its own community council, its own school board and its own distinctive social and community events. Its sons and daughters, who leave the island to work "overseas"—perhaps as close as Lerwick, but often further afield—still retain a tremendous loyalty to their native isle. In recent times, there have been signs of increased house building and a rising population, something that has been assisted by a first-class ferry service.

In contested local elections, the turnout is traditionally high, which speaks eloquently for the vitality of civic life on the island. Moreover, when a public meeting was called on the island on the eve of the assistant commissioner's hearing to debate the commission's proposals, some 30 per cent. of the electorate turned out. I am sure that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland can do a quick relative calculation: I wonder when he was last aware of a public meeting in Edinburgh, West that managed to attract the attention of 17,700 of his electors to debate a matter of public policy.

In addition to those considerations, one must also consider the legal position. Schedule 6 to the relevant statute, the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, requires the boundary commissioners to provide that

"the number of local government electors shall be, as nearly as may be, the same in every electoral area".

It also states that regard is also to be had to

"the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable".

The schedule specifically states:

"The strict application of the rule"—

the numbers rule—

"may be departed from in any area where special geographical considerations appear to render a departure desirable"

Can there be any more obvious geographical consideration than a rural island community separated by water from a busy county town?

The arguments that I have advanced so far provide a substantial case for Bressay's separate representation on the Shetland Islands council. I recognise that I am asking not only for that argument to be accepted but for the Secretary of State to bring forward a new, revised order. I am asking him to go against the recommendations of the boundary commission in this case, and I appreciate that he would not do so lightly. However, I believe that, under section 17(2) of the 1973 Act, the Secretary of State has the power to modify proposals made to him by the commission.

In my submission, there are three compelling reasons, in addition to those to which I have already referred, why the Secretary of State should exercise his discretion and modify the commissioners' proposals to allow Bressay to continue as a separate electoral division.

First, the issue does not give rise to any partisan political dispute. The reluctance of a Secretary of State to interfere with the recommendations of the independent boundary commission would be proper and understandable if, by doing so, he opened himself to the charge of gerrymandering for party political advantage. That is not the case here, because Bressay has a long tradition of electing independent councillors, and the position of the islanders has attracted cross-party support.

Secondly, if, as the assistant commissioner has maintained, the clinching argument is Bressay's low electorate, it might be wise to ask the simple question: who would be most prejudiced by a decision to maintain an electoral division of 255? The answer is those wards with a much higher electorate where, arguably, voters could claim that their vote in returning an island's councillor was disproportionately devalued in relation to the vote of a Bressay elector. Hon. Members may think that most of those voters live in Lerwick, where divisions can be between two and three times as large as that in Bressay. However, far from complaining about that, the chairman and vice-chairman of Lerwick community council, and its members, went along to the public inquiry to support the islanders' claim. As I have already said, Bressay's case enjoys support throughout Shetland.

The third and most important reason why the Secretary of State should exercise his discretion is what has happened since he received the boundary commissioners' report, because the same Local Government Boundary Commission, under Lord Osborne's chairmanship, has produced a report on the electoral arrangements for Orkney Islands council. It proposes one ward, Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre, with an electorate of 225, and another, Shapinsay, of 268, which is similar to that being argued for in Bressay.

Indeed, if I may pursue the Shapinsay parallel, the original proposal was to incorporate Shapinsay in a Kirkwall burgh ward. That was rejected, admittedly by a different assistant commissioner, in the following terms:

"The case for separate representation having been accepted in the past, I have approached this matter on the basis that the question to be answered is whether circumstances have changed to an extent justifying a different conclusion on this occasion. In my view they have not. The general perception in Orkney is that the islands have special interests and community ties which can properly be distinguished from those of the mainland, even those parts of the mainland separated from them by relatively narrow stretches of water. It would be difficult to devise any system of linking the islands to parts of the mainland which did not imply that the island electorate would be in a minority in the new divisions, and this would be widely regarded as unsatisfactory and as undermining some distinctive characteristics of Orkney society."

The commissioners accepted that recommendation and decided that Shapinsay should not be linked with the mainland, and that Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre should be maintained in their current constituted division because of the strong reasons put forward in the report. Those strong reasons, which I have quoted, will not be lost on the House, and I trust that they will not be lost on the Minister.

Clearly, what the commission was prepared to support strongly in the case of Orkney it has rejected in the case of Shetland. I need not labour the point because it is reasonably self-evident. Instead of highlighting the inconsistency of the boundary commission, I would rather that the Minister would draw the positive lesson from that; the Secretary of State's attention should be drawn to a contemporary finding of the boundary commission in almost identical circumstances which would be sufficient to justify him revising the order.

The arguments in favour of Bressay's separate representation are overwhelming. I ask the Minister to consider them seriously. There is nothing wrong with admitting that he perhaps got it wrong. If the Minister were to change the order, it would be widely acclaimed throughout Shetland. After all, this is the Government which, in recognising the paramount wishes of certain islanders in the south Atlantic, incurred more than £3 billion of post-conflict public expenditure. Separate representation on Shetland Islands council is a small price to pay to meet the wishes of the islanders of Bressay and to give victory to the campaign of the Bressay residents to "let Bressa be".

9.7 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on winning the ballot for the Adjournment debate and on the assiduous manner in which he has represented the interests of his 255 constituents on the island of Bressay. We do not normally debate the orders which implement new local authority electoral arrangements, because Parliament has decided that the final stage of the lengthy and detailed consultation process should be undertaken by executive action by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

I welcome the debate, however, because it is proper that Parliament should give attention to such important matters from time to time, and it is only right that doubts about the commission's conclusions should be aired in this way.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland has been engaged for almost four years now in conducting reviews of local electoral arrangements for all the regional and islands authorities in Scotland. As hon. Members will appreciate, that was a massive task as these have been lengthy and painstaking reviews which have involved an enormous amount of public consultation and debate. The commission should be congratulated on the way in which it carried out this difficult task, especially in view of the resistance which changes of this sort often generate.

I recognise that some of the hon. Gentleman's constituents will be unhappy at what they perceive as an unjustified change recommended by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland. But, as I shall explain, there is a wider interest involved. I am confident that the commission has been pursuing that wider interest for the benefit of all electors in Scotland and of all electors in Shetland.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland has been set up by Parliament with the task of conducting regular reviews of local electoral arrangements. It is important that we do not lose sight of the fact that those regular reviews apply to the whole of Scotland. The commission's recommendations must be consistent, as they apply in for example Dumfries and Galloway, the city of Glasgow, Fife or the Highlands, just as they apply in Shetland. There are no grounds for saying that one part of the country should be treated specially or differently from the rest, because Parliament has laid down the rules that the commission must follow. Those rules are designed to achieve a balance in the best interests of the whole electorate, not the special interests of a particular faction or community.

Those clear criteria laid down by Parliament make it possible for the commission to discharge its duties with a minimum of political pressure and interference, which is important to allow us to maintain the basic structure of our democratic traditions. The commission has a right to interpret the rules as it sees fit and it is answerable to the courts in that respect, but it has no right to disregard the rules. If it does so, it will be answerable to the courts, although there is no way in which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would be willing to countenance recommendations that do not conform to the rules.

One of the main purposes of the rules that is measurable and unambiguous is to achieve electoral parity. It is important that, in the election of members of a local authority, the weight of one resident's vote should be broadly the same as that of another. Obviously, it is impossible to get precise arithmetical parity every time, as other factors must be taken into account. Community interests would rank highly among those but they in turn should not be allowed to distort that fundamental democratic objective.

At the start of the review, Bressay was 60 per cent. below parity while the seven Lerwick divisions were on average 19 per cent. above parity. I shall explain that by looking at the electorates taken from the current electoral register for that part of Shetland.

At present, the smallest electoral division in Lerwick has more than 600 voters. Two electoral divisions have more than 1,000 voters. But Bressay—separated by about half a mile of water from Lerwick—has just over 250. That is hardly fair. It should come as no surprise that the commission took a long, hard look at that situation. Put another way, if that were maintained, the weight of a Bressay elector's vote would continue to be three times that of a Lerwick elector, which would hardly be fair. As a consequence of the review the nine divisions covering Lerwick and Bressay together are estimated to have electorates on average just 2·5 per cent. above parity. That is much more equitable and the commission has done well to achieve such a balance, which also benefits all the electorate throughout Shetland.

The commission thought long and hard about that proposal before it was published. One of the considerations that doubtlessly weighed heavily would have been the community one. The commission would also have been aware that it can take account of special geographical considerations when formulating its proposals. In that regard, however, the Commission would have noticed that, although Bressay is an island, it is separated from mainland Shetland only by a very short distance and there is a five-minute ferry service every hour from 7 am until 11 pm on weekdays and until 1 am Friday and Saturday nights. That service has recently been significantly improved by a new and bigger vessel. In addition, all the secondary school children from Bressay attend school in Lerwick, and the health and emergency services are all provided from Lerwick.

There are therefore strong grounds for the commission having seen Bressay as much more closely involved now with Lerwick in the community sense than it has ever been in the past. Nor do I have any fears that Bressay voters' interests will be rendered secondary to those voters who live in Lerwick and with whom they will share a representative on the Islands council. In my experience, such councillors are particularly sensitive to the needs of such sections of their constituents, especially if they are in a minority.

Bressay is now a dormitory unit of Lerwick in terms of transport, employment and education. I assure the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland that I have every reason to suppose that a councillor representing Bressay will be every bit as sensitive to their interests as the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Wallace: I have listened to what the Minister has to say. He must have heard the quote that I gave from the Orkney boundary commission review, and the almost identical circumstances of Shapinsay in relationship to Kirkwall. Assuming that the boundary commission has worked consistently in the interests of Scotland, as the Minister said, how is it that the two boundary commissions reached almost diametrically opposed decisions within four months of each other?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That is easy—the circumstances are entirely different. The ferry service between Bressay and Lerwick, on a new and bigger ferry takes five minutes and runs hourly from 7.15 am to 11 pm, and to 1 am on Fridays and Saturdays. The ferry between

Shapinsay and Kirkwall takes infinitely longer—30 minutes—and occurs only six times a day, between 9.45 am and 5.30 pm. Therefore, there is no possible comparison in terms of access and transport.

The hon. Gentleman sought to make a comparison between Bressay and Shapinsay, but the commission decided that the different considerations justified a separate electoral division with a below-quota electorate. Such a comparison only serves to demonstrate how dangerous comparisons can be because of the essential difference between the nature of the ferry services.

Having made its proposals, the commission provided every opportunity for local discussion and consultation, as required under the legislation. All the representations and comments submitted to the commission were considered carefully. As a consequence of those representations and as a sign of how seriously they were viewed, the commission requested the Secretary of State to appoint an assistant commissioner. Mr. Martin, a former regional council chief executive, with extensive relevant experience in such matters was appointed assistant commissioner. The inquiry took place in Lerwick on 27 June 1991.

Every opportunity was provided for views to be expressed and comments made. The assistant commissioner is entirely independent of the commission and he submits his report according to how he assesses the case. He does not always agree with the commission. The inquiry also considered another of the commission's recommendations for Shetland that dealt with an adjustment to provide a division of Tingwall, Nesting and Lunnasting, and another consisting of Whiteness and Weisdale, on which the assistant commissioner disagreed with the commission. The commission subsequently accepted his advice.

However, the assistant commissioner concluded that the proposal to link Bressay with the Lerwick Harbour division was "appropriate and practical". The assistant commissioner's detailed report, which also includes the written statement submitted to the inquiry by Dr. Jonathan Wills on behalf of Bressay community council, has been included in full in the commission's report to the Secretary of State. That allows the full picture before the commission to be available to the public and shows that the assistant commissioner attached significant weight to Bressay now being a commuter region for Lerwick. The Commission's final recommendations to the Secretary of State maintained that proposal.

As the legislation requires, the Secretary of State allowed some time for further representations to be made. Representations were made but they did not say anything new or add to what had already been presented to the commission and the assistant commissioner at the public inquiry. As the commission had carried out its statutory function according to the legislative requirements and as its recommendations, had been endorsed by the assistant commissioner following a public inquiry, my right hon. Friend concluded that he had no grounds for overturning its recommendations, for two reasons.

The first reason concerns the commission's independence. My right hon. Friend recognises the fundamental importance of the commission being free of political control. Were that not so, we could not have confidence in our democratic arrangements. Provided that the commission carries out its duties correctly, its conclusions must command support; otherwise, there is no justification for its existence.

Mr. Wallace: Since Parliament has given the Secretary of State the power to modify the boundary commission proposals, in what circumstances would the Minister envisage the Secretary of State using those powers?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: They would have to be extremely serious circumstances, possibly involving irregularity. The Secretary of State has such powers, but I am not aware of his ever having used them. If the hon. Gentleman can cite an example, I shall be happy to consider it. In this case there are no grounds whatever for him to exercise the powers, because of the need for consistency.

Changes, particularly those of the sort generated by boundary commissions, are often initially deeply unpopular, as they are in this case with the hon. Gentleman's 255 constituents; but if the Secretary of State were prepared to overturn recommendations that have been made after due process of the correct procedures, simply as a result of special pleading from whatever quarter, he would be abandoning every prospect of consistency. We would quickly reach an impossible situation if the Secretary of State gave way to such pressure.

Similar pressures and claims would arise in other parts of the country, and the Secretary of State might find himself subjected to legal challenge if he did not give way in every case. How would he handle conflicting claims from special interests, none of which were in agreement with the commission's recommendations? The result would be chaos. There would be little justification for the commission carrying out its role at all.

As I said at the outset, I recognise the strength of local feeling which a change of this sort can generate; and I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on pursuing his constituents' interests as far as is possible. Broader issues are, however, involved, and the commission must have due regard to them. I have confidence that the revised arrangements for local representation will be to the benefit of electors generally in Shetland. I am also confident that, when all the reviews of the electoral arrangements for the whole country have been completed, while there will be parts of the country where some people might want the commission to have acted differently, the consensus will be that the commission has carried out a difficult task effectively, with tact and diplomacy and with the best interests of local government voters throughout Scotland at heart.

Rosyth Dockyard

9.20 pm

Mrs. Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): I begin by offering my thanks and by paying tribute to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to the other Deputy Speakers and to Madam Speaker for allowing this debate to take place. Last week, Madam Speaker generously granted a debate on Rosyth dockyard but, for reasons of which everyone is aware, it was not possible for it to occur. I know, however, that everyone involved has been working to ensure that it takes place tonight. It is only fair that I should thank all right hon. and hon. Members, and the Whips on both sides of the House, for their assistance in ensuring that the debate takes place. In many ways, tonight could not have been a better time for this debate, as Parliament was lobbied today by workers from all the dockyards involved in defence.

I am here to speak not just for myself or on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown); nor am I here to speak only for the work force of Rosyth—for its 4,100 direct employees and its many thousands of indirect employees. No; I am here to speak out for every man, woman and child in Scotland.

Over the years, the industrial giants of Scotland have disappeared. The only one left is Rosyth dockyard, Scotland's largest industrial complex. If the Government do not secure Rosyth's future, we in Scotland will be left with nothing but an industrial history, former employment and bitter memories.

I want to cover three main areas in this speech—employment, industrial strategy, and the strategic, security and cost implications for Rosyth. The people of Scotland fear that the Government will break their promises. Since 1985, Rosyth royal dockyard has been promised that it will be the prime submarine refitting yard. In 1985, a senior member of the Government told us that the yard could look forward with high hopes. We were told that work on the refitting of Trident submarines was guaranteed. He added that the Government would complete the building of the massive facilities required to support Trident submarines, which would be refitted at Rosyth. That Minister is still a member of the Government; indeed, he is now an even more senior member—the right hon. Gentleman is now the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I ask the Minister of State for Defence Procurement whether the Chancellor still holds the views that he expressed in 1985, and I ask him also to give us his own opinion.

I shall talk about the jobs that were guaranteed by the Government, jobs that now seem so insecure. In the dockyard, there are 4,100 direct employees. In Fife, there are certainly another 4,000 to 5,000 indirect employees. It has been estimated in a study produced by the Fraser and Allander Institute and St. Andrew's Economic Services that overall job losses throughout Scotland as a result of the closure of the dockyard, which would take place if it was not awarded the Trident refitting contract could be up to 18,000. Sub-contractors would collapse, as would small businesses, 80 per cent. of which have 50 or fewer employees.

There are 245 companies providing supplies or subcontracted services to the dockyard. A further 250 provide services to the naval base. Throughout Scotland, an additional 835 companies have some sort of business with the dockyard. What future will the Government promise 1,330 companies in Scotland if the dockyard is closed? What future will the Government promise the naval base, and especially 4,000 naval personnel, if the dockyard closes? What future will they offer 18,000 employees and their families in Scotland if they do not fulfil their promises to Rosyth? Those people are like the 18,000 who comprise the population of Buckhaven, like the 18,000 who live in Balerno and Baberton, which are in the constituency of the Secretary of State for Defence, and like the 18,000 who live in Huntingdon and Godmanchester, in the Prime Minister's constituency. What will happen to those people if the dockyard has no future?

Fife does not have low unemployment; it has the second highest unemployment in Scotland. If the dockyard closes, it will certainly come top of the list. It will have an overall unemployment rate of 17 per cent. In the Dunfermline area, we shall be talking of up to 30 per cent. unemployment—one in every three people out of work.

We are aware of the plight of many young people. At present, Rosyth dockyard still brings some hope—for example, it still trains 65 per cent. of all Scottish engineering apprentices. If it closes, the Government will be telling those apprentices and engineering firms that there is no future for them.

If the yard closes, it will cost the Government a great deal. We reckon that redundancy costs will be about £102 million. Clean-up costs will amount to £2 million and unemployment costs will reach £280 million; that is not to mention writing off the £125 million that has already been spent on the new Trident fitting work. I am suggesting to the Government that they can save more than £500 million. They can save jobs and their own reputation by adopting Babcock Thorn's proposal to have two dockyards with one management.

That proposal is for a dual-site option of submarine refitting at Rosyth and surface ship refitting at Devonport. That option would save the Ministry of Defence more than £260 million and would save the Exchequer an additional £250 million. It would preserve local economies and employment and provide a safe solution for submarine refitting. Babcock Thorn has made a fixed-term bid to the Government of £267 million. It offers Rosyth new equipment and fabric which are designed with low maintenance in mind. It offers facilities and special skills, efficiency and throughput, more jobs and minimal cost to the Exchequer.

It is not just Rosyth's management who are arguing for two dockyards and one management. Just last week Professor Donald MacKay, the chairman of Edinburgh consultancy PIEDA Ltd., said that savings of up to £440 million in defence spending could be made if submarine work was carried out at Rosyth and work on surface ships was carried out at Devonport. He estimated that the two yards could produce cost benefits of between £320 million and £438 million over the next 30 years.

Other worldwide studies demonstrate that the best savings are made by adopting a multi-site focused approach rather than a large-scale single-site operation. Safety, decommissioning, lay-ups, operational availability and location considerations all favour the dual-site approach, with Rosyth dealing with submarines.

I have just received a report from Price, Waterhouse —hardly a firm of which I would normally speak well. About Rosyth it said:

"As a result of our analysis of the projected operational costs to the MOD estimated by BTL under the two options and the sensitivity analysis which we have undertaken on certain material figures and assumptions, we conclude that costs are marginally balanced in favour of a dual site option.

In addition the MOD have a potential opportunity to save approximately £120-£140 million by concentrating nuclear submarine refitting and decommissioning at Rosyth. These savings represent the differential cost of Rosyth's ability to accommodate the full nuclear programme earlier than Devonport."

The Rosyth proposals are intrinsically safe. Rosyth is much more remote from the public than Devonport, where 38,000 people live within 2 km of the dockyard. Rosyth is capable of meeting all modern safety standards and its work force have an impeccable track record in submarine refitting and technical expertise. Its safety record on nuclear refitting is second to none.

The site for a new refit facility was chosen not by Babcock Thorn but by the Ministry of Defence after intensive investigation in the early 1980s. The design of the new facilities at Rosyth is at an advanced stage. They will be built on bedrock, which is more secure than any other kind of rock anchor. Rosyth's results have been audited by the nuclear installations inspectorate.

Let me say something about industrial strategy. The Fife economy is very fragile, because of such factors as long-term structural change, peripherality and a lower level of company formation; yet the dockyard has been innovative. It has developed defence diversification up to 15 per cent. of its work load. The most famous example is probably its work on London underground carriages.

None of us is under any illusion: the new era of peace and the peace dividend is in danger of creating an economic desert in parts of the country—particularly in Fife, where 30 per cent. of all businesses are defence related. In Rosyth, 10 per cent. of regional gross domestic product is provided by the dockyard; the dockyard, together with the base, has a turnover of £394 million, the vast majority of which is spent in Fife; and the Scottish economy is further affected by related expenditure of £380 million a year.

Let me ask the Minister some questions which I should particularly like him to answer. When does he believe that Rosyth will be ready to undertake the first Trident refit? When does he believe that Devonport will be ready? What Government savings will result from the closure of Rosyth, given the massive increase in unemployment benefits and the reduction in tax and national insurance receipts? When will a decision be made and announced? Hon. Members want specific dates, rather than further generalities such as "before Christmas" or "early in the new year".

Would Rosyth be given a lifeline, just to delay its closure? Does the Minister see a future for the naval base, which I visited on Monday, if the dockyard closes? Is it true that the Navy Board has come out in favour of Devonport? Why has the Ministry of Defence rejected Babcock Thorn's proposal to take over all nuclear refitting work three years early, in 1994, which would save £150 million? Does the Minister accept that Rosyth could handle the whole operation from 1995? Are the Government in favour of a dual site or a single site? As far as the Minister knows, does the Chancellor still hold the views that he held in 1985, and does the Minister share those views?

Finally, let me ask a question that was given to me to ask tonight:

"When the Government privatised the Royal dockyards . . . it announced that, in addition to securing better value for money, it also wanted to achieve 'scope for expansion of employment opportunities in the regions concerned' and 'an assured long-term future for the Dockyards' . . . It is clear that the proposal put forward by Babcock Thorn is consistent with these objectives. Can Ministers confirm that these are still aims of Government policy?"

Let me be honest: I never thought that I would stand in this Chamber arguing for nuclear submarines that would assist the Government. I am prepared to do so because I think that people are most important—the Rosyth work force, their families and the people of Fife and Scotland in general. It does not come easy to me, but I propose that the Government increase their popularity with the people of Fife and Scotland by retaining Scotland's largest industrial complex. I do not need to tell any hon. Member what will happen if Rosyth dockyard closes, nor do I need to tell any hon. Member that this is not just a local campaign or a Fife campaign. It is a campaign throughout Scotland, and possibly even further, by all those who care about the defence of this country.

9.39 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I congratulate the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms. Squire) on, first, attaining this debate and, secondly, being kind enough to agree—as have my hon. Friends—to my speaking in the debate. I have no hesitation in contributing to debates on defence matters. Many hon. Members know that for many years it has been my job to defend the reasons why we maintain our nuclear capability on the Clyde. I have believed in deterrence for many years, and I still do. We must examine how to maintain the submarines that will be based in the Clyde for the next 30 years.

The Minister will be aware that the Babcock Thorn proposals which he and the Government have received, as well as the modified versions, are financially sound. Babcock Thorn's two-dockyard proposal was not dreamed up simply to save jobs. It is a management proposal made on sound management lines that clearly demonstrates that one can manage two facilities more effectively and efficiently than one.

Another huge and important advantage of having the submarines serviced at Rosyth and the surface ships serviced at Devonport is that the proposals are environmentally sound. A purpose-built, earthquake-proof dry dock facility for nuclear submarines at Rosyth must surely be safer than a modified facility at Devonport. The absence at Rosyth of a high-density population makes it a much better choice. It cannot be wise to put nuclear submarines into a modified facility right in the centre of a large, waterfronted city, particularly when a more suitable, less populated site at Rosyth is available.

Can the Minister confirm that this aspect of the environmental considerations will be fully and adequately addressed before any decision is made? Can he also confirm that the Babcock Thorn single management proposals for both dockyards will be fully and properly examined, again before a decision is taken? Will the independent report that supports these views also be considered?

Furthermore, can the Minister confirm that the real and full cost to the public purse, in the event of that facility being closed, will be made known? I refer to the money already spent at Rosyth as well as to that which has been committed and that will not be recouped. There will also

[Mr. Bill Walker]

be the cost of redundancies and the unemployment and social security costs. Will the Minister ensure that the figures submitted by Fife regional council and the Fraser of Allander Institute are part of the package that the Treasury must properly examine before just a military decision is taken? My view, and that of independent experts, is that the cost to the public purse of closing the Rosyth facility would be far in excess of the cost just to the Ministry of Defence.

Can the Minister also confirm that, before any decision on the future of the Rosyth dockyard is made, proper consultations will take place with all those involved? I have particularly in mind the trade unions and the management.

I remind my hon. Friend—the hon. Member for Dumfermline, West drew attention to this—that at present not so many engineering apprentices are being trained as one would wish. In Scotland the number of engineering apprentices is slightly more than 600. When one remembers that more than 300 of those apprentices are trained in the dockyard at Rosyth, one realises that the cost in the training budget would be massive if we had to find alternatives. That is important. Such matters must be taken properly and fully into account before any decisions are made. One should be in no doubt what the economic consequences will be for central Scotland if the dockyard closes. The consequences will be horrendous. One should have no doubt about that at all.

I have no hesitation whatever in standing behind my hon. Friend and saying that I do not need to be persuaded that it is wise to keep Rosyth. I have always believed that Rosyth is one of the great jewels in the crown of defence, and I still believe that. That is why I argued in 1985, and earlier, that we must keep both the dockyard and the naval base. I still believe that the retention of the dockyard and the naval base is an essential military requirement.

It is worth noting the proposal of Babcock Thorn to have submarines serviced at Rosyth. That is sensible because submariners have their homes in central Scotland and the submarines are based on the Clyde. Anyone who has studied such matters knows that submariners spend a lifetime in the service. Many of them buy homes in central Scotland and put down roots there. If submarines are required to be serviced, it makes sense to have them serviced in a convenient place so that submariners do not have to move from home. They can travel daily because Rosyth is as near to where many of them live as the base on the Clyde. That matter must be taken into account. It is equally true that the service fleet is largely based in the south of England. The sailors who man the surplus ships have their homes in the south of England, so it makes sense to have the ships serviced in the south of England. That must be another important matter.

I now turn to yet another important matter. *[Interruption.]* It is not a matter about which anyone should mutter or be foolish. I refer to one of the most important defence decisions that we will make, probably this century. It is also one of the most strategic and economic decisions that Scotland will face. If we do not retain the facility, the consequences are too horrendous to contemplate.

As the Conservative Member who has been charged with the responsibility of looking after defence matters on behalf of the Conservative party, I ask my hon. Friend to bear in mind, as the Government will, the fact that there are bound to be political costs which I would hate to contemplate if we considered closing Rosyth. The peace movement has given free reign in Scotland to oppose the location of a nuclear deterrent on the Clyde. The big factor that has undermined from the beginning the peace movement's campaign against nuclear deterrence—the hon. Lady put her finger on it—has been the jobs at Rosyth. The jobs at Rosyth were our deterrent. When I say "we", I refer to those of us who believe in nuclear deterrents. The Rosyth jobs were the trade-off for trade unions supporting the retention of nuclear deterrents on the Clyde.

We must examine the matter carefully, together with all the other political considerations. I would not look foward to appearing on radio and television to defend the retention of the nuclear base if I could not constantly remind people of the massive number of jobs that generated from the maintenance of submarines at Rosyth.

9.49 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few sentences in support of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms. Squire), who introduced the debate with great skill and considerable conviction. One should acknowledge her persistence in ensuring that the debate took place.

It would also be wrong of me not to congratulate the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). It appears that he is impervious to change. Prime Ministers come and go and reshuffles take place, one after the other, but still he ploughs an occasionally solitary furrow as the guardian of the defence interests of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association in Scotland. That is a rare achievement and, even on a serious occasion such as this, one should perhaps acknowledge it.

My interest in the debate stems partly from the fact that my constituency lies within Fife. Although the economic consequences of the closure of Rosyth might not affect north-east Fife with quite the same severity as it would undoubtedly affect the constituency of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West, any substantial reduction in economic activity that would occur as a result of closure would have a significant effect on the economy of Fife as a whole and, indeed, on the economy of central Scotland.

The military justification for the retention of the dockyard is overwhelming. Before I deal with that, I should like to note that, if the dockyard closed, the military arguments for retaining the base would be less strong than at present. It is not unreasonable to assume that if the dockyard closed, in due course the base would also go. The economic and employment consequences would be extremely severe.

It cannot be right from a military or security point of view to put all one's ship repairing resources and facilities in one location. I ask the House to think about it in terms of something as simple as sabotage. Let us suppose that all the facilities were located on the south coast of England. The technology of ballistic missiles is now so advanced that some countries in the middle east have the ability to put ballistic missiles into western Europe and the mainland of the United Kingdom. That may seem improbable, but only a couple of years ago we were engaged in a conflict with someone who would have had no compunction, if he had had the capacity to do it, about firing ballistic missiles at the mainland of the United Kingdom.

If perchance or even by design such a missile landed on the sole ship repairing facility, the damage to the ability of the United Kingdom to conduct its defence affairs could be substantial. It cannot make sense for the moment to concentrate all our facilities in one location. If the proper defence of the United Kingdom is to be achieved, it is inevitable that there must be two separate locations.

I have no discomfort in arguing for Trident submarines to be refitted at Rosyth, because I believe in the independent nuclear deterrent. I believe in a four-boat Trident fleet. The more boats in the fleet, the better opportunities there will be for refitting. The Minister should also bear it in mind that it would be a strange irony if the economic advantage to be derived from refitting nuclear submarines at Rosyth was taken away while the facilities at Rosyth were used for the storage of decommissioned nuclear-powered submarines for which no final resting place has yet been found.

For the reasons that I have given and in view of the powerful arguments made by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West, I support the proposal that surface fleet work should be located at Devonport and the refit of nuclear submarines should be sent to Rosyth, where the facilities are available and the skills and the capacity of the work force are well proven.

9.53 pm

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): I, too, compliment the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms. Squire) on her speech about Rosyth dockyard. I am grateful to her for allowing me and my hon. Friend the Minister to participate in the debate. I was an apprentice at Rosyth dockyard. My home town was Dunfermline. The hon. Lady commented on the value of those apprenticeships to young people nowadays, and I endorse every word that she said on that subject.

Rosyth dockyard has played an important role in Britain's defences over many years, especially during the past 50 years, and I believe that it still has an important role to play in the future. During the Falklands war, it certainly rose to the occasion. Throughout the past 20 or 30 years, Rosyth has played a vital role in maintaining the Polaris fleet, which has been right at the centre of British defence policies. Trident is at the centre of those policies for the future, and the nuclear deterrent has operated from Scotland over the years, as it will in the future. It is right to expect that the nuclear deterrent fleet, which has been maintained so well at Rosyth, will continue to be maintained there.

Since Babcock Thorn took over, Rosyth has changed considerably from the dockyard I knew. It has won more than 40 per cent. more work than others through competitive tenders—a remarkable achievement. Its labour utilisation has improved by about 22 per cent.—that, too, is remarkable. Its cost overruns on Ministry of Defence budgets have been virtually eliminated. That fact must weigh heavily with my hon. Friend the Minister when he considers Rosyth's future.

As the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said, and for all the reasons that he mentioned, it is important that at least two naval bases be maintained in the United Kingdom.

Rosyth dockyard now has tremendous skill and knowledge within the base, and I ask that that skill and knowledge be put to good use for the future of Britain's defence systems.

9.57 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): This has been a useful and timely debate, and I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms. Squire) not only on her good fortune but also on her tenacity in securing it. I pay her a genuine tribute, because for months she has campaigned with commendable vigour on behalf of her constituents through correspondence and by coming to see Ministers —and now by securing this Adjournment debate.

I took especial note of the fact that the hon. Lady, with the leader of Fife regional council and other local authority leaders, and with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who is on the Opposition Front Bench tonight, came to see me last week to argue on similar lines and with great force the case that she has made so eloquently tonight.

I have visited both Rosyth and Devonport to see for myself their facilities and plans and their blueprints for the future, and I have been impressed, as it is easy to be, with the efforts and the determination of the management teams and the work forces at both dockyards.

Like all my colleagues in the Government, I am deeply conscious of the great importance of the royal dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth to the economies of their areas. Both employ several thousand people and sustain employment for many thousands more in firms throughout their regions. The companies are also among the largest trainers of apprentices in their areas; and I was glad to hear the personal contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), who speaks with the experience of a former apprentice at Rosyth royal dockyard.

We are conscious that when we make our proposals in due course we shall be taking some important decisions, and we recognise the enormous significance for Fife and for Scotland of the issues which have been raised tonight.

However, we must also recognise that the subject generates strong emotions in the other part of the country likely to be affected. As I shall make clear to the House, our future plans for ship refitting and repair will have great and wide implications for the communities both of Devonport and of Rosyth. We have to be very careful how we reach our decision.

At the end of the day, we can be influenced only by hard facts of the kind that we have heard tonight. We are approaching the decision with scrupulous fairness and impartiality. To some extent, I am almost in purdah tonight because we are fairly close to reaching our decision and, as far as Ministers are concerned, this debate must be something of a listening exercise. However, I will answer all the questions asked by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West.

Ms. Squire: Will the Minister be more specific about the dates involved in reaching a decision and making it public?

Mr. Aitken: I will answer the hon. Lady's question about the dates. However, before I respond to her questions, which I recognise are important, I want to pay tribute to the——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Mr. Aitken: Before responding to the questions of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West, I want to pay a genuine tribute to the work forces at both dockyards who have given long and devoted service to the Crown over many years. Rosyth has carried out all the refits of Britain's Polaris submarines, including that of HMS Renown whose rededication ceremony took place a few days ago. In particular, I pay tribute to both companies which have reacted positively and enthusiastically to a requirement to complete warship refits ahead of time and to convert vessels of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary to war time use in preparation for the Gulf conflict and, before that, the Falklands conflict. The whole country has good reason to be very grateful to all those who work in the royal dockyards.

I want now to respond to some of the specific questions that have been raised in the debate, and I will do so in reverse order. My hon. Friend the Member for Ayr, whose contribution as I said, was very valuable from his perspective as a former apprentice at Rosyth, quite rightly highlighted improvements in productivity and competitiveness at the yard. He praised the great reservoir of skill and knowledge in Rosyth dockyard. I entirely accept his points.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) set out eloquently the military and security case for two locations. We are well aware of that. However, I thought that he was a little far-sighted when he envisaged the possibility of missiles raining down on Devonport. I suppose that stranger things have happened in the military world and it was perfectly valid for him to make out his case about the importance of two locations rather than one.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), who has long been a staunch and vociferous champion of strong military defences of this country—more so than the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West, who acknowledged her recent Damascus-like conversion to Trident submarines—ran through a list of questions. He asked whether we would take into account environmental considerations, and the answer to that is yes; whether we would properly consider the dual-site proposal, and the answer to that is yes; whether we would take into account the recent special reports, particularly that from Fife council, to which the answer is yes; whether we would take into account the money that has already been spent on the RD57 project at Rosyth, to which the answer is also yes; whether we would take not just a military decision but a wider decision, and the answer to that is also yes, we will take all those broader factors into consideration. Finally, he asked whether I would be willing to receive consultations, and the answer to that is also yes.

We do not seem to have done much but receive representations from every possible viewpoint. In addition to representations in respect of this debate, I met a delegation this afternoon from Devonport and, a few minutes before the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West opened her debate, we heard a petition tabled from Devonport. We are trying to carry out a genuinely even-handed approach. Lack of consultation has not been a problem.

I want now to consider the specific questions of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West, many of which referred to dates. She wanted to know when Rosyth and Devonport would be ready to undertake the first Trident refit. We are confident that the facilities at either Devonport or Rosyth will be ready in time for the first Trident refit. We estimate that Devonport could take over all nuclear work at approximately the end of 1996 and that Rosyth could do the nuclear work nine months earlier, in the spring of 1996.

The hon. Lady asked what Government savings there would be if Rosyth was closed. Given the unemployment increases that she predicted, I cannot give her a precise figure, but, as I said in answer to a question from her on 27 October, all relevant considerations will be taken into account. The amount of spending that might be necessary on unemployment benefit will be roughly the same in both areas.

The hon. Lady asked me when the decision will be made and announced. It is our firm aspiration and intention to announce our proposals by the end of the year, but I should enter the caveat that, if more time is needed to get those proposals right, we will take it, because it is a decision of some complexity and wide significance. If we need to take a little longer in the interests of checking more carefully, I do not think that the House would begrudge such extra time, but we hope that it will not be necessary.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): The Minister will agree that the loyal work force in Devonport and in Rosyth are on tenterhooks on this issue. I should like it to be recognised that at least one west country man is present who has constituents in Devonport. The loyal work force to whom the Minister rightly paid tribute recognise that it is an extremely important decision and that it must not be rushed, but it has gone on for a very long time and patience is wearing thin.

Mr. Aitken: There is no question of any kicking for touch or unreasonable delays on the part of the Government. As I have said, it is our firm aspiration and intention to reach a decision and to publish our proposals before the end of the year. I entered the caveat because more information is still coming in and further representations are being made. Only this afternoon, I saw people from, I presume, the hon. Gentleman's constituency or from neighbouring constituencies, and it is only fair to make sure that everyone has his say. I accept that we have already tarried some time in reaching this stage in our considerations.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West asked whether there would be a future for the naval base if the dockyard closed. That is a hypothetical question. The decision that we have to take is primarily about the future location of nuclear refitting work. Of course we will take into account the implications for all other installations at Devonport and Rosyth, but those are not directly germane to the issue.

I was asked about reports from the Navy Board. I cannot comment on advice that the board might or might not have given in confidence to Ministers, particularly as that advice is still continuing. We receive advice from a variety of sources, and some of it is still in progress. I was asked by the hon. Lady why the Ministry of Defence had rejected Babcock Thorn's proposal to take over all nuclear refitting work three years early in 1994 and to save, allegedly, £150 million. We have neither accepted nor rejected any proposal, although we had reservations about a timetable from Babcock because it would have involved deferring the refit of one SSN.

The hon. Lady asked whether I accepted that Rosyth could handle the whole operation from 1994. We accept that Rosyth would have the facilities available from the end of 1994 to handle all nuclear refitting work, but a key factor would be the nuclear programme of the other yard which might be continuing for some time.

I have done my best to answer those broad questions. I hope that I have not left out anything. However, let me say a word about the reasons for and the conduct of the review, because the crux of the matter is our review of future refitting strategy. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), the former Secretary of State for Defence, made it clear in his original statement on "Options for Change" in July 1990 and in his statement on fleet support in July last year that there has been a fundamental change in the level of readiness, infrastructure and support that we now need to defend this country and our overseas interests.

Against that background it would be irresponsible if the Government failed to give the most careful consideration to whether the investment that we make in defence is giving good value for money to the taxpayer. That applies as much to the support area as to the front line, and we have, as the House knows, engaged in a thoroughgoing assessment of our future needs in the fleet support area, including the dockyards.

A particular factor has been the consideration of the future size of our nuclear submarine fleet, which now comprises 13 hunter-killer submarines besides the four ballistic submarines, which carry Britain's independent nuclear deterrent.

Our original intention was, as the House knows, that Trident submarines should be refitted at Rosyth. The hon. Lady reminded the House of statements made by Ministers some years ago, but they were made when our submarine force levels were rather higher, and there was no doubt that two refitting facilities would be required.

However, studies done in my Department, on the basis of proposals by each of the existing dockyard contractors, have shown that it would be feasible and cost-effective to concentrate nuclear refit work at one dockyard.

Mr. Gallie: Does my hon. Friend concede that, if Rosyth were selected, its experience and knowledge are sufficient to maintain the fleet without the movement of resources from elsewhere, but if Devonport were selected expertise and knowledge would have to be moved there from Rosyth to maintain the Trident submarines?

Mr. Aitken: That is a fair point, but it is debatable. Others might make out a different case. We listened carefully to all those points of view and are considering whether to have two sites or one and whether there will be only one nuclear refitting site.

We have reached the point when we must consider the best way forward in the light of all the evidence that has been given to us. That evidence has covered a broad range of issues, including military, financial and other factors, and we want to get the process right.

The hon. Lady referred—as she would, given her constituency—to the proposal that we received recently from BTL. We recently received further proposals from both dockyard contractors and the parent company of the management contractor at Rosyth, Babcock International Ltd., has proposed that it should manage both dockyards, with nuclear refitting concentrated at Rosyth. That is known as the dual-site approach. We have had a similar proposal from Devonport Management Ltd., but it would be wrong for me to discuss the details of the proposals made by Babcock or Devonport because they contain so much commercially confidential information.

Both proposals are extremely constructive. I am grateful to the hon. Lady for drawing my attention to the Price, Waterhouse report, which she introduced as though it were a rather ill-smelling piece of fish, even though it seemed to substantiate her case and its conclusions. I gather that she does not have much love for accountants, even when they serve her cause.

All the documents and reports have been helpful and constructive and have assisted us to find the best way forward. They will be wholly taken into account when we announce our eventual package to the House.

The Government are fully aware of the momentous importance of the decision. As we are discussing Rosyth, we recognise how crucial it is not merely to Rosyth dockyard and its immediate surroundings, but to the people of Scotland and the economy of Fife. That importance is reflected in the good attendance at this late hour.

The impact on the local economy—on jobs and industrial strategy, to which the hon. Lady drew attention—is one among the many factors that we have to consider as we seek to balance the needs of the Navy and the taxpayer against those of south-west England and eastern Scotland, and against the more general needs of the defence of the United Kingdom and the cost-effective use of taxpayers' money and public funds.

As soon as we have proposals, we shall announce them, and we shall then be able to discuss their wider ramifications with hon. Members, local authorities, trade unions and other interested parties. That process will be immensely important in the consultation period in ensuring that we reach the right conclusion in the end.

I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving me this chance to set out the Government's plans and proposals on this important matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at thirteen minutes past Ten o'clock.

[illegible] or by our ancient [illegible]

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[illegible] Government [illegible]

[illegible]

House of Commons

Thursday 26 November 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF BRISTOL (PORTISHEAD DOCKS) BILL *[Lords]* *(By Order)*

Bill read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords]* *(By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords]* *(By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords]* *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 3 December.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Tourism

1. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures he is taking to encourage co-operation on tourism with the Republic of Ireland.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Robert Atkins): There is close co-operation between the Northern Ireland tourist board and its counterpart in the Republic in areas of mutual benefit to tourism on the island of Ireland. Recent initiatives include a joint travel desk at the British travel centre in London, a reservation system for hotels throughout the island of Ireland, accessible worldwide, and joint marketing in North America and Europe. I am keen to see this co-operation grow.

Mr. Duncan: Does my hon. Friend agree that co-operation with the Republic on a range of matters, including tourism, makes sense politically and economically, and should be welcomed by all communities?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend has put his finger on an extremely important point: if we can co-operate in this area we can do so in many other areas, with the consequent good effects that it might have. I can do no better than draw the House's attention to an example of co-operation in which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State was involved yesterday, when he launched the north-west passage tourism route. As a north-west Member, I am conscious of the importance to Northern Ireland of the north-west. Such co-operation will prove useful in years to come.

Mr. Madden: Is the Minister aware, however, that the prospects for increasing tourism between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland will be greatly damaged if the rampaging Home Secretary has his way at a meeting of immigration Ministers on Monday, because tourists will have to carry passports, and citizens of the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and Denmark will be regarded as aliens when they travel to other member states of the European Community?

Mr. Atkins: No more alien than a Member of Parliament from Yorkshire is in Lancashire. The hon. Gentleman raises an important point, which I shall draw to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Sir James Kilfedder: Is the Minister aware that the Republic's tourist office in New York deters—or at least seeks to deter—Americans from extending their visit in the Republic into Northern Ireland, and will he make strong representations to ensure that this practice is brought to an end?

Mr. Atkins: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Mallon: Far from the Republic of Ireland office deterring tourists from moving on to the north of Ireland, surely one of the strongest deterrents to tourists from the Republic visiting the north is the type of security installations that can be seen at almost every point along the border. Does the Minister accept that those who operate in border areas, especially in Newry and South Armagh, face an uphill fight because of these military installations, not least the latest one at Cloughoge, which is a blight on the community and the entire environment?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman should address his point to those who cause trouble—terrorists and others involved in paramilitary activity, who make such installations necessary. My task as Minister with responsibilities for tourism is to ensure that we attract as many tourists as possible, but my hon. Friend the Minister of State and the Secretary of State will have heard the hon. Gentleman's comments. They have made great efforts to ensure that the installation to which the hon. Gentleman referred is sited most carefully; unfortunately, it is necessary because we have terrorists and we must stop them.

Energy Policy

2. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on energy policy in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: Northern Ireland's strategic energy objectives are energy efficiency and the clean production and use of energy, lower costs and the protection of consumer interests, diversification of supply and security of supply.

Mr. Bruce: Will my hon. Friend tell the House what plans he has to privatise electricity in Northern Ireland, and whether he believes that privatisation will bring down the price of electricity both for individual consumers and for industry?

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As he will know, four power stations completed the first phase of privatisation earlier this year. I had the opportunity to visit one of them and I was most impressed with the achievements of the consortium involved. Clearly, privatisation will produce more competition and improve energy efficiency, and I am sure that the continued plans to privatise Northern Ireland Electricity will be successful. I hope that shares will be made available to a wide range of the public, which will allow them to participate properly in the ownership of Northern Ireland Electricity, as opposed to its being a state-run body.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Minister accept that in the past electricity subsidies to industry were part of our incentive packages? Does he share, or recognise, the concern of high energy using industries in Northern Ireland that the foreseeable increases in their electricity costs may put them out of business, and put out of a job all the people whom they employ? Will the hon. Gentleman go further than he has done to date to protect industry in Northern Ireland from unreasonably high future electricity costs?

Mr. Atkins: With his experience, the hon. Gentleman knows better than anyone that the position in Northern Ireland is unusual, in that we do not have competition from gas—although we have hopes of that in the not-too-distant future—and, as we are a peripheral part of the United Kingdom, there are some troubles involved in the provision of energy. I am aware of the problems experienced by some large users, although, as the hon. Gentleman will also be aware, I have managed to obtain a two-year deferral of the implementation of those costs and have invited the companies concerned—incidentally, some of those companies will benefit, although I know that others will not—to take the matter up with the regulator in due course.

Mr. Colvin: Does my hon. Friend agree that for privatisation to work properly there must be competition? What plans has he for restoring the electricity interconnector with the Republic and establishing the interconnector with Scotland?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend will know that the interconnector with the Republic has suffered from terrorist activity and has not been operational for some time. Plans are afoot to deal with the problem by way of alternative connections across the border with the south in other parts of the Province.

With regard to the interconnector with Scotland, we await further confirmation from Commissioner Millan, who came to see us in Northern Ireland not long ago, when we discussed the necessity of a grant. We hope that we shall receive information about that in due course, when we shall be able to implement the physical and energy aspects of that most important connection with the mainland.

Mr. Stott: As I understand it, the interconnector is due to be completed and in place by 1996. According to the Action Group on Northern Ireland Electricity Prices, that interconnector will be used only by Scottish Power and Northern Ireland Electricity for 10 or 15 years, so companies that use 1 MW or more will not have the opportunity to make individual contracts with any other Great Britain supplier. If that is true, how can the Minister claim that the Scottish interconnector will in any way increase competition with Northern Ireland Electricity?

Mr. Atkins: As the hon. Gentleman knows, there are two interconnectors. There is the gas interconnector, which will provide competition. Clearly, the operation of the electricity interconnector is a matter for Northern Ireland Electricity, in co-ordination with Scottish Power. If the hon. Gentleman has particular points to make, such as the one that he has enunciated today, I should like to know more about them, because that is certainly not my understanding at present.

Labour Statistics

3. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the latest available figures for *(a)* registered vacancies and *(b)* unemployment in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

5. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current level of unemployment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: I apologise, Madam Speaker, for being the dominating force at the Dispatch Box this afternoon.

At 2 October 1992, there were 5,374 unfilled vacancies registered at local offices of the Training and Employment Agency. The number of unemployed in Northern Ireland on 8 October was 106,436, a fall of almost 4,000 over the previous month.

Mr. Barnes: I hope that the answer does not show complacency and that there will be some dominating action in Northern Ireland. The Minister will be aware that unemployment in Northern Ireland, despite the latest figures, is still the highest of any region in the United Kingdom. Unemployment helps to breed resentment and discrimination in Northern Ireland, and it leads to paramilitary activity. Tackling unemployment is probably the highest priority. Will the Government or the Northern Ireland Office be in touch with the newly elected Irish Government, who are expected to take office very soon, to try to work out an economic package for the island of Ireland which will start to tackle unemployment in the area?

Is not it a pity that Ulster Unionist Members do not understand that the Northern Irish people, including the Protestants, express considerable interest in ensuring that the coal industry in this country is not closed down? They therefore resent the vote here the other night.

Mr. Skinner: The question has got the lot in.

Mr. Atkins: As the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) says, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) got the lot in. I cannot answer all the points without delaying the House unduly. I know that the hon. Gentleman takes a continuing interest in these matters, so I will address the point about the importance of cross-border trade, which is part and parcel of trying to develop companies, to expand companies and to create new jobs for those who need them. The hon. Gentleman is entirely right to say that Northern Ireland suffers from the worst unemployment of any region, although the slight fall in the past two months is a good sign and should be welcomed. My task and that of my ministerial colleagues is to ensure that we attract companies, that we expand existing companies, that we create new jobs and that, above all, we encourage extra trade between the north and the south.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the Irish Government. I have had conversations with my erstwhile counterpart, Mrs.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Come on!"] I have forgotten her name. She may change her job as a result of the election, but I shall continue to have contacts with her successor, whoever he or she may be.

Mr. Cryer: Is not the complacency of the Minister's reply reflected in the elections in Ireland where the people are voting heavily for a Labour Government of some sort who will revive the Irish economy? Is not the position north of the border the same? People are looking for a Government who will revive manufacturing industry and who will not build an economy on the fragile basis of extended credit. We have a Chancellor of the Exchequer who cannot keep his own financial house in order, although he is supposed to keep the finances of the nation in order. Is not he a reflection of the Government's total failure to provide jobs in Northern Ireland and in the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Atkins: That sounds like another typical Yorkshire rant. We already have a great deal of co-operation with the south. Mrs. O'Rourke, the lady whose name temporarily escaped me, and her successor, whoever she or he may be, will continue to devote a lot of time to developing cross-border trade and to ensuring that questions such as the hon. Gentleman's do not have any foundation in fact.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: May I turn my hon. Friend back to the question of unemployment? It is a serious issue and not a matter for laughter among Labour Members sitting below the Gangway. The last time that unemployment in Northern Ireland was at the level of unemployment in the rest of the United Kingdom was in 1968.

One of the best things to do in building a new consensus on getting more jobs into Northern Ireland is to work not only with the south, as suggested by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), but with the new President of the United States so that the United States realises that the way in which to help Northern Ireland is to visit it and to buy goods from it and to understand that violence harms employment.

Mr. Atkins: I entirely agree. That is why, like many hon. Members, and like the people of Northern Ireland, I am delighted to welcome visits such as that made by the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) and his colleague from Belfast, who recently went to the United States with a view to developing trade and finding new jobs for Northern Ireland. It is part of the Government's task to do as much as we can to encourage that process—not just in the United States and the south of Ireland but, with the completion of the single market at the beginning of next year, in parts of Europe. We need to attract companies and make them realise that Northern Ireland is a prime place in which to invest, to develop and to create jobs for people, from whatever part of Ireland, who want them.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: What consideration has the Minister given to creating more employment by providing more finance for roads, in keeping with the policy in the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Atkins: Every Ulster Unionist Member—or his council—has spoken to me about the need for more roads. I have considerable sympathy on this matter. The announcement of the public expenditure allocation for the block is not yet ready, but I know that roads are a subject which is dear to many people's hearts and I shall do what I can to alleviate their concern.

Mr. Barry Field: Given my hon. Friend's concern about unemployment and his answer to the question about peripherality in Northern Ireland, will the Northern Ireland Office be making representations to the Foreign Office on Monday—along with the Isle of Wight, Shetland and Orkney and the Western Isles—asking it to put on the agenda for the Edinburgh summit the agenda of the peripheral maritime regions conference for areas of the EC that are disadvantaged by their dislocation from a mainland country?

Mr. Atkins: As always, my hon. Friend speaks glowingly for his constituency, the Isle of Wight. I did not have it in mind to address that point to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, but if my hon. Friend thinks that the Isle of Wight and other parts of the United Kingdom should be included, perhaps that ought to be considered.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: Would the Minister care to visit Harland and Wolff with a view to examining employment prospects in its ship repairing section?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman extends an invitation which I should be more than happy to accept—again, as I have already paid a couple of visits to Harland and Wolff and recently attended the launch of the Knockadoon, which will be most important to Harland and Wolff's future. The hon. Gentleman has a particular concern and interest, and I should be happy to go with him, at a mutually convenient time, to visit the section of Harland and Wolff about which he feels so strongly.

Intergovernmental Talks

4. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on the talks with Northern Ireland political parties and the Government of the Republic of Ireland about the future of Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I am glad to be able to provide a little competition for my hon. Friend the Minister of State.

I have nothing at this stage to add to the substantial statement that I made to the House on 11 November. I remain encouraged that the parties that participated in the talks agree with the two Governments that further dialogue is necessary and desirable and have committed themselves to engage in informal consultations about the way ahead.

Mr. Canavan: Is the Secretary of State aware that there will be a general welcome for his assurance that, whatever the result of the Irish general election, he will do everything possible to ensure that dialogue between the British and Irish Governments—and also, it is to be hoped, between elected representatives representing various views on both sides of the border—will be resumed? Does the Secretary of State agree, however, that such talks would be more meaningful if it were made clear at the outset that the ultimate aim is to negotiate democratically new constitutional arrangements embracing the whole of Ireland, and that such negotiations should continue even if certain politicians decide not to participate?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman recognises the desirability of talks taking place after the election is over. In general, that opinion is shared throughout Northern Ireland—and, I am sure, in the Republic. We should continue with the task of trying to establish a new beginning for the totality of relationships within Northern Ireland, between Northern Ireland and the south and between the two islands. That is what we are about. It is bound to take time, but, as long as people are talking, there is value in it, and I believe that we have made valuable progress.

Mr. Peter Robinson: When the complexion of the new Government in the Irish Republic is known, will the Secretary of State determine whether they are prepared to work towards the withdrawal of their territorial claim to Northern Ireland? If he feels that the Irish Government are prepared to work in that direction, will he assure them that the Unionist community in Northern Ireland would be delighted to see a Government in the Irish Republic who want to take the first and basic step towards a friendly relationship with Northern Ireland?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I realise the significance of articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution to many people in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. I think that I must leave it—and I can do so with some confidence—to the Unionist community in Northern Ireland to make its views on this matter clear to the incoming Government.

Mr. Trimble: Does the Secretary of State agree that the constitutional future of Northern Ireland is and can be a matter for the people of Northern Ireland and the House only? Does he agree that any questions about the future institutions of government in or affecting Northern Ireland should, similarly, be a matter solely for the people of Northern Ireland and the House? Does he appreciate that our anxiety to remedy the democratic deficit in Northern Ireland with regard to those institutions should be addressed by him and the Government as soon as possible?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The House knows about what has come to be called the constitutional guarantee, and I need not recite it. The guarantee relates to the opinion of the greater number of people living in Northern Ireland and their wish to remain part of the United Kingdom.

Questions of democratic status which relate to political structures within Northern Ireland are part of what we have been addressing in the past six or seven months. They are an important part. Of course, any changes that may be necessary are a matter for the House. It is also necessary to examine the question of north-south relationships as well as internal relationships to see whether we can reach an accommodation of all the legitimate interests in the affairs of Northern Ireland. That is what we have been trying to do for the past six or seven months. That is what the people of the Province have told me that they wish to see continue. It will take some time.

Dr. Hendron: I know that the Secretary of State is aware that the talks are very much to do with peace and the historic conflict between the two communities. Above all, the talks are to do with the preservation of human life and law and order on our streets.

The Secretary of State is aware that yesterday afternoon a young man named Pearse Jordan was shot dead on the Falls road in the heart of my constituency in circumstances which are causing great concern to my constituents. Therefore, I ask the Secretary of State to set up an independent inquiry into all the circumstances surrounding the death of Pearse Jordan, bearing in mind——

Madam Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman would hold his fire for a while he would see that we have security questions later on the Order Paper. At present his question is not appropriate to question 4 with which we are now dealing. If the hon. Gentleman will relate his question to question 4, of course I shall hear him. However, if he looks at the Order Paper, he will see that it contains specific questions about security.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I understand the hon. Gentleman's deep concern. If we do not reach the security questions, I undertake to see him and deal fully with the question that he has asked.

I slightly take issue with what the hon. Gentleman said at the beginning—that the talks are about peace. The talks are not essentially about peace; they relate to the resolution of an ancient quarrel that has taken place over many centuries and which is still unresolved. We need a resolution of the conflicts between competing interests in Northern Ireland. I shall come to the important point that the hon. Gentleman raised if I can.

Lady Olga Maitland: What steps is my right hon. Friend taking to reassure President-elect Clinton, following his remarks during the election campaign that he proposed to send a peace envoy to Northern Ireland? Will he inform President-elect Clinton that serious discussions are going on between all political parties and that they will continue to do so?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I know that President-elect Clinton has been made well aware of the matter by our ambassador in the United States and by other means. It is important to make a distinction between what may be said in the heat of the contest of a presidential election and what may become the steady policy of the incoming Administration. I share my hon. Friend's concern. We had better wait and see how things develop.

Mr. McNamara: It might be a good idea if people read the letter that was sent. There was no mention of a peace envoy as such. Will the Secretary of State confirm that he welcomes any constructive help, aid, assistance and investment from the United States—such as the investment that has gone to Derry from Boston? I come back to the talks and the opportunities that they will provide for the new Government of the Republic in the new year. The Secretary of State has said that the talks are informal, bilateral discussions. At what time and at what point will the Secretary of State think it possible to have more structured discussions within the context of seeking that solution?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: We must wait to see how things develop. I know that the parties want to talk to each other bilaterally and that the Governments want to do so. I hope that we shall do so before Christmas. We shall have to see how we get on. Procedures, structures and the rest of it are the servants of the participants. We do not want to hold to one format or another, simply for the sake of it. The main thing is to get down to the business and keep talking business until we reach an agreement.

Mr. Hume: Given that 42 million people in the United States declared that they were Irish in the last census, and that those 42 million have roots in Ireland both north and south, does the Secretary of State agree that a powerful relationship can be cultivated on behalf of the people of Ireland, north and south? In particular, we could develop an economic relationship with a view to marketing the products of our small and medium-sized enterprises and securing inward investment. Does he agree that an envoy appointed for that purpose would be a positive appointment?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: An envoy appointed for that purpose would certainly be helpful. However, I pay tribute to the American ambassador here, who takes a great deal of trouble over Northern Ireland. He comes frequently and knows a great deal about it. I agree with what the hon. Gentleman said. Yesterday I visited the Ulster American Folk museum near Omagh. Last year 130,000 people visited the museum. A great majority were from the United States. I am glad to see that that tourist interest is beginning to be matched by commercial interest. There are hopeful signs of continuing American investment in Northern Ireland, which is an extremely good place for anyone to invest.

Inward Investment

6. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps will be taken to promote inward investment in Northern Ireland following the report from the Northern Ireland Economic Council on job creation; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Industrial Development Board's inward investment activity is reviewed regularly. I am pleased to be able to inform the hon. Member that action has already been taken to address a number of the recommendations contained in the economic council's report and that the others are being carefully considered.

Mr. McGrady: Does the Secretary of State agree that the report of the Northern Ireland Economic Council is depressing reading for the people of Northern Ireland? It shows that the number of firms inwardly investing was reduced by 41 per cent. between 1973 and 1990, with a consequent loss of employment in those sectors of 52 per cent. We can no longer hide behind the question of a terrorist image because, at the same time, the Republic of Ireland increased its inward investment by 27 per cent. Does the Secretary of State agree that the change in policy by the IDB some two years ago, to concentrate on product design and marketing rather than targeting the creation of jobs, needs to be examined by the Department? Will he give an undertaking to insist that the IDB honours its commitment to spread visits to Northern Ireland to South Down? Only 4 per cent. of visits in the past four years were to my constituency.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The report to which the hon. Gentleman refers speaks for itself. It acknowledges the difficulty of attracting internationally mobile investment to Northern Ireland at a time when competition for investment is increasing. Nevertheless, the report makes specific recommendations. It calls for a more focused approach. Accordingly, the IDB is concentrating increasingly on the industrial sectors and sub-sectors which hold the greatest potential for Northern Ireland.

Of course, that report has been taken closely on board and the hon. Gentleman will see some changes in consequence. He mentioned South Down and I pay tribute to Down/Chicago Link Ltd, which has established structures in Down and Chicago, thanks to several visits by and the unstinted efforts of the hon. Gentleman.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the spate of violence in Northern Ireland is spiralling—the heart of Coleraine has been bombed and the heart of Belfast has almost been bombed again? Will he take it from me that the best thing that he could do would be to get on top of that violence and deal with it? Then people would have the confidence to invest in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Of course I agree that the security situation in Northern Ireland is very disadvantageous to investment. I hear a great many commentators referring to the need to get on top of the IRA, implying that more should be done that is not being done by the security forces, but I find them exceedingly short when it comes to giving particulars of what should be done that is different in character, quality or scale from what is being done.

Mr. John D. Taylor: While there is criticism within the business community about the performance of the IDB, does the Secretary of State agree that several negative factors are working against it, such as the IRA terrorist campaign and the worldwide recession? In view of factors of that nature, would it not be better advised to concentrate on giving greater assistance to Ulster business men and industrialists who are creating jobs in Northern Ireland?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: It is a question of balance. I agree that one does not want a single-minded concentration on the attraction of inward investment. I am glad that the IDB has about 460 companies on its books and that it looks for ways to help established companies, which I agree is just as important.

Mr. Viggers: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that occasionally the people of Northern Ireland do not seem to appreciate the enormous effort and vast resources which have gone into improving the infrastructure there? If the menace of terrorism were lifted there is no reason why it should not be as prosperous, and have as low a level of unemployment, as any part of the United Kingdom.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: My hon. Friend had a distinguished career as a Minister in Northern Ireland and knows a great deal about that sort of thing. An enormous amount of work has been done. Coming as I do from the underprivileged south-east of England, I envy the people of Northern Ireland for many of their roads, although I realise that much more needs to be done. All people who speak about terrorism should remember that the ordinary people of Northern Ireland suffer from the crimes committed by the terrorists, who will not succeed and have no prospect of achieving the political aim of the IRA or of any other terrorist organisation. One and all, they take it out on the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. McNamara: The Secretary of State will recall that the Northern Ireland Economic Council recommended that an extensive and independent review be undertaken to evaluate the overall impact of inward investment. He has said that he has taken on board some of the points made by the council. Can he say whether he will have such an independent review?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Several months ago my hon. Friend who has responsibility for the economy instituted a review by the IDB's chairman and the permanent secretary of the Department of Economic Development on IDB's promotion activity. The review has been completed and the recommended changes are being discussed. We want to get on and we do not want too many reviews. We want to consider the changes recommended and see what we can do to get on with it.

Tourism

7. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures he is taking to promote tourism in Northern Ireland.

10. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures he is taking to promote tourism in Londonderry.

Mr. Atkins: Following a review of tourism in 1989 and the introduction of new tourism legislation in April this year, the Northern Ireland tourist board has been reorganised and resourced to take forward the promotion, marketing and development of tourism throughout Northern Ireland. In addition, district councils are being encouraged to develop tourist amenities in their areas. My overall aim is to maximise the contribution that tourism makes to the Northern Ireland economy and this, of course, includes Londonderry.

Mr. Evans: I welcome my hon. Friend's response to that question about tourism and to earlier questions on the subject asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan). Does the Minister agree that if we are to encourage more tourists to the Province, we must give high-quality training to personnel concerned with tourism?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is right, because unless good-quality service is given to those who come to Northern Ireland, they will not come again. The crucial factor is that those who come to the Pronvince and see its beauties, however they perceive them, know that they must come again. The quality of service provided by properly trained staff at all levels is fundamental.

Mr. Fabricant: Will my hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to people from all the communities in Londonderry for their hard work in regenerating the centre of that city and making it a tourist attraction? Will he also join me in paying tribute to the people of Helen's Bay, Portrush, Newcastle and all parts of Northern Ireland, and all the beautiful places that I know exist there, because I have visited them and hope to visit them again?

Mr. Atkins: I can say without equivocation that if my hon. Friend returns again with as many friends as he cares to bring, he will be extremely welcome. A special plaudit is due to the citizens of Derry for all that they have achieved in recent months and years in providing a tourism attraction. I think particularly of the Tower museum and the craft village that has been created, largely as a result of the work done by the council, by Paddy Doherty of the inner city trust and, above all, by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), who has done an enormous amount to help in that respect.

Mr. Hume: Does the Minister agree that good communications, particularly air travel, are essential? Will he ensure that airport facilities in the north-west are brought up to the standard that we in that area want, so helping tourism to increase?

Mr. Atkins: I am tempted to say watch this air space. I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. William Ross: Does the Minister agree that if we are to improve the standards of hotel and catering establishments, we should make available to the catering college at Portrush the maximum support it requires to produce the proper quality of staff? Does he further agree that among the glories of tourism in Northern Ireland are the wonderful beaches along the north coast? Will he ensure that the raw sewage that is at present pouring across some of them is properly dealt with before it goes into the sea?

Mr. Atkins: I recently visited the catering college in Portrush and was impressed with the quality of meal that I was given and the work that I saw being done. The attractions of Portrush, Portstewart and other places, not least the golf course and Bushmill's distillery, are all contributory factors to the attractions offered to tourists by that part of Northern Ireland. I shall do all I can to help in that respect. I shall investigate the point that the hon. Gentleman raised about sewage.

Community Care

8. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated amount of money allocated for the introduction of the community care programme in April 1993 in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State announced on 19 November 1992 that the funds to be transferred from social security to the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland to support the changes in the community care arrangements from April 1993 will amount to £24·63 million in 1993-94, rising to £65·28 million in 1994-95 and to £100·33 million in 1995-96. Any additional funds secured in the public expenditure round will be announced at the conclusion of the survey.

Mrs. Fyfe: Does the Minister know that there are about 201,000 disabled people in Northern Ireland and that that represents a prevalence rate of 174 per thousand, which is a higher average than any other region in Britain and 22 per cent. worse than the British average? In allocating funds for the community care programme, will he therefore take account of the high prevalence of disabilities in Northern Ireland and allocate the full amount necessary?

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful for the hon. Lady's statistics. She is right to say that we have many problems in Northern Ireland, a great number of which are caused by the health, deprivation and problems that exist in that area. The amounts of money that have been allocated take that into account and a higher proportion is given per person for those purposes than in Great Britain. I am grateful for the hon. Lady's interest.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome the care that has been given towards community provision in Northern Ireland and the sums that are being and have been allocated. However, is the Minister satisfied that, in the allocation of those funds, independent homes such as Lakeside, in my constituency, and others will not be jeopardised because of the possible failure to have full accommodation to give them the opportunity to provide a high standard of service?

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Indeed, the home that he mentions gives great service to the community. In Northern Ireland, the care of each individual will be very carefully assessed, and the outcome of the individual assessments will dictate the nature, level and locality of the services to be provided. The private sector will be essential in helping to provide those services.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 26 November.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Hendry: Has my right hon. Friend seen the report in yesterday's *Financial Times* on Derbyshire, which highlights the growth of jobs, prosperity and confidence in that county and beyond as a direct result of Toyota's decision to manufacture cars in this country? Is that not the clearest possible evidence of the success of the Government's strategy to make Britain the best place for international companies to invest? Is not that in the sharpest possible contrast to the position across the channel, where yesterday's vote on GATT shows that the French claim to be good European citizens is a total sham?

The Prime Minister: I greatly welcome the large investment by Toyota in Burnaston, together with that by other Japanese car manufacturers in recent years. Over that period their total planned investment in the United Kingdom is now nearly £2 billion and will create something in excess of 10,000 jobs. Clearly, that is extremely welcome news for this country. We are a very attractive area for foreign investment and I intend to keep it that way with low inflation, low taxation and no social charter.

Mr. John Smith: In view of the evident public concern, will the Prime Minister tell the House whether he has had discussions with Her Majesty the Queen about the issues of taxation and the civil list payments?

The Prime Minister: Let me say first to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that I believe that affection and respect for the monarchy are very wide and very deep across all sections of the nation. On the particular point that he raises, the sovereign is not liable in law to pay tax on her personal income and does not at present do so. But Her Majesty, some months ago—before the summer recess—indicated to me that she wished consideration to be given to changing that arrangement. She asked me then to consider the basis on which she might voluntarily pay tax and further suggested that she might take responsibility for certain payments under the current civil list arrangements. The House will be keen to know that the Prince of Wales has made a similar request in regard to the Duchy of Cornwall. Discussions are continuing between the Treasury, the Inland Revenue and the royal household. When they are completed I shall make a full statement to the House.

Mr. Smith: I am sure that the whole House will welcome the fact that consideration of those questions has been initiated. When does the Prime Minister expect to be able to make that full statement to the House, and what has the Queen suggested by way of changes in the civil list?

The Prime Minister: I cannot be precise about when I can make a statement, but I would expect to be able to make one early in the new year. I also expect that the new arrangements will be able to come into effect for the next tax year. On the second part of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's question about the civil list, the Queen has asked me to consider arrangements under which she would reimburse the Consolidated Fund for the cost of annuities paid to all members of the royal family, except the Queen Mother and the Duke of Edinburgh.

Mr. Clappison: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming today's encouraging news about American economic growth? Does he further agree that any consequent growth in world trade would be good for British trade, and that British industry is now well placed, with low inflation and low interest rates, to take advantage of world economic growth?

The Prime Minister: I agree wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend. It is clearly good news to see that the American economy begins to grow again. That will be good news, not just for the United States, but for the rest of the world trading community. It means that British companies and British business have a great opportunity. We have low inflation, the lowest interest rates in the European Community, an extremely competitive exchange rate and a single market of 340 million people on our doorstep. Now that the prospect of a world trade war has been averted, the circumstances are coming together that provide better opportunities for British business than we have known for some time.

Mr. Ashdown: What words has the Prime Minister to say to his fellow citizens of all political colours who, this afternoon, will discover that their councils are to sack teachers, close schools, shut down social services and still levy a council tax that is higher by far than anything that his Ministers promised during the last election?

The Prime Minister: I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman should wait for the statement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in a few moments' time. The right hon. Gentleman's allegations have a familiar ring. We seem to have heard them from him and his colleagues year after year, yet they have never yet become fact.

Mr. Waller: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is vital for all European nations to support with one voice the general agreement on tariffs and trade? Does he further agree that if any one European nation were to jeopardise the implementation of that agreement, it would go against the interests not only of Britain and its European partners, but of international trade generally?

The Prime Minister: I do agree with my hon. Friend on that. The agreement between the Community and the United States is a good one for the entire Community and the entire world trading community. It would, of course, be desirable for all member states to agree as speedily as possible. I know that there are difficulties in France, but I am sure that when France has examined every aspect of the deal, which has not yet been concluded and has to be concluded in Geneva, it, too, will realise that liberalisation of trade, services and manufactures is a very valuable prize for the French economy, as well as for the economies of every other industrial nation in the world.

Q2. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: How can the Prime Minister justify a system whereby unelected and unaccountable card-carrying Conservatives are appointed to run Wales by quango? Does not that drive a stake through the heart of the democratic process? When will such political nepotism stop?

The Prime Minister: The heart of the political process of Wales is here in the House of Commons, with the answerability of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: May I put it to my right hon. Friend that both the question by the Leader of the Opposition and my right hon. Friend's answer will be welcomed by people across the country and across the political spectrum? Would it be possible to suggest that senior members of the Privy Council should try to keep in contact with each other so that the country can respond to a lead from the royal household and from the leaders of the political parties?

The Prime Minister: As I indicated to the House a few moments ago, I hope that we shall be able to conclude the arrangements before too long, and I hope then to be able to respond to the House. I think that the announcement that I have made today and the fuller announcement that I shall be able to make, I hope, early in the new year will be widely welcomed, both in the House and beyond it.

Mr. Sheldon: While I welcome the announcement by the Prime Minister, will he now consider the setting up of a Select Committee on the civil list, as was done in 1972? It is about time, after 20 years, that we considered these matters dispassionately and carefully and came to a sensible conclusion.

The Prime Minister: I know that the right hon. Gentleman has expressed that view, but I see no need for such a special Select Committee. The House approved the present civil list arrangements in 1990 to run for 10 years. The additional reimbursements which Her Majesty has asked me to consider will reduce the net cost to the Exchequer. I made the point that the arrangements run for a full 10 years. The actual increase is, of course, 6 per cent. because of assumed savings of 1·5 per cent. If there is a surplus at the end of the period, it will, of course, be taken into account in setting future civil list payments.

Mr. Pickles: Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that, following the autumn statement, the best way to give a boost to British industry is to start a programme of removing regulation from business? Does he further agree that business currently faces a triple assault from the town hall, Whitehall and Brussels?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The autumn statement has set out the right framework for growth and we need to be sure that that growth is not shackled by red tape, whether it comes from Whitehall, county hall, town hall or the European Community. I announced some time ago that I had asked my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to lead a new blitz on the regulatory sausage machine from wherever those regulations may come. We intend to cut all unnecessary rules and requirements that dull enterprise and innovation. I hope that before too long British business men will be able to warm their hands at a new bonfire of controls.

Q3. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Darling: How can the Prime Minister justify a situation in which nurses and teachers will this year get no wage increase and possibly lose their jobs, when, at the same time, the chairmen of the privatised water industries are digging their faces into the public trough yet again and are asking, and will get, increases of between 30 and 50 per cent? What does the Prime Minister intend to do about it?

The Prime Minister: Against the advice of the Government yesterday—if I may borrow the hon. Gentleman's phrase—around 90 Labour Members dug their noses in the trough.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Will the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must resume their seats.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Will the Prime Minister recite for the House the moral, political and legal principles that distinguish the two cases of informers, the case of Brian Nelson and that of the informer known as "Michael", who featured in a BBC television programme? Can the Prime Minister explain to the House and to the country why one of the two is at present serving a 10-year sentence and the other has left the country with his pockets stuffed with tens of thousands of pounds, with a new life made for him in some other area of the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I understand that the Royal Ulster Constabulary is investigating the programme to which the hon. Gentleman refers and that a report will be submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions. The principle of employing participating informants to assist the police in the prevention of crime is well established in this country and in other democratic societies. As I believe the hon. Gentleman well understands, lives would be lost in Northern Ireland if the security forces were unable to receive information from informants. On his other point, there is no immunity from prosecution for informants who commit crime and the security forces are at all times subject to the rule of law.

Q4. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Hoey: The Prime Minister will know that nearly a quarter of a million people have signed a petition demanding that St. Thomas's hospital should stay open on its present site. I have taken the liberty of putting in his name, because it is his local hospital. I wonder whether he will sign it and ensure that his local hospital, a hospital crucial to central London, is kept open.

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Lady knows, it is widely accepted that substantial changes in London will be necessary to provide the right health care in future. However, there will be very full consultation before any decisions are taken on the Tomlinson report. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health has already visited St. Thomas's to listen to views on the proposals. We shall consider them, examine the report and announce our conclusions in the new year.

Q5. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does my right hon. Friend welcome the announcement yesterday by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster that £1·5 billion-worth of Whitehall in-house functions will be market tested? Does he agree that the civil service must subject itself to the same disciplines of efficiency and value for money as the private sector?

The Prime Minister: The initiative on market testing announced by my right hon. Friend yesterday is a giant step forward in bringing new thinking and new skills to the service of the public, and in getting work done that needs to be done better and with better value for money than ever before. I believe that we can be proud of the work done by many millions of public servants. That does not mean that it cannot be done better. That is what market testing is about, and it is why we support it and why the Opposition, who so often put the convenience of trade unions before that of the public, oppose it and will no doubt continue to oppose it.

Madam Speaker: Order. Time's up. We now come to business questions——

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): On a point of order Madam Speaker——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows well enough that I take points of order at the end of all the statements. I regret that he will have to wait.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 30 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Social Security Bill.

TUESDAY 1 DECEMBER and WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER—Progress in Committee on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

THURSDAY 3 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Judicial Pensions and Retirement Bill *[Lords]*.

FRIDAY 4 DECEMBER—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 7 DECEMBER—Committee and remaining stages of the Social Security Bill.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet on Wednesday 2 December at 10.30 am to consider European Community document No. 4204/89, relating to VAT: special arrangements for second-hand goods, works of art, antiques and collectors' items.

I come now to the bit that everyone has been waiting for. The House will wish to know that, subject to the progress of business, it will be proposed that the House should rise for the Christmas Adjournment on Thursday 17 December until Monday 11 January.

It may also be of assistance to the House to know that, even more subject to the progress of business, it will be proposed that the House should rise for the Easter Adjournment on Friday 2 April until Wednesday 14 April.

[*Wednesday 2 December*

European Standing Committee B

Relevant European Community Document

4204/89 Value Added Tax

Relevant Report of the European Legislation Committee

HC 79-viii (1992-93)]

Mrs. Beckett: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement—especially for having responded to the concern expressed on both sides of the House and for having given us early notice of the dates for the Easter recess. I know that all hon. Members will appreciate that help with their planning. That is the good news.

There is, however, considerable resentment in the House at the scheduling of the statement this afternoon on the revenue support grant, after a statement on Sunday trading for which some other time could surely have been found. Hon. Members on both sides are anxious to question the Secretary of State for the Environment on issues of local taxation, about which there is anxiety. I hope that satisfactory arrangements have been made for our Scottish and Welsh colleagues to pursue issues of local taxation pertaining to Scotland and Wales.

I press the Leader of the House to find time for a debate in Government time on the consequences of privatisation, before any further such moves. Does he recognise that strong concerns about the consequences of electricity privatisation for British Coal are exacerbating fears for the future of that industry? Recent reports from the bidders that double fares or the closure of 5 per cent. of the routes on Network SouthEast might follow privatisation are also giving great cause for anxiety, and they highlight the need for a full debate on the consequences of past privatisation well before we embark on further such risky moves.

Having sought a debate in Government time, I also ask the Leader of the House for an assurance that there will be a further Opposition day in the near future.

Mr. Newton: I thank the hon. Lady for her generous remarks about the recess dates. I should have made it clear that, because Easter is rather late next year, the Easter Adjournment is largely before rather than after Easter, as has happened on previous occasions.

I note what the hon. Lady says about the revenue support grant statement and the other statement which are to be made shortly. The Sunday trading statement was originally to have been made on Monday, but it was thought that that might be inconvenient to some Opposition Members as it was also their Supply day. However, we felt it right to make the statement this week.

There will not be oral statements by the Secretary of State for Scotland or for Wales today, but the Secretary of State for Scotland will be making an oral statement next week and the Secretary of State for Wales will be making one towards the middle of next month.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): In the House?

Mr. Newton: Yes, oral statements—by which I mean statements from where I am standing now, when the hon. Gentleman will have every opportunity to look the Minister straight in the eye and ask direct questions.

Those statements will not be precisely in every detail parallel with the one today because the various parts of the United Kingdom operate slightly differently, but there will be oral statements on local government finance in Scotland and Wales within the next couple of weeks or so.

I cannot promise a debate specifically on privatisation between now and Christmas, but the hon. Lady will be aware that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has undertaken to have debates on coal, to mention one of the matters to which the hon. Lady referred, in the light of his White Paper in the new year. The hon. Lady will well know also that we expect to bring the rail privatisation Bill before the House in due course, which will give opportunities on that as well.

I note the hon. Lady's request about Opposition time. I am obviously anxious to be helpful, but I cannot at this moment make a commitment for one between now and Christmas.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): My right hon. Friend will no doubt have noted during Northern Ireland questions that we never reached question 11 on security. The hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) tried to raise the matter in a way in which I would not have done and was told that the appropriate question would be reached in due course, but it never was.

Bearing in mind the number of murders that are taking place in Northern Ireland, may we have a debate in the House before Christmas to discuss, in particular, the disgraceful and appalling article published in *The Guardian* last Mondy which purported to portray the IRA as respectable soldiers who are jolly sorry that they kill people and who are kind to their children, and that sort of thing? Such a debate would be much more important than one on the privatisation of the railways and should be given greater priority.

Mr. Newton: I understand that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland touched on that point at one stage during Northern Ireland questions, but I note my hon. Friend's request, which was an ingenious effort during business questions to make a point intended for Irish questions.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I remind the Leader of the House of his responsibility to allow the Scottish Grand Committee up to six matter days in the course of any one year. The right hon. Gentleman may know that there has been an effective Scottish Trades Union Council lobby of the House on constitutional and job issues which are of the first significance north of the border. I hope that, if the right hon. Gentleman cannot find time to allocate one day next week, he will do so before Christmas.

May we have an early debate on the common fisheries policy regime which will apply to the inshore fleet in 1993?

Mr. Newton: As to the hon. Gentleman's first point, I will of course consider his suggestion. As to his second, I indicated in one or two answers to previous business questions that I hope to provide time for a fisheries debate between now and Christmas.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): May the House debate job creation, and discuss an interesting new wheeze discovered by friends of the Leader of the Opposition, who apparently create jobs for their friends in Monklands by giving them coloured forms? Is that what Labour means by their new agenda? It sounds suspiciously like the old one to me.

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's remarks, but that is more a question for the Leader of the Opposition than for me—and I believe that the whole House would be interested to hear the comments of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith).

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Insofar as there is increasing contravention of broadcasting directives prohibiting the availability of the air waves to those espousing the causes of terrorist organisations, will it be possible to find time to allow the Secretary of State for National Heritage to come to the House to tell us how those directives can be made more effective, both in letter and in law?

Yesterday, a Sinn Fein councillor who did not see a shooting incident was able to appear on television and spew out his vicious and malicious propaganda to the disadvantage of our hard-pressed security services. Will the Leader of the House try to find time in the very near future to allow the Secretary of State to explain how that can be put right?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman, because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage is due to answer questions within the span of the business statement that I just made—that is, on Monday 7 December. In any case, I will draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): So that the House can discuss GATT, the Balkans, and all the other matters that will preoccupy the Edinburgh summit, can a debate on foreign affairs be placed on the agenda of the House before the Christmas recess?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise a general debate on foreign affairs in quite that form, but I make the point —as I did to the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis)—that my right hon. Friends the President of the Board of Trade and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are due to answer questions next week, so there should be an opportunity to raise the question of GATT. In view of my hon. Friend's well-known interest in such matters, I draw his attention to the opportunities that will arise perhaps on the Consolidated Fund and certainly on the debate on the Christmas Adjournment motion.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Will the right hon. Gentleman ask the President of the Board of Trade to make a statement to the House about the condition of the 10 pits marked for closure? When the President last spoke to the House on that subject, he gave an assurance that the fabric of those pits—the faces and roadways—would be kept viable so that the pits could be reopened, if that were the will of the House. All the evidence of weekly inspections is that those faces are coverging and deteriorating fast.

Unless the President makes a statement and requires British Coal to inform him on a weekly basis about what is happening to those faces, people will not know. Several of my hon. Friends and I have been seeking a meeting with the President of the Board of Trade and are aghast that he has so far refused personally to meet us. That shows an unusual and, I believe, unprecedented lack of courtesy by a Minister in relation to such a pressing issue.

Mr. Newton: As I mentioned in response to a previous question, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will answer questions in the House next Wednesday. Meanwhile, I fall back on the formula of undertaking to convey to my right hon. Friend the strength of feeling that the hon. Gentleman has expressed.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I am sure that the House is grateful to know the dates of the Easter as well as the Christmas recess, but I hope that that does not ominously mean that the Bill to ratify the Maastricht treaty will drag on that long in Committee on the Floor of the House. I have no wish to stifle debate, but in view of the will of the House on Second Reading, with a one-page Bill of only three to four clauses, surely even the Chair will have to rule out of order most of the amendments tabled so far. Can my right hon. Friend give an assurance that the Bill will be expedited so that ours will not be the last country to ratify the treaty?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend's interest in such matters is, to say the least, well known. Let me give him two assurances. First, my announcement of the Easter recess dates was prompted by nothing more than my desire to please the House, in my familiar fashion; it did not constitute a comment on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. Secondly, the Government's position on that Bill remains the same: it is an important measure, and the House must be given proper time to discuss it.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Does the Lord President share my grief and anger about the rape of a 17-year-old

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girl in Hillingdon by a man who, it was claimed in court, was moved to commit that heinous crime by the pornographic telephone service? Is it not about time that the Lord President and his right hon. Friends took account of the seriousness of the situation? I have been trying to do something about it for seven years. How much longer must we wait, and how many more youngsters must be terrorised in the same way because an Act of Parliament has allowed British Telecom to run such lines?

I cannot understand how Conservative Members can pray before each sitting of the House knowing that an Act that they passed in 1984 has resulted in so much agony and trouble for ordinary people. When will we be able to debate the matter, and when will the law be changed?

Mr. Newton: It is to the hon. Gentleman's credit that he has taken an interest in such matters for a long time. No one would wish to express anything other than grave concern about the case that he has described. I shall ensure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage is made aware of what he has said, and it is possible that he will be able to raise the matter with my right hon. Friend at National Heritage questions in 10 days' time.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): My right hon. Friend will recall that, on 19 October, the Foreign Office wrote to my right hon. Friend the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee confirming that a document in straightforward English explaining the Government's interpretation of the Maastricht Bill would be made available to the House. According to the Foreign Office, the document would be made available at the earliest possible opportunity, but certainly before the recommencement of debate on the Bill. That can now be done only today or on Monday. If the Foreign Office pledge is not honoured, will my right hon. Friend make a business statement on Monday, postponing the Bill's Committee stage until we have seen the document?

Mr. Newton: I shall not give my hon. Friend the immediate undertaking that he seeks. I shall, however, give him an immediate undertaking to look into the point that he has raised as soon as business questions are over.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): May I revert to the distressing and deeply worrying position of the fishing industry? Will the right hon. Gentleman undertake not only to confer with the relevant Ministers in both the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Scottish Office about the possibility of a debate before Christmas, but to write to interested Members on the subject?

Last week, during a sitting of Standing Committee A, it was clearly intimated that no such debate would take place before Christmas. In the light of the failure of the fisheries Minister to report back to the House following Monday's meeting in Brussels, will the Leader of the House ensure that a statement is made next week? Hundreds of our constituents now face not only a bleak December, but bankruptcy and a loss of livelihood.

Mr. Newton: I note what the hon. Lady has said. As she will know, her hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond)—who evidently could not be present for business questions—has secured for next week an Adjournment debate on the North sea haddock quota. Obviously, that will cover some of the issues raised by the hon. Lady.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): May we give three cheers for the fact that, after six months, the Maastricht Bill is at last going into Committee? As it will take many hours and many weeks, will my right hon. Friend consider telling us on which days it will be discussed so that hon. Members can make their plans? No doubt the information is already available to Ministers.

Will my right hon. Friend also take on board the point that was hinted at by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd)—that the Bill could be scuppered by points of order, if we are not careful? Those of us who want to support the Government and get the Bill through would like enough time for full discussion of all the issues, without any trouble.

Mr. Newton: I sense that the latter part of my hon. Friend's remarks were directed elsewhere than at myself, because I am not seeking to cause, or acquiesce in, the sort of trouble that she seems to have in mind.

On my hon. Friend's first point, as I hope I have made clear in the few months that I have been doing this job, I am always anxious to give the House as much notice as I can of business or of recess dates, but I cannot promise to give in advance all the dates that my hon. Friend would like.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Did the Lord President hear on the radio this morning that the Government are about to abolish the independent living allowance, which has brought a better quality of life to many severely disabled people in recent years? Will he find out why the House has not been told, and what is likely to replace the fund? May we have a statement next week so that hon. Members may be aware of what is happening?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is a little behind the time. This is a matter in which I am interested, and he will find that a question was answered earlier this week setting out the Government's plans, on which, as is well known, we have been working for some time, for a successor body to the independent living fund. The Government intend to legislate in the present Session to provide for the successor body.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): The House will welcome the return of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill to the Floor of the House—none more so, I suspect, than Madam Speaker. What will be the position if the exchange rate mechanism falls apart? Will we continue with amendments relating to the mechanism?

Mr. Newton: The question whether amendments are proceeded with will depend, first, on the selection of the Chairman of Ways and Means—that is not a matter for me—and the wishes of hon. Members who have tabled them. On the underlying issue, it seems that what has happened with the exchange rate mechanism has very much confirmed almost everything that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been saying for a long time.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I demand that the Leader of the House arranges for the Secretary of State for Scotland to make a statement on this letter sent direct to my constituents, usurping my democratic role as an elected Member by asking my constituents to contact him if they have problems of a national or local nature. Surely that is a breach of my repesentation and role in the House.

Mr. Newton: I have not had the advantage of seeing the missive to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but I shall bring his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State as soon as I can.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): May we have a day's debate on general education matters, not least the publication of league tables showing school results? My right hon. Friend will know that that is important to me and my constituents. A debate would give us a chance to welcome the change in Labour policy, because the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has now said that the Labour party would publish league tables.

Mr. Newton: As I think I said last week, I am increasingly tempted to find time for a debate to allow the Opposition to explain why they opposed the policy for so long, even if there has now been a welcome shift of view. It is not the first time, of course, that there has been a welcome shift by Labour Members to policies that we espouse but which they initially opposed. Despite that temptation, I cannot undertake to provide time for a further debate on education in the immediate future.

Mr. Joe Ashton (Bassetlaw): Will the Minister reconsider his decision about the Easter recess? Is he aware that, despite what the Jopling report said, he has fixed dates when children will be at school but the House will be on holiday? The week after, children will be on holiday and we shall be back here. In the interests of family unity, will he reconsider the dates to ensure that they coincide with school holidays?

Mr. Newton: If ever there was an example of how difficult it is to please all the people all the time, even though I have announced a recess date so far in advance, that must be it. I cannot give quite the undertaking which the hon. Gentleman seeks, but I shall certainly consider what he has said.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): Will my right hon. Friend find time soon for a debate on a business issue which has become serious—the insurance of premises on the mainland of the United Kingdom in the wake of IRA bombings? Is he aware that the withdrawal of reinsurance arrangements means that businesses may remain uncovered in the United Kingdom, which not only poses a threat to the insurance industry—in which I declare an interest, through my membership of Lloyd's—but is a serious problem when we try to attract business to the United Kingdom? I yield to no one in my understanding of the publicity angle, but, as the *Financial Times* has said, what I suggest does not represent acquiescence to terrorism; it is simply carrying on the fight against terrorism by different means.

Mr. Newton: If I understand my hon. Friend's question aright, this seems to be a matter for the President of the Board of Trade, who will be here next week to answer questions. I shall bring it to his attention.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House review his answer to a question about a debate on coal privatisation, in view of the odd set of circumstances now prevailing? British Coal wants a small industry because British Coal is part and parcel of a takeover bid. It wants a nice little captive rigged market, with only 30 million tonnes worth of coal contracts at the power stations. It is important that we should have a debate before the White Paper is published so that we can expose the murky deal going on with Mr. Neil Clarke and his gang. They are obviously intent on shaping the market to suit themselves rather than the miners. That is why we should have a debate before Christmas.

Mr. Newton: I do not believe that I referred to a debate specifically on coal privatisation—certainly I did not intend to. I was referring to the whole range of issues that will arise from the review by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and the White Paper which he has promised. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is making a point which I suspect he may seek to develop at that time. I cannot promise him a debate in the near future.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): May I remind my right hon. Friend that an amendment has been tabled to early-day motion 908?

[That this House welcomes the resumption on 28th October in New York of direct negotiations between the leaders of the two communities in Cyprus, with a view to searching for a lasting and mutually acceptable solution to the Cyprus question; is heartened by the recent references in this House by a Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister to the constructive aprouches of the two leaders taking part in the negotiations; notes the United Nations Security Council Resolution which envisages a freely negotiated and mutually acceptable settlement to the Cyprus question; and welcomes the statement from another Minister of State that the Greek Cypriots must agree to genuine power sharing that accepts Turkish Cypriots as a politically equal community.]

The amendment expresses the regret of the House at the breakdown of the talks on the reunification of Cyprus in New York a few weeks ago. In a report this week the Secretary-General of the United Nations attributes that breakdown to the intransigence and lack of political will of the Turkish Cypriot community.

Will the Government make a statement telling us what they, as President of the Community, can do to bring about a resumption of the talks? Will they also tell us what Suleyman Demirel, the Turkish Prime Minister, said on the subject when he visited London recently?

Mr. Newton: I cannot undertake that the Foreign Secretary will make a statement, but I assure my hon. Friend that the Foreign Secretary and the Government as a whole will continue to give every support to the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General to resolve the Cyprus dispute.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Members' interests.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will know, and I hope that he will be pleased, that the usual channels finally managed to appoint the Select Committee last Friday. That paves the way to the publication of the new register, which I hope will take place at an early stage—although that is a matter for the Committee. It also enables me to consider some of the other issues in which the hon. Gentleman is interested.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): My right hon. Friend is to be sincerely congratulated on his decision to

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announce the Easter recess—for the sake not only of Members but of their families. He will be aware that this decision relates to an important part of the report of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), which calls for reform of the hours of the House. Can my right hon. Friend make further progress on the reforms proposed in the Jopling report? Is he aware that, of the almost 1,000 motions on the Order Paper, early-day motion 9, which calls for those reforms, bears the second highest number of Members' signatures?

[That this House welcomes the Report of the Select Committee on the Sittings of the House, HC20, Session 1991-92, which considered 'whether the public and private business of the House might be conducted more effectively by making changes to the order and timing of business, the hours of sitting and the arrangement of the parliamentary year'; notes the recommendations of the report and the debate on 2nd March 1992; and urges the Government to provide time to discuss further and consider substantive motions and vote on the recommendations of the report at the earliest opportunity.]

Two hundred and fifteen Members have signed that motion, which represents one third of the Members of the House of Commons.

Mr. Newton: I am very much aware of the interest shown in these matters by my hon. Friend and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling). As I said, I hope that we shall be able to make further progress before too long following discussion through the usual channels. Apart from the relatively early announcement of recess dates today, the pattern of business in the House on Thursdays over the past few weeks and the hours at which the House has risen show that quite a lot of progress has been made even within the existing rules.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Is it possible to have a full day's debate on Britain's growing housing crisis? There is evidence in the surgeries of hon. Members of all parties of great distress in housing. Does the Leader of the House know that on Tuesday the Churches National Housing Coalition hopes to lobby the House? It has an all-party approach and aims to emphasise the seriousness of the housing crisis. Would the right hon. Gentleman like to meet the Archbishop of Wales, for example, on Tuesday?

Mr. Newton: I am not sure that I can undertake to meet the Archbishop of Wales about housing matters on Tuesday, much as I would, in some respects, wish to be able to do so. Nor can I promise the debate that the hon. Gentleman seeks. In the past couple of weeks, notably in the autumn statement, the Government have announced a number of measures that will have an important and advantageous effect on certain housing problems.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): May we have a debate on today's welcome statement that Treasury economic forecasting is to be contracted out? Is my right hon. Friend aware, for example, that in a league table of forecasters' effectiveness, the Treasury came 19th, whereas the Liverpool Six had four of its members in the top eight?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Richard Ryder) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Butcher: Could we not give the whole shebang to the Liverpool Six? We might then be able to steer the ship of state with all the hard data required to make appropriate decisions.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Chief Whip claims that those are not accurate figures. Whether they are right or wrong, I cannot promise a debate. Indeed, I should be rash to do so until we see how the new arrangements perform.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement next week on the difficulties being experienced in France and on the potential breakdown of the GATT talks? May we examine the possibility of an interim ban on the export of live animals for slaughter during this period? Many people would like the ban to be permanent in view of the variable standards of transport of live animals in other EC countries. In view of the potential dangers for animals, should not the Government consider the possibility of at least a temporary ban until the difficulties are removed?

Mr. Newton: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government have for a long time vigorously sought to improve the welfare of animals, including those being transported abroad. I will ensure that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is aware of the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Does my right hon. Friend intend to introduce the paving coal and rail Bill in another place next week? Is the Bill to be split or do the Government intend to push ahead regardless of the timetable for the introduction of the White Paper on the future of the coal industry?

Will my right hon. Friend ponder the stark difference between the Green Paper issued by the Secretary of State for National Heritage on the future of the BBC, under which there is to be a six-month debate on the role, objectives, organisation and funding of that great organisation, and the way in which we are steaming ahead, if I may use that phrase, with the railway privatisation proposals without any serious debate on the possibilities and without alternative methods being considered?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will be aware that the progress of Bills in another place is a matter for another place. I understand that it has been said there that the expectation is that progress will be made on the paving Bill in Committee next week. Knowing my hon. Friend's interest in these matters, I am sure that he is aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport said in a slightly different other place—on the "Today" programme—that he expected to introduce the railway privatisation Bill early next year.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): Now that we have cleared up the question of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, will the Leader of the House tell the House when he thinks the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration will be established? Given the statement on the citizens charter yesterday, and given the Government's interest in issues of complaint and redress in public services, is it not rather strange that, seven months into a new Parliament, the instrument that the House has to exercise scrutiny in precisely that matter has still not been established?

Mr. Newton: I, too, would like that Select Committee to be established. No doubt the usual channels—whose representatives on both sides of the House are present—will make every effort to do their stuff, if I may use the vernacular, as they have done recently in respect of the Select Committee on Members' Interests.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman's point of order may well be a point of frustration, but in any case I am afraid that he will have to wait until the end of the statements.

Sunday Trading

4.1 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, I should like to make a statement on Sunday trading in England and Wales. My original intention was to come to the House once the judgment from the European Court was available but I now understand that, because of circumstances that have recently arisen at the Court, that is unlikely to be before January. I have therefore decided to let the House know how we propose to proceed.

The Government are determined to give Parliament the opportunity to settle the vexed question of the reform of the law on Sunday trading in England and Wales.

No body of opinion finds the existing law wholly satisfactory. Everyone—from sabbatarians to deregulators—is critical of some aspects of the Shops Act 1950. But there is a very wide spread of opinion about how it ought to be reformed. The House will wish to know how we intend eventually to ask Parliament to resolve the issue.

The question now is not whether there should be reform but what that reform should be. This is a matter upon which every Member of Parliament is likely to have his or her own views. Views cut across our usual party lines. It is the opinion of Parliament as a whole that must determine the issue. The Government would expect to give their supporters a free vote on the key issue of whether restrictions should apply to trading on Sunday and, if so, what they should be.

The Government will in due course invite Parliament to decide between the three main options: total deregulation; proposals put forward by the Shopping Hours Reform Council; and proposals put forward by the Keep Sunday Special Campaign.

Total deregulation would place the law in England and Wales on the same basis as the present law in Scotland. That gives complete freedom of choice and allows opening to be determined by commercial judgments of the wishes of the shopping public. To my constituents, I make no secret of the fact that that is my preferred option.

The Shopping Hours Reform Council proposes a quite different model, under which any small shop would be able to open at any time on a Sunday to sell anything that it chose to sell. Larger shops would be able to open only for a limited period of six hours. The council proposes a local authority registration scheme under which shops would inform the local authority of their intention to open on a Sunday.

The Keep Sunday Special Campaign put forward proposals that would in general prohibit trading on Sunday but exempt certain classes of shop—shops catering for recreation, emergencies, social gatherings and travel. Whether such a shop could open on a Sunday would be determined by what it sold. Whether some types of shops could open would depend on their annual turnover in a list of permitted goods. There would be a maximum floor size for some types of shop. Some shops wishing to open on a Sunday would have to register with their local authority, which would have the discretion to decide whether any shop should be permitted to open.

The Government have concluded that Parliament should fully debate all three options to see precisely what

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each implies for shops, what they can sell, and what their customers can buy. The House should then decide which option is to be preferred.

We have already begun to work on a Bill that will provide a mechanism for Parliament to make that choice. I have today written to the Keep Sunday Special Campaign and the Shopping Hours Reform Council inviting them to work with the Government in formulating their proposals for a Bill. The Bill presented to the House will contain all three models as alternatives. One will be chosen by the House and that model will then go through the normal refinement process in Committee and on Report. The result at the end of the debates in both Houses will be the preferred legislative solution.

We shall publish before Second Reading an explanation of the practical effect of each set of proposals. We will aim to draft each model, in collaboration with the groups that I have named, with great care to make it easy to implement, readily enforceable, and as free from anomaly as possible.

The Bill will contain Government clauses to provide protection for existing shop workers from being compelled to work on a Sunday if they do not wish to do so. However, we must remember that a great many people would positively welcome the opportunity to work on a Sunday, and their freedom must be protected, too.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Not in this House. Six weeks, holiday have been announced for this place.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. As far as I am aware, his offer to work on a Sunday does not feature in the Jopling report. We have important legislation in this Session which may alter the position. There are precedents, but that is where we are at present.

I cannot yet say when the House will be given the opportunity to settle the law on Sunday trading. Our proposals will need to await a judgment of the European Court of Justice. That court is considering several cases referred to it by some English courts, including the House of Lords, to establish whether our Sunday trading laws are compatible with the free trade articles of the treaty of Rome. The court will deliver its judgment soon.

It would be wrong to enact or seek to enact fresh legislation while we await that judgment. To do so would risk a new law, falling foul of Community law and therefore having to be replaced. But there is no need to delay the preparation of a Bill. I will be pressing ahead with that, seeking and expecting the co-operation of the Keep Sunday Special campaign and the Shopping Hours Reform Council so that, once we have the ECJ's judgment, we are well placed to take advantage of the earliest opportunity that can be found for legislation.

I have described a process which will enable Parliament to settle the issue on Sunday trading reform. I hope that we will be able to bring forward the legislative proposals without undue delay. I invite the House to endorse my proposals so that we can proceed, with the co-operation and assistance of the various interested parties, to draft the necessary Bill. I believe that that method of proceeding offers the welcome prospect of a conclusion to the uncertainty and anomalies of the present legal situation on the subject.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State is introducing legislation on this issue and that there will be a free vote on it. Will he give an undertaking that the vote will be genuinely free and that the payroll vote will not be mobilised in favour of any one option or, indeed, any one issue within an option?

Does the Secretary of State agree that the challenge is to produce a lasting reform that ends both the present deregulation through anarchy and the anomalies of the existing law, which is clear and practical and commands public support, yet properly protects the rights of those who will have to work on a Sunday if others are to shop on a Sunday? Does he agree that that matter will be especially important since, once we have legislated, the legislation will need to be enforced? There will be a strong duty on the House to ensure that the proposals produced are capable of being enforced which the present legislation is not.

I suspect that we are about to be subjected to intense lobbying from groups of all persuasions. Will the Secretary of State ensure that the information and studies available to the Government are shared with Members of Parliament? Will he ensure that the information includes assessments of the impact on the local environment and quality of life of those who live close to the shops which will open on a Sunday? Will it also include an analysis of the current practice in Scotland, where Sunday trading is permitted, although in practice is somewhat circumscribed?

I come to the nub of the issue, certainly for the Opposition. The Secretary of State said that the legislation will contain the three main options canvassed publicly. At least two of the campaigners, the Keep Sunday Special Campaign and the Shopping Hours Reform Council, are heavily backed by employers. Will the Secretary of State ensure that the legislation contains specific provisions to protect existing employees who do not want to work on Sundays? All employees, both present and future, should be subject to the voluntary principle and entitled under law, or by agreement with employers, to the premium payments for such working to which many are now entitled.

Many hon. Members and many others outside the House believe that people should have greater freedom to shop on a Sunday provided that open on a Sunday for us does not mean exploited on a Sunday for those who work in the shops that serve us. Therefore, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give an undertaking that all the options on employment protection will be in his Bill? Does he understand that it is hardly surprising that the Opposition are wary of the Government's promises on employment protection when they are abolishing that protection under the wages councils legislation for shopworkers and other groups?

If the Government are sensible in handling this issue, there will be a chance of achieving the necessary reform of Sunday trading in a way that is sensitive to those who are genuinely and rightly concerned to keep Sunday's special nature and allows the public greater choice to shop under the law, if they want to do so. Does the Home Secretary agree that sensible reform is surely long overdue?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his final words and for some of his other comments. I assure him that there will be a genuine free vote among Conservative Members. There may be some surprising unanimity but I should be surprised if all hon. Members who usually form what is called the Government's payroll vote voted for the same option. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will make it clear that his party will permit a similar free vote. I trust that other Opposition parties will do the same.

I accept that enforcement of the legislation is extremely important. I hope that no one will vote against the Second Reading of a Bill which offers genuine choice. There is no clear scope for enforcing the Shops Act 1950, which has no friends left in the House or outside. The reason for asking outside groups to be involved at this stage in drafting the legislation is so that the skills of the parliamentary draftsmen can be brought to bear to ensure that what is drafted is in order and we do not become bogged down in technicalities. They will also ensure that the legislation is enforceable to the best of expert judgment.

We shall certainly place before the House all the research that we commission. However, I find that research does not make many people change their mind on any aspect of this problem. I shall seek to find an analysis of the position in Scotland—although I do not undertake to commission it—where there is regulation of hairdressers and barbers but not of any other trades. The position in Scotland has not led to widespread opening of all shops but to a settled situation which reflects the demands and wishes of people in each locality.

I said in my statement that the Government would produce clauses on employee protection and particularly on protection for existing shopworkers who took on their work on the basis that they would not work on Sundays and who need protection against being required to work on Sundays in future. We are not inviting outside bodies to help draft wide options on employee protection, because they are concerned solely with shopworkers.

There is nothing unique to shopworkers about working on Sundays. Many other employers and employees have to work or choose to work on Sundays. But that matter, as well as every aspect of the legislation, will be subject to amendment in the usual way. Undoubtedly people will propose amendments on that subject.

The abolition of the wages councils has not the slightest relevance to Sunday trading. They do not exist to regulate working on Sundays.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Home Secretary consider that spreading six days trading over seven days is unlikely to be profitable unless traders either cut wages or increase prices? Does he agree that there is therefore a risk that Sunday trading will lead to Sunday slaving? Does he accept that it is a mark of a civilised society that it can find for every member of that society one day of rest in the week?

Mr. Clarke: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's analysis that there is a set amount of shopping, so that, if shops open for seven days rather than six, the same amount of trade will be spread over more time. The proportion of their income which people spend in retail outlets depends on the attractiveness and availability of those outlets. I believe that the effect of relaxation in the law will stimulate more retail activity and more employment.

I note the hon. Gentleman's views. They are the first of many that we shall hear on the overall impact of Sunday trading legislation. The hon. Gentleman represents a Scottish seat and I well remember that, when the Government last tried to sort out anomalies on the subject, the Second Reading was defeated by large numbers of Scottish Labour Members, who voted against it. This Bill will not apply to Scotland. Scottish law remains totally deregulated and I do not think that I have ever heard a Scottish Member propose to change the law in Scotland, but this is the United Kingdom Parliament and the hon. Gentleman is entitled to his views and to his vote on the measure.

Dame Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): May I take this opportunity to congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the extraordinarily sensible way in which he has brought the proposal for the determination of this difficult problem to the House? I am glad to note that both Opposition and Conservative Members will be offered the opportunity of a free vote, which is important. Since the matter will not be brought before the House for resolution for some time, what advice can my right hon. and learned Friend offer to retailers who are opening on Sunday, especially in the run-up to Christmas, and to many people in work and in retailing in these difficult times, who would like retailers to be able to open on Sundays?

Mr. Clarke: My right hon. Friend conducted a wide-ranging consultation on the subject. She sought to achieve a consensus between the most interested parties on how it might be resolved. No one could have made more effort than she did, but it was impossible to produce any agreement. I am glad of her welcome for the way in which we have tried to resolve the matter by a free vote in the House.

The Shops Act 1950 remains in abeyance, because no one knows what the law is until the European Court judgment. We wait to find out whether that will make it clear how the Act might be enforced. Given that my latest information is that the court is not likely to give its judgment before January, it will be left entirely to those responsible for each retail outlet to decide what to do in the run-up to Christmas.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I thank my right hon. and learned Friend warmly for what he is seeking to do. Will he reflect on what he said a few moments ago? Many people think that the law is not in abeyance. The law of the land is clear and certain and people are choosing deliberately to flout and confound it. When he presents the Bill, will he not seek unduly to advocate his preferred solution? Does he agree that, if subsidiarity means anything, it should allow a country to determine its Sunday trading laws?

Mr. Clarke: I strongly agree with my hon. Friend's last question. I hope that that is the outcome of the European Court judgment, which depends on the effect of previous treaties and legislation in the House. When the legislation passes through the House, in so far as I take part alongside my hon. Friend the Minister of State, I have no doubt that I shall from time to time advocate my opinions and preferred solutions. I shall endeavour to distinguish clearly between speaking on behalf of the Government and speaking in my capacity as the Member for Rushcliffe, as I have when I have found myself in situations of this kind

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before. I merely speak as one who has one vote among 650, when I express my opinion or choose between the various options. I shall try to stick to that.

I have described what I think has been the position under the Shops Act 1950 for some time but I should make it clear that, as my right hon. Friend the Attorney-General explained in answer to a question in the House,

"local authorities can still issue summonses"—*[Official Report*, 11 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 368.]

In a written answer he said:

"The decision of the House of Lords"

in the Kirklees case

"means that local authorities can apply for interim injuctions against retailers in order to enforce the law without giving cross-undertakings in damages."—*[Official Report*, 15 July 1992; Vol. 211, c. *707*.]

That is strictly the position. I regard it as unsatisfactory, and I hope that we shall soon enable Parliament to make it clearer.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): The Home Secretary made a complex statement. I cannot recall in the years that I have been in this place a Minister offering the House three options relating to one Bill. I welcome hon. Members being afforded those options, because some of us have been waiting with bated breath since 1986 for the Government to introduce a measure on Sunday trading. The Government could have taken the opportunity at any time since that date to introduce legislation to resolve the problem of the Shops Act 1950.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman referred to the possibility of research changing people's minds. Having had six years in which to research the whole issue, it is clear that his mind has not been changed. I remind him that the House decided in 1986 by a majority of 14 to throw out the total deregulation proposed by the then Government, who had a majority of over 100 in the House. A whipped vote took place on that occasion, rather than the free vote that the Home Secretary has been kind enough to offer today.

It is clear from the right hon. and learned Gentleman's reply to his hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), and to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), that the vote will not be all that free. I should like a free vote when we debate my Shops (Amendment) Bill on 22 January. I would be happy to give a copy of that measure, which has been examined by legal experts, to the Home Secretary so that he may read it and do further research tonight. The Keep Sunday Special Campaign—*[Interruption.]* This is a complicated issue——

Madam Speaker: Order. I hesitate to intervene in the hon. Gentleman's remarks, but he may have noticed that I was getting rather anxious. I remind him that questions must relate to the Secretary of State's statement. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is so immersed in the whole issue that he is anxious to get his points across. I urge him to complete his questioning quickly—we are all anxious to know what he wants to ask—so that I may call other hon. Members.

Mr. Powell: I appreciate what you say, Madam Speaker, and I was coming to my final question. During his busy day yesterday, the Home Secretary may not have noticed the press launch of a campaign about employment protection. That involved a Cambridge university research document by two professors who had looked into the effects of Sunday trading on employment protection.

I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman obtains a copy of that document to make sure that the proposals for total deregulation that he, in his capacity as Home Secretary, is prepared to support, contain provisions relating to employment protection that I hope hon. Members in all parts of the House want included in any legislation. Provisions giving such protection should apply to all of the three options that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is offering.

Mr. Clarke: My track record on this subject is rather blemished, because, in 1986, I replied to the Second Reading debate of the then Shops Bill and tried to persuade the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and others that if they gave a Second Reading to that measure, the whole issue could be resolved then, if necessary by it being amended in Committee to produce a solution that the House preferred. In my opinion, the previous Parliament ducked its responsibility to change, with the result that we have had six more years of the Shops Act becoming ever more complicated.

We are now proposing the options as I describe them. We shall involve the Keep Sunday Special Campaign in the drafting. I appreciate that those involved with that movement have helped the hon. Member for Ogmore to draft his Bill. I hope that they will now discuss the matter with parliamentary counsel so that there may be no disagreement between parliamentary counsel and their draftsmen about the technicalities of the measure. We may by that means ensure that the measure is in the best possible shape, thereby avoiding the need for drafting amendments later. It may be complicated, because other amendments will no doubt be tabled to each of the options.

A precedent was the embryology Bill, which was a way of resolving a more difficult issue. It was exceedingly complicated and I hope that this matter will be slightly more straightforward. Whatever individual Members may have thought about the outcome, the House agreed at the time that the parliamentary proceedings on the embryology Bill were a model of how to proceed on these difficult social subjects.

I am aware of Cambridge university's research, which is based on a grand survey of 35 retail outlets. However, I shall study it with care and compare it with all the other research that will flow in upon us in the next few months. We all know the high level of interest in the subject.

The private Members' Bill is a matter not for me but for the House on the day when the hon. Gentleman presents it.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his proposal is a novel but distinctly odd way of legislating? Will he resist the temptation to refuse to answer a hypothetical question and tell us what would happen if the House decided that it preferred his first option with 40 per cent. of the vote, with 30 per cent. going to each of the other two alternatives? If the majority of 60 per cent. then decided to vote down the first option, which he said he preferred, what on earth would we do?

Mr. Clarke: My right hon. Friend is extremely experienced in procedural matters and has asked a shrewd

Chief Whip's question. First, I must satisfy the House authorities that that form of Bill is in order. Obviously, it will be drafted with that in mind. Secondly, we must make sure that the issues are presented to the House so that they can be voted on in good order and in sequence. My right hon. Friend the present Chief Whip and I will be happy to consult my right hon. Friend on how best to sort the matter out.

The alternative is to do what we did in the embryology Bill—put down one preferred option, and then have amendments and vote in sequence. However, I expect that however we proceed it will give rise to some controversy and I hope that we shall have much discussion in the House about a satisfactory method so that we agree an acceptable way to proceed by the time we debate the Bill.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Will the Home Secretary give us a little more information about employee protection? His qualifications following his initial statement about employee protection will fill many people with anxiety. We need an assurance that employee protection will be absolutely guaranteed. Furthermore, what is the Home Secretary's view on the position of local authorities like Stoke-on-Trent, which have sought to implement the law as it stands? It has cost local authorities a lot of money to do so. Because the Government have ignored the law, will he consider recompense for those local authorities that have simply tried to enforce the law?

Mr. Clarke: The views on what type of shop should open and what they should sell seem to cut across party lines. Although opinions vary, there is obviously a more philosophical division between the two parties about the extent to which the law should provide, in great detail for employee protection. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) even suggested that we should stipulate rates of pay for particular workers on particular days. The Government will produce proposals on employment protection and hon. Members will have to debate them when they see them. I invite the House to consider employee protection in the context not just of shops but of all the arrangements that have long prevailed for public transport workers, doctors, nurses, the police and others. The Government's instinct is not to go in for tightly regulated employment provisions for the category of people working in shops on Sundays.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): On subsidiarity and whether this nation state should be able to decide whether it wants to trade on Sundays, is my right hon. and learned Friend saying that, if the European Court decides against us on the existing legislation, we shall nevertheless be tied in future legislation to the European Community's wishes? Will he assure us that, if the European Court decides in our favour on the existing legislation, it will not be able to tie us on future legislation which the House decides it wants to introduce?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. and learned Friend seems to agree with the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson). When local authorities start litigation of any sort, they take the usual risk and must assess their prospects of success and the likelihood of having to bear the cost. There is no provision for the Government to step in to compensate local authorities for that cost.

As for the European Court, my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has been arguing strongly on behalf of the British Government that the Shops Act 1950 is perfectly compatible with European law, and the matter should be returned to the British courts. I hope that that is the outcome. The judge advocate's opinion has, so far, broadly supported the proposition—that the court should not be bound by that. When we receive the judgment from the European Court we shall have to see whether it imposes inhibitions on us, so that when we draft future legislation we can ensure that we are not taken back to the European Court.

I do not think that any hon. Member wants the matter to depend on European judgments. It is, self-evidently, a matter that touches on the social mores of England and Wales, and should be determined by this Parliament.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): In the 18 years that I have been in the House I have hardly ever before heard a statement from the right hon. and learned Gentleman with which I almost wholly agree. He has introduced sensible procedural arrangements, and I am confident that it will be possible for the House to make a decision on a choice of the three options that will not necessarily lead to the barmy position of all options being excluded.

I have changed my mind over the past year, and the proposals of the Shopping Hours Reform Council are now my preferred option, although they were not a year ago. A central plank of the reform council's procedures is that there should be some flexibility in the contract of employment arrangements for new employees. If the House were legislating to set up transport on a seven-day basis when previously there had been no public transport on that basis or to open hospitals on a seven-day basis when they had never been opened on that basis before, we would build in contractual arrangements for the employees in those industries. It is right to consider doing that as it is a central plank of the arrangements.

We are legislating for a key sector of social and cultural activity in this country which is virtually unique. That is why we have been unable to find a policy to succeed the 1950 legislation. Therefore, in the circumstances, a case can be made for special arrangments. If the Shopping Hours Reform Council has that policy as its central plank and it is to form one of the options, it would be ludicrous to exclude consideration of it from the arrangements. I ask the Home Secretary, not necessarily to totally reverse his procedure, but to have an open mind on the issue.

Finally, I urge the Home Secretary not to make the same mistake as the then Home Secretary did in 1986 when, on Second Reading, he said from the Dispatch Box that there would be no guillotine on the Bill. That promise lost the Bill its Second Reading vote; the vote had nothing to do with the Bill's content.

Mr. Clarke: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman and I can agree so much on the means of proceeding. I am sure that he and I agree that, unless the House can find a way of resolving such issues, it never gets round to considering the subject at all. Important social issues are put off because nobody can devise a method of handling such topics that completely cut across traditional party divisions.

I do not agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman's analysis of the position with respect to employment protection. We shall reflect on what he and others have

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said while we are drafting the Bill. We are proposing arrangements that will be addressed once the Bill is before the House and its provisions are being discussed.

As for guillotining, it is too early to start talking about timetabling a Bill of this sort. When I was winding up the debate on the last occasion we discussed the subject, I well remember spending most of my time trying to explain that I was sure that my right hon. Friend had not said, in such terms, that there would be no guillotine. In my experience, if one promises no guillotine on a Bill, its progress through the House never ends at all.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): I join in congratulating my right hon. and learned Friend on presenting a statesmanlike solution to the problem of how the House should handle such a difficult issue. In order that we can have as well-informed and comprehensive a debate as possible—fully worthy of the procedure that my right hon. and learned Friend has just outlined—will the Government prepare in advance some facts and figures on the additional cost to public funds that will ensue if we decide on total deregulation? I have in mind the cost, for example, of parking enforcement, extra policing, refuse collection, and so on. Those may be subsidiary issues but they are important issues none the less, of which the House will wish to take account when the debate comes.

Mr. Clarke: I appreciate my hon. Friend's welcome for this method of proceeding. My initial reaction to the specific points that he has raised is that retailers, for example, pay for the cost of taking away their own refuse and other things. I will certainly undertake to put before the House the results of such research as the Government commissions. I do not intend to commission enormous amounts of such research, because it is my experience that nobody comes up with agreed and objective factual data that in the end have much conclusive effect on individual Members' opinions.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We must move on now to the second statement. We shall be returning to this subject before too long.

Revenue Support Grant (England)

4.41 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Howard): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the local authority finance settlement for England for 1993-94.

Next year is the first year of the council tax. As hon. Members will know, the tax will reflect both the value of the property and the number of people who live in it. The lowest value properties are in band A, the highest in band H. The occupants of a band H property will pay no more than three times as much in local tax as the occupants of a band A property in the same area, thus preventing a return to the excessive variations in household bills which occurred under the rates. All 6 million single adult households will receive a 25 per cent. discount. Almost all full-time students will be exempt. Three million households on income support will pay nothing. There will be transitional protection for those households facing higher bills. The new tax will be cheaper and easier to collect than the community charge, because there will be only one bill per household and no need to keep a register.

The council tax will place local government on a strong financial footing. I believe that it has considerable support, not only among members of the public but among local authorities. They have worked hard with us to ensure a smooth and successful introduction of the new tax. I am grateful to them and to the local authority associations for the constructive role that they have played.

In considering the details of the settlement I have taken into account the representations made to me by local authorities and their associations, the responsibilities which local authorities face and the scope for further improvements in value for money. I have had in mind our intention that public sector pay settlements should fall within the range 0 to 1·5 per cent.

I have also considered very carefully what the country as a whole can afford. Local government expenditure accounts for 26 per cent. of general Government expenditure. It has increased by 3·6 per cent. a year in real terms over the past two years. In present economic circumstances it is unreasonable to expect such growth to continue. The Government must keep a tight grip on public spending, and within the total we must give as much priority as we can to capital spending. Local government must play its part, too.

Authorities will be able to spend considerably more on capital projects next year, since they will have full use of nearly all the capital receipts they receive from 13 November to the end of December 1993. I expect this change to make an extra £1·75 billion available to local authorities for capital expenditure. As an additional incentive, I have already announced a range of capital partnership programmes, which offer authorities extra support from my Department to make these receipts go even further and to encourage projects of lasting benefit to local communities and industries.

It was against this background that, on 12 November, I announced the aggregate figures for the local government settlement for the coming year. Those figures have now been increased by £26 million, as announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health today in the light of changes to the independent living fund. Taking account of that additional sum, the Government's view is that the appropriate level of spending for local authorities in England in 1993-94 will be £41·168 billion. Central Government funding in support of that expenditure will be £33·545 billion.

Those figures reflect a number of changes in local authorities' functions next year. They include £565 million which we intend to set aside as a special grant to help authorities as they take on their important new responsibilities for community care. On the other hand, they make no provision for functions, principally further education, for which local authorities will no longer be responsible next year and for which about £2·5 billion was provided in the current year.

Making full allowance for these changes, the year-on-year increases underlying my proposals are 3·1 per cent., which is about £1·2 billion, in the appropriate level of spending and 3·7 per cent., which is also about £1·2 billion, in Government funding. Those increases should enable local authorities to maintain service provision. Overall, local authorities should need to raise no more next year through the council tax than they have budgeted to raise this year from the community charge.

I am today issuing a consultation paper setting out how we propose to distribute that funding. Copies have been placed in the Vote Office and the Library and are being sent to every local authority.

In the statement I made on 12 November, I proposed that the non-domestic rate poundage for 1993-94 should increase by 3·5 per cent. to 41·6p, in line with the rate of inflation. That will ensure that businesses continue to benefit from the Government's success in reducing inflation. In addition, under the changes announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his Budget statement earlier this year, business ratepayers who stood to benefit from the introduction of the unified business rate or from the 1990 revaluation will receive the whole of their benefit next year. Transitional protection will continue to be available for those who stood to lose, and the shortfall will be made good by the Exchequer.

I now propose to set the distributable amount of non-domestic rates at £11·559 billion. This represents a reduction of £747 million from 1992-93, largely as a result of repayments following appeals. I am today publishing details of the full calculation. All receipts from non-domestic rates continue to be distributed in full to local authorities.

I propose that the total of revenue support grant for 1993-94 will be £17·052 billion. In addition, some £4 billion of specific grants will be available. My detailed proposals for the way in which standard spending assessments will be calculated for 1993-94 are set out in the consultation paper. I have also provided the provisional figure for each authority's standard spending assessment. I am proposing some modifications to the way in which SSAs are calculated.

The main changes are inevitable, as they result either from changes in local authorities' responsibilities or from the new basis of local taxation. The main change of functions is in relation to further education, which will become the responsibility of the Further Education Funding Council from April 1993. This means that a simple comparison of proposed SSAs for 1993-94 with those for 1992-93 will, for all education authorities, show a decrease.

Expenditure on authorities' new community care responsibilities will be funded by the special transitional grant, so there is no allowance for this expenditure in the SSA element for personal social services.

Other changes to the calculation of SSAs result from the use of more up-to-date information. In particular, we now have estimates of resident population for mid-1991 based on the 1991 census. I propose to include these in SSAs for 1993-94 as they clearly represent a better basis than the previous figures based on the 1981 census. I realise, however, that for some authorities there will be changes, either up or down, between these better estimates, only very recently available, and those previously used. I therefore propose to pay a special grant to those authorities whose SSA in 1993-94 will be reduced by 5 per cent. or more as a direct result of incorporating the population estimates based on 1991 census results rather than those based on 1981 census results.

Council taxes will be set locally by individual councils. They will depend on how much councils decide to spend and on how much they provide for non-collection, community charge arrears and successful appeals. There are 366 billing authorities and eight separate valuation bands; so tax levels will inevitably vary widely.

At the level of the individual household, the variation in bills will be even wider, because of single person discounts, income support exemption, council tax benefits, and transitional relief. Against that background, any figure for average taxes needs to be treated with great caution. What matters is the individual tax bill for the individual taxpayer.

In order to distribute grant fairly to each council, we have to allow for different levels of taxable resources in each authority. That means that, for each of the eight valuation bands, we have identified a notional council tax for standard spending which can be derived from the figures. For instance, for band C—two thirds of all properties fall in bands A to C—the council tax for standard spending is £439. I emphasise that those figures are part of the grant calculation. They are not predictions or averages.

Many households, particularly those living in properties in the lower bands, will gain from the council tax. On the other hand, those living in properties in the higher bands should expect to make a relatively larger contribution to the cost of local services. But I am determined that any year-on-year increases in bills between the community charge and the council tax should be held down to affordable levels.

I am therefore proposing a scheme of transitional relief which will ensure that no household faces an excessive increase in liability next year as a result of the introduction of the council tax. Relief will be provided against increases above a specified amount, which will be different for each of the eight valuation bands. For properties in band A, relief will be provided against increases above £1·75 a week. For each higher band, the starting-point for relief will rise by an additional 25p; so for properties in band B it will be £2 a week and for properties in band H it will be £3·50 a week.

I expect that in most cases the calculation of relief under this scheme will be based on authorities' actual budgets and not assumed budgets. The scheme will last for at least two years, and we shall review the arrangements for later years in the light of experience of the operation of the

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scheme in 1993-94. I shall set aside resources from the total of Government support to meet the cost of the scheme, which I expect to be about £340 million in the first year.

My Department has written to local authorities today with details of the scheme. Copies of the letter have been placed in the Vote Office and the Library.

I have consistently made it clear to the House that I am determined to protect local taxpayers from unreasonable demands by their local authority. I have no doubt that most authorities will wish to play their part in setting reasonable budgets and reasonable levels of council tax, but where councils propose excessive budgets or excessive increases in budgets, I shall not hesitate to use my powers to protect council tax payers from the consequences and to ensure that local government spending does not rise above affordable levels.

I am today announcing my provisional capping criteria which authorities will need to take into account when they set their budgets over the next few months. I am also issuing my proposals for exercising my statutory powers to specify for each authority a base position—known as a notional amount—by reference to which I intend to measure budget increases for the purposes of applying capping criteria. I have placed papers in the Library and Vote Office setting out in detail my provisional criteria and my proposals for notional amounts. Copies have been sent to local authorities.

No authority that sets a budget at or below its SSA can or will be capped. Only those that budget above their SSA are potentially liable to capping. I intend to allow larger increases for authorities with budgets close to their SSAs than for those whose budgets are higher. Where budgets are very substantially above SSA, I intend to seek budget reductions, but in all cases I intend the reductions to be manageable.

I am proposing that each authority's notional amount is to be its 1992-93 budget adjusted to reflect changes in boundaries and functions and that under the new council tax system interest on collection fund cash flow will for the first time fall within the authority's budget.

My intended criteria are therefore as follows. Any increase of more than 2·5 per cent. over the 1992-93 notional amount will be considered an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget requirement over the authority's SSA. Any increase of more than 1·75 per cent. over the 1992-93 notional amount will be considered an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget requirement over 1 per cent. above the authority's SSA. Any increase of more than 1 per cent. over the 1992-93 notional amount will be considered an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget requirement over 5 per cent. above the authority's SSA. Any increase of more than 0·5 per cent. over the 1992-93 notional amount will be considered an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget requirement over 10 per cent. above the authority's SSA.

In addition, I intend that any budget requirement more than 12·5 per cent. above the SSA will be considered excessive, save that an authority will not be designated if it fulfuls certain conditions equivalent to the conditions which I applied this year.

This year, I adopted a de minimis proviso allowing authorities budgeting by no more than £1·50 per adult above the criteria for excessiveness not to be designated. I told the House at that time that it should not be assumed that in any future year we would judge such a de minimis provision to be appropriate. Local authorities should not assume that there will be any such proviso or principle for 1993-94.

My proposals allow for the particular circumstances of the inner London boroughs which still bear the cost of overspending inherited from the Inner London education authority and of the City of London.

Those criteria are necessarily provisional. When I come to make my decisions on capping, I shall, of course, take into account all appropriate considerations.

My proposals for local authority spending and for external support are realistic and manageable in the current economic circumstances and, in particular, in the light of the Government's policy on public sector pay. We expect pay settlements for local government employees within a range of 0 per cent. to 1·5 per cent. over the coming year. Given my proposed increases of 3·1 per cent. in total spending and 3·7 per cent. in external support, provided that local authorities manage their resources efficiently, they should be able to maintain the full range of services they provide.

This settlement also means that authorities will not need overall to raise from their taxpayers next year any more than they did under the community charge this year. For individual taxpayers, my proposals will provide additional protection in two ways: through capping, which will restrain unreasonable levels of spending, and through the transitional relief scheme.

I am confident that this settlement will provide local authorities with the resources that they need to deliver the wide range of local services of the quality which people expect and deserve and at a level of tax which they can afford.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Is it not true that the Secretary of State's statement will mean cuts in vital public services throughout the country, with nursery classes closed, library provision ended in many areas and higher charges for meals on wheels and home helps—all because the right hon. and learned Gentleman has been ready to sacrifice the needs of children, the elderly, the sick and families to sweeten the pill for the rich of the introduction of the council tax?

Is the Secretary of State not aware that, having failed the nation once by forcing through the poll tax against overwhelming hostility, he is now failing the nation a second time? Will he confirm that the announced 3·1 per cent. increase in so-called total standard spending is a bogus figure; that councils will be short of £200 million in cash, comparing this year's budgets with next year's settlement; and that this can only mean job losses, even with a total pay freeze? Was not that the implication of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's weasel words, when he said in his statement that these increases "should" enable local authorities to maintain service provision? Is he saying that these levels of settlement will enable authorities to maintain service provision? Will he guarantee that there will be no service cuts and no job losses? Has he made any calculations about the statement's effects on jobs and services? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman proud, or sorry, that his policies have already led to the loss of 6,700 teaching posts in the past year?

On council tax, will the Secretary of State confirm that his announced band C of £439 is £57, or 15 per cent., above the level promised by his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), even allowing for inflation since he claimed those figures? The right hon. Member for Henley claimed that band C would be £356. Allowing for inflation since then, that would be £382, not £439.

Given that, will the Secretary of State now apologise for the way in which the right hon. Member for Henley misled the House and the country in the run-up to the election, and will he apologise for the fact that only two weeks ago he sought to mislead the House by pretending that no such predictions had ever been made?

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): My hon. Friend did not say "deliberately".

Madam Speaker: Order. Perhaps the hon. Member will allow me to deal with the matter. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) knows that we do not use such terminology.

Mr. Straw: Will the Secretary of State apologise for the way in which he sought to confuse the House and to dissemble over the fact that he knew very well that the right hon. Member for Henley had made predictions about the level of the council tax before the election, well knowing that the Government would never implement such levels after the election?

Why has the Secretary of State pretended in public that the council tax will be fair, when in private, in a letter to Conservative Back Benchers, he has trumpeted its unfairness? Why has the Secretary of State rigged the system, to quote his words, so that someone in a £350,000 house will pay only three times the council tax of someone in a £35,000 flat, not 10 times the tax?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that the single person's discount will mean that a single company director earning £100,000 a year and living in a £350,000 house will pay no more council tax than a pensioner couple living in a £120,000 house with below-average income?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that the majority of people who will gain from transitional relief are those who also gained from the poll tax? Is it correct that in Wandsworth the maximum council tax can only be £3·50 a week, given the operation of the transitional relief scheme?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that the £1·75 billion that he is claiming that local authorities can raise is based on wholly tendentious assumptions that the authorities will be able to sell that number of assets and that, what is more, he has not mentioned that £330 million of that amount, even if it is raised, is to be clawed back by reductions in central Government's credit approvals on top of which the Government have cancelled the urban programme?

Is it not the truth that the Secretary of State's capping regime has been specifically designed to force through cuts in services and jobs? Does he not understand that his threat to cap every authority is contrary to the view of his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Henley? Writing in *The Times* two years ago, the right hon. Gentleman said that councils should be

"free to set and account for their own budgets".

Not only is it contrary to the right hon. Gentleman's view; it is contrary to the Secretary of State's own view, expressed to Parliament, that charge-capping powers should be used only "rarely", where a council acts "irrationally" and "contrary to all reason", and contrary to his words to the House:

> "The people of an area certainly will be able to vote for a relatively high-spending authority if they so choose."—[*Official Report*, 25 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 51.]

Since many Conservative as well as Labour authorities are now spending at the cap, is the Secretary of State claiming that those authorities have been acting irrationally in seeking to protect services in their areas? What does the Secretary of State have to say to Conservative councillors in, say, Harrow, who are now having to consider £13 million of cuts and hundreds of job losses to keep within the cap?

Is the Secretary of State not aware that the standard spending assessments can only be a rough and ready system for the distribution of grant? Is it not an affront to good government and to democracy for such complex algebraic formulae to be used by him to ride roughshod over the judgment of 24,000 democratically elected councillors of all parties and their voters on what should be the appropriate level of services in their areas?

Where is the reason in an SSA system that provides £200 more for each pupil in Berkshire than in Wigan? Where is the justice in a system which gives Gloucestershire £7·5 million for nursery education when it has no nursery schools, while punishing North Tyneside for providing a nursery place for almost every child?

Is not the Secretary of State's SSA system, the base for this central control, nothing more than a grotesque farce, given that it has taken Ministers three years to end the lunatic regulation that assumed that Brent had more snow than Cumbria, and Camden more snow than Lancashire? It has taken the Secretary of State three years to end what was blatantly obvious to everyone else.

When will the Secretary of State understand that while across Europe, east and west, other countries have been moving to devolve power to local communities and their councils, the Conservative Government in Britain today now have such tight central control of local authorities that it is unparallelled in the industrialised world outside the former Soviet Union? If subsidiarity is to mean anything, is it not time that it began to mean something at home?

Is this not a bad statement about a poor system from an utterly incompetent and uncaring Secretary of State?

Mr. Howard: The lament of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is the latest in a long line that we have heard from Labour spokesmen after revenue support grant statements. Year after year we are told by the Labour party that increases in Government support will lead to slashing cuts in services and job losses. If the Opposition's predictions had been correct, we would not have any more teachers, policemen or home helps employed by local government.

Nowhere in the hon. Gentleman's remarks was there any sense that local councils might run their services more efficiently, that there is a need to protect capital investment or to keep firm control of current spending. Nowhere was there any recognition of the interests of the taxpayer; rather, there was one giant hole in the hon. Gentleman's remarks: how much extra does he think should be provided to local authorities next year? Has he cleared any figure that he might have in mind with the hon. Member

[Mr. Howard]

for Peckham (Ms. Harman)? How would he raise that extra money—through income tax or through higher borrowing?

The hon. Gentleman suggested that the figures that I gave of a 3·7 per cent. increase in funding and a 3·1 per cent. increase in spending were bogus. *[Interruption.]* He says that now. But it was not a bogus figure. The bogus figure was the figure that the hon. Gentleman gave. He was not comparing like with like, and I was. That is why my figure was accurate and his figure was nonsense.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the figure for the CTSS. He compared it with what he said was a figure promised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), but he knows perfectly well that my right hon. Friend never promised any level of council tax at all, that he never made any predictions about council tax and that the figures that were published by my right hon. Friend were in response to the Opposition's demand that the Government should provide figures on the same assumptions that the Opposition have made—unrealistic assumptions. The figures were published not as promises or predictions, but in response to demands made by the Opposition.

We have heard some interesting points from the hon. Gentleman. We have heard that he is against the single person discount of 25 per cent. He is against a discount that will benefit 6 million people next year, and they will remember that Labour was against providing them with that help. The hon. Gentleman is against transitional relief —and the 3·75 million people who will benefit from it also will remember that Labour was against providing them with any help next year.

The hon. Gentleman is against capping because he does not recognise that it is essential to restrain central or local government expenditure. He clings to the same absurd approach that Labour took at the last general election, when it wanted to cap the assembly that it proposed for Scotland but not cap any local authority in England, Scotland or Wales.

The hon. Gentleman had a clear test to face today. Labour local authority leaders want a successful introduction to the council tax and in September told the Leader of the Opposition to soft-pedal his opposition. Local councils do not want the upheaval that would be caused by the need to introduce yet another form of local taxation and neither does anyone else—except members of the Opposition Front Bench. Far from co-operating responsibly as their local authority leaders would wish, they are determined to do all that they can to undermine the new tax.

The partisan claptrap that we heard from the hon. Gentleman this afternoon shows how dismally Labour is failing the test of opposition—and far more so that of government.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Before we proceed, I make the point that the exchanges between the two Front-Bench speakers lasted half an hour. I am looking not for comments or statements but for brief questions to the Secretary of State. I am sure that the right hon. and learned Member will be equally brief and helpful in his answers.

Sir Paul Beresford (Croydon, Central): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the brief mention by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) of Wandsworth failed to acknowledge that the opportunities for adjacent authorities that have similar standard spending assessments, but are Labour and Liberal-controlled, would be exactly the same if they were efficient and provided decent, value-for-money, quality services?

Mr. Howard: I agree, and I have every confidence that Wandsworth's future performance will continue to provide a benchmark against which people can judge the performance of responsible Conservative local government against that of irresponsible local authorities controlled by Labour or the Liberal Democrats.

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): Can the Secretary of State estimate the number of job losses that will result from his statement, and the average council tax in the various bands that he announced? What does he have to say to the Association of District Councils, which yesterday passed a motion condemning capping because it takes away the ability of local councillors to undertake the programme on which they were elected and denies the people the high-quality, properly managed services for which they voted?

Mr. Howard: I would say to the association exactly what I said to the hon. Member for Blackburn a few moments ago—and in deference to your remarks, Madam Speaker, I shall not repeat my observations. We will not forecast the average council tax because, as the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, council tax will be fixed by local authorities next year and I am not in a position to say the precise level at which they will each fix it. If local authorities manage their resources sensibly and adhere to the public sector pay policy guidelines of between 0 per cent. and 1·5 per cent., there will be no need for job losses.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): I draw to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the two volumes of closely reasoned argument presented by Warwickshire county council to his Department and the numerous representations made by Members of Parliament representing Warwickshire constituencies, detailing the deficiencies and anomalies of the county's standard spending assessment. Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House what action he has taken in this settlement to remedy the injustices suffered by my county and my constituents?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend has fought hard for the interests of Warwickshire and has drawn its grievances to my attention on more than one occasion. I considered his material very carefully and, although we have not been able to make extensive changes to SSAs this year, I shall keep that matter under close review.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Is not the Secretary of State really concerned about the relatively affluent people living in larger houses who would have to pay more council tax? Given his failure to secure £2 billion of transitional relief, is he not seeking to protect the wealthy from any increase by imposing a draconian capping regime that will cause thousands of redundancies and destroy basic services in authorities such as my own, in Sheffield, and those in authorities of all political persuasions throughout the country? Will not the constituents of Conservative Members as well as those of my right hon. and hon. Friends recognise the severity of the cuts imposed by the Secretary of State's package when they see housing, education and social services in their areas undermined and destroyed?

Mr. Howard: I doubt whether any right hon. or hon. Member can speak with greater authority about irresponsible local authority overspending than the hon. Gentleman, so I do not propose to take any lectures from him. There was never any question of £2 billion of transitional relief—I do not know from where the hon. Gentleman plucked that figure. I have just announced the details of our effective system of transitional relief. We also have a capping system that will ensure that local government plays its full part in restraining general Government expenditure, which is essential for this country's economic performance.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): My right hon. and learned Friend will know from my meetings with members of his Department of the widespread concern and anger in Bury that the council is proposing to close nursery classes, reception classes and a whole raft of local services. Will he acknowledge the great demand in the community that I represent for a reappraisal of the grant mechanism? There is a belief in Bury that, being a small borough, it is not treated fairly.

Mr. Howard: I know the lengths to which my hon. Friend goes in making sure that Bury's case is powerfully made, and I have no doubt that he will continue to miss no opportunity to ensure that that continues. We think that Bury is fairly treated under the proposals that I announced today, but that is, of course, a consultation exercise and we are open to any further points that Bury wishes to make.

Dr. Roger Berry (Kingswood): Will the Secretary of State contrast the Government's immediate decision to provide £50 million to repair Windsor castle with the effect of his statement, which will be to impose £50 million of cuts on Avon county council services? Does he acknowledge that the use this year of funds and balances to protect services had the full support of Avon's Conservative councillors? Will he extend his concern for one family living in Windsor to the thousands of families in my constituency of Kingswood and throughout Avon, so that their children's education will not be further damaged and that care for the elderly and disabled will not be further disrupted?

Mr. Howard: That is a thoroughly unworthy intervention, of which the hon. Gentleman should be ashamed. I am confident that it will evoke no greater sympathy in Avon than it has in all sensible parts of the House.

Sir Anthony Durant (Reading, West): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that transitional relief will be based not on a notional figure but on the actual level of the local tax?

Mr. Howard: I can confirm that. Subject to few conditions, that will be the case—it represents a great advance on previous years, when transitional relief was based on notional budgets. We intend as far as possible to base relief on the actual budgets fixed by local authorities, and we expect to be able to do so in the overwhelming majority of cases.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): How can the Secretary of State justify the cuts in jobs and essential services that his announcement implies for places such as the city of Newcastle and the metropolitan borough of Gateshead, when his own Government recognise that they are in need of special help? What implications does the statement have for crime levels in Northumbria, and what suggestions does the right hon. and learned Gentleman have, given the imminent ending of the urban crime fund? Will not the Secretary of State go down in history as the Marsham street strangler—slowly choking the life out of democratic local government?

Mr. Howard: I have no need to justify the job losses alleged by the hon. Gentleman, because there is no need for them to occur. If local authorities manage their resources sensibly and adhere to the public sector pay policy guidelines, they will have the resources that the hon. Gentleman's own authority needs to provide the services that he identified. I have held discussions with his neighbour about the ways in which the initiative that led to the urban crime fund can be continued.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I very much welcome the use of more up-to-date figures, which must benefit growing counties such as Cambridgeshire. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the apparent concern expressed about job losses would be much more valid if the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and others had set an example last night in regard to pay restraint, instead of copping out of a difficult decision?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is quite right. Not for the first time, he has identified an example of the yawning gap between the words that we hear from the Opposition and the actions that they perform.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The Secretary of State appeared to acknowledge the defects that have featured in previous years' standard spending grants and to recognise the difficulties inherent in using the 1981 census. Does he accept, however, that a quick glance at the figures suggests that unemployment and economic deprivation have not figured adequately in the determination of grant? As a result, areas suffering from those conditions will find it extremely difficult to maintain services, however prudent their spending may have been. Such areas will experience an increase in public squalor and a marked reduction in their authorities' capacity to meet serious need.

Mr. Howard: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's criticisms. Although the standard spending assessment makes no specific allowance for the factors that he mentioned, allowance is made for many other factors that lead to similar consequences. The hon. Gentleman said that he had had a quick look at the assessment; if he reads the report in detail, he will find that the way in which other factors are taken into account goes a long way towards dealing with the problem that he has identified.

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): My right hon. and learned Friend's announcement about transitional relief has gone some way towards relieving my constituents' anxieties, but does he recognise that the tightness of the settlement will cause some local authorities difficulties? I refer to authorities which do not collect the community charge, rates or rents, which leave properties

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empty and which will kick and scream to get any services out of competitive tendering. If any jobs are to be lost, they will be lost in Labour and Liberal authorities that simply do not get their act together.

Mr. Howard: For the benefit of local government, my hon. Friend has helpfully identified a checklist of policies that they should put into effect if they are to ensure that they can respond to this settlement constructively, without any of the dire consequences of doom and gloom that have been predicted by Labour.

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): Does the Secretary of State accept that he sets the revenue support grant and the business rate and that, because of his stringent capping powers, he effectively sets the level of council tax throughout the country and throughout Nottinghamshire? His talk of law and order services has a hollow ring, given that the Nottinghamshire chief constable wants 60 extra police officers, the county council could fund 20 and the Government will provide none.

Mr. Howard: No; I do not accept for a moment that it is the Government who set the council tax for authorities in Nottinghamshire or elsewhere. We set the limits—the constraints—which are necessary, for reasons that I advanced earlier, but local authorities are allowed a good deal of discretion within which to set the council tax. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will exert on his local authority whatever influence he may possess and will encourage it to behave in the way suggested a few moments ago by my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles).

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that a large majority of the houses in my constituency are in the lower council tax bands and that they suffered cruelly under the community charge? They will definitely benefit from the new arrangements. Moreover, many of my constituents are single householders who suffered under the rating system: they, too, will benefit. As my right hon. and learned Friend will know, our bete noire is the extravagant spending of Lancashire county council. I am delighted that he is to cap the council firmly and make it behave for once.

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We shall have to wait and see what budget Lancashire county council sets for next year before deciding whether to cap it; I hope that it, in common with other local authorities, will note the capping criteria that I have set and will set its budget within those criteria. In that event, I shall not need to impose a cap. I am sure that my hon. Friend will lose no opportunity of drawing to the council's attention the significance of the criteria that I announced.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): One massive evil of the poll tax that still remains is the methodology by which the standard spending assessments, and therefore the grants, are determined. The only alterations of which we have heard are those introduced by further education and community care legislation and by the carrying out of a census. In other respects, the same methodology is used—a methodology that has placed North East Derbyshire district council, for instance, in 365th position among 366 authorities in England and Wales, while some other authorities receive two or three times as much per resident.

The formulae should be changed and the allocation should be redistributed. Will the Secretary of State publish the figures, placing the amounts in order, to show each district and each county area the amount that they receive? The Government are supposed to believe in league tables; let us have some league tables now so that we can see what is going on.

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman visits the Vote Office, he will find that all the information he needs is there in voluminous quantities. We consult local authority associations scrupulously on the way in which we assess the amount of grant that each authority should receive. As even the hon. Gentleman will realise on reflection, it is not possible to arrive at a system that pleases everyone. I accept that our system does not altogether please the hon. Gentleman, but it is a fair system, which is the result of extensive consultation.

Mr. Michael Ancram (Devizes): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that local taxpayers in areas with responsible councils, such as Wiltshire, will do better than those who are governed by irresponsible, high-spending Labour or Liberal Democrat councils? Will he also confirm that the cost of electing irresponsible councils will still be borne largely by those who elect them, rather than by the taxpayer in general? In the light of that, once the council tax has settled down, would my right hon. and learned Friend be prepared to re-examine the unified business rate to see whether it too can be made to work more fairly?

Mr. Howard: I entirely agree with the first part of my hon. Friend's question. On average, each Labour councillor costs £238,137 more, and each Liberal Democrat councillor £107,423 more, than each Conservative councillor. That bears out in some detail, and with some force, what my hon. Friend said.

I fear that I cannot hold out any hope of further action on the business rate. As my hon. Friend will know, the fact that the rate now increases by no more than inflation is a great safeguard for business, after years in which profligate Labour authorities used to heap huge increases on business, year after year. My hon. Friend will also be aware of the measures taken by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in this year's Budget, which afforded substantial relief to business rate payers.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does the Secretary of State recall that, when the Government began to alter local government finance, they made two claims: that the new arrangement would be simpler and easier to understand and that it would be fairer? Does he really think that the system described in his statement is simpler and easier to understand? Does he really think that it is fairer for my constituents in Tameside still to have to pay substantially more next year than people in, for instance, Wandsworth? Should not the Secretary of State have apologised to the House for the mess that the Government have made of the system and, in particular, for all the money that was wasted in the introduction of the poll tax?

Mr. Howard: I very much doubt that it is given to man to find a system of financing local government that would please the hon. Gentleman. I think that the system that we have put in place, which will take effect from 1 April next year, is sensible and will attract support from those who want to put arguments about the method of local government finance behind them once and for all.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Am I right in believing that, overall, the majority of householders will pay less under this fairer system, and has my right hon. and learned Friend any facts and figures that are comparable with the old rating system?

Mr. Howard: It will crucially depend on the level of council tax that local authorities fix next year, but I expect that more people will benefit from the introduction of the council tax than will lose.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): But does not the Secretary of State realise that we can all agree on at least one of his sentences—that sufficient resources should be made available to councils to provide proper services? Is he aware that the available money for the London borough of Newham is £10 million less than the total SSA estimated by the Government as necessary expenditure on services? That is equivalent to the difference between the amount that the council must pay in capital repayments and interest and the amount of the relevant SSA. However, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, writing to me last year, said that the capital borrowed by councils was not under the control of the Government. Does the Secretary of State agree, therefore, that the Government should fix the SSA pro rata to the amount for which they give permission and that, unless they do so, they can be accused of financial fraud?

Mr. Howard: I do not entirely follow the hon. Gentleman's point. It is for local authorities to decide how much they wish to spend on capital projects. They make their capital spending decisions, and those charges have financial consequences. I am sure that the London borough of Newham was aware of those consequences when it took the decisions to which I referred. The documents that I have placed in the Vote Office are part of a consultation exercise and I shall listen to any points that the hon. Gentleman or his local authority wish to make in the course of that exercise.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend about the democratic right of local authorities to fix their own budgets, but the mistake that was made with the community charge was that those budgets were not monitored close enough, were not capped early enough and, like my authority, were allowed to spend many millions of pounds on wasteful schemes. Auditors are taking Southampton city council to court for wasteful and illegal expenditure of well over £1 million. Such action shows that my right hon. and learned Friend must act quickly to cap wasteful authorities.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is entirely right to draw attention to such important matters. I shall not hesitate to use the capping powers which I have announced where councils spend excessively and breach the criteria.

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman been following a script from "Dad's Army"? Has he not displayed all the ruthless centralising ambition of a Napoleon with the bumbling incompetence of a Captain Mainwaring? In so far as his figures add up, do they not do so solely on the basis of a pay increase of 0 to 1·5 per cent. for some of the lowest paid workers—dinner ladies, home helps and others—and is it not scandalous of the Government to demand that of them?

Mr. Howard: I defer to the hon. Gentleman on "Dad's Army"; but the Government have said that people in public sector work should be prepared to make a sacrifice to increase the prospects of jobs for those who are out of work. I should have thought that that message might just command the support of the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends. If it does not yet do so, I ask them to reflect and reconsider, because it has widespread support among the people of this country.

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, in calculating the SSA for the city of Gloucester, he has taken fully into account the population changes resulting from the boundary changes—which, he will acknowledge, were not taken fully into account last year?

Mr. Howard: Without going into what was or was not fully taken into account last year, for next year I can answer my hon. Friend's question in the affirmative.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The Secretary of State claims that the council tax is fair. Is he aware that its relief provisions for disabled people are grossly unfair, because someone in the top band can claim relief for disablement, taking him down to the next lowest band, but there is no band into which someone who is in the bottom band can fall? The right hon. and learned Gentleman's proposals and the council tax discriminate unfairly against disabled people in the lower band of the council tax. What does he intend to do about that discrimination?

Mr. Howard: The purpose of the relief to which the hon. Gentleman refers is to ensure that disabled people are not penalised unfairly because a house has an extra room or extra facilities for them. For that reason, we say that such a property should be deemed to be in a band lower than it would otherwise be. If a property is already in the bottom band, it cannot, by definition, be put into a lower band. I should have thought that that would be apparent even to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): Will my right hon. and learned Friend agree to reconsider the way in which SSAs are calculated for coastal resorts such as Eastbourne, particularly tourism statistics, ward-weighted density and coastal protection?

Mr. Howard: I very much understand the concerns to which my hon. Friend referred. Tourism statistics are now taken into account in the calculation of the standard spending assessment, as my hon. Friend will see when he examines the documents in the Vote Office. As I have said, this is a consultation document, and I shall listen carefully to representations from my hon. Friend or his local authority.

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Will the Secretary of State be honest with the House and acknowledge that, in attempting to appease the rich in the leafy suburbs, his statement will lead to a severe cut in essential public services in many parts of the country? Will

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he acknowledge that, at a time when almost 3 million people are out of work, his statement will lead to the loss of many jobs of those employed directly in the public sector and those in the private sector who are dependent on public sector purchases of goods and services?

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman further acknowledge that the reduction in the real level of local authority resources will turn the screw on the recession and further weaken our economy? Given the consultations that he will have with the many authorities such as Harrow that will inevitably troop into his office to make representations, will he give a commitment now to modify spending limits and capping procedures and allow authorities of different persuasions to provide the essential services that their communities demand?

Mr. Howard: I do not accept any of the points that the hon. Gentleman made, for the reasons that I gave when answering other Labour Members' points. I understood that the Labour party intended to start singing a new tune, but we have heard this evening the same old discordant tune and the same old failed message—spend more, tax more, waste more. That is the message that the Labour party still gives to the people of this country, and that is why it will continue to be rejected by them.

Points of Order

5.38 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you consider the rather silly games that are played by Government business managers, who insist on placing important documents such as this in the Vote Office, to be collected by Members only when Ministers take their seats? Today, as the Minister sat down, there must have been 40 or 50 Members scrambling outside the Vote Office like children—I was one of them—to get copies of papers to bring into the Chamber for our hon. Friends. This place is reduced to a farce when we operate on that basis, and I ask you to consider whether the rules could be changed.

It was only when I looked at the document that I was able to establish the fact that a millionaire house owner in Mayfair would be paying less council tax——

Madam Speaker: Order. A point of order to me is one thing, and the hon. Gentleman raised a reasonable point; however, he must not use that as a platform for continuing the exchanges. Of course, it has always been the practice that documents should be made available in the Vote Office—*[Interruption.]* Order. Allow me to finish speaking. It has always been the practice for documents to be made available when the Minister concerned has finished speaking. I quite understand how difficult it is for hon. Members when there are a great many documents to be read immediately so that questions may be put. I have been a Back Bencher myself. Perhaps I shall examine the matter further.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I should be grateful if you would assist us. You will have heard the Home Secretary make a statement to the House earlier today, on Sunday trading, in which he said that the Government would allow Conservative Members a free vote on the provisions of the Sunday trading legislation. Indeed, he emphasised that point several times and sought an assurance from me that there would be a free vote on the Opposition side. I gave that assurance, but subsequently—probably because of an error—notes for the Home Secretary to use in answering supplementary questions have been circulating among the press.

Those notes include an answer to the theoretical question:

> "Will the Government whip through their employee protection provisions?"

Those provisions will be an important part of the legislation on Sunday trading. The answer provided for the Home Secretary to use was:

> "It is too early to say."

In other words, the basis on which the statement was given to the House, and on which we questioned the Home Secretary—that there would be a free vote—has now been thrown into doubt by the right hon. and learned Gentleman's notes on answers to supplementary questions. I should be grateful if you, would tell us how we can ensure that the Home Secretary makes an accurate statement to the House, so that we may question him on it. The matters concerned will be at the very heart of the legislation.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will understand that I can concern myself only with questions and answers across the Floor of the House, not with what happens outside the Chamber. Of course, it is for Members themselves to pursue with Ministers the way in which the House will finally divide on particular legislation. The way in which individual Members or parties vote in the House is certainly not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. There is another way of dealing with the matter. When my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) makes such comments, what he says will finish up in *Hansard* tomorrow, and the Home Secretary can read it. Even better, it has occasionally been known for Ministers to be brought back to the Dispatch Box to correct what they have said. Before today is out, the Home Secretary should be brought here and challenged by Opposition Members. We shall still be here tonight, and we shall demand a proper statement, because the right hon. and learned Gentleman has misled the House into believing that the Tories will have a free vote from the very beginning of Second Reading right through to the end. It is pretty obvious that that will not be the case.

Madam Speaker: The points of order raised by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) are often of great interest to the House. One reason why we shall have an *Official Report* tomorrow—indeed, one reason why we record all our proceedings—is so that we can all see what has been said the day before, and perhaps make some corrections if that proves necessary.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. With regard to your assertion of your intention to consider further the matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), I understand that the release of any papers relating to a ministerial statement is in the hands of the Minister concerned, who may, if he wishes, instruct the Deliverer of the Vote to make such statements available before the Minister rises to speak, when he rises, or later. I beg you, Madam Speaker, to check on that matter, and to bear it in mind when considering any action which you may wish to take.

Madam Speaker: I shall certainly bear that matter in mind.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

TRANSPORT AND WORKS

That the draft Transport and Works (Descriptions of Works Interfering with Navigation) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Transport and Works (Guided Transport Modes) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

ROAD TRAFFIC

That the draft Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (Amendment) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

ESTATE AGENTS

That the Estate Agents (Specified Offences) (No. 2) (Amendment) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 2833) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

That the Child Resistant Packaging and Tactile Danger Warnings (Safety) (Revocation) Regulations 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 2620) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

SOCIAL SECURITY

That the Social Security (Miscellaneous Provisions) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 2595) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Income Support (General) Amendment (No. 3) Regulations 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 2804) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

That the National Health Service (Determination of Districts) (No. 4) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 2751) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the National Health Service (District Health Authorities) (No. 4) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 2752) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

COUNTY COURTS

That the County Court (Amendment No. 2) Rules 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 1965) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Public Service

Motion made, and Question proposed, That his House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

5.45 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): On Second Reading of the Civil Service (Management Functions) Bill earlier this month, the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) asked for a wider debate on the management of the public service, and I was happy to respond to that idea. I promised to consult my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House on whether we could have an early debate, and I am glad to say that we have managed to find the time for it.

I am especially pleased that we are having this debate so quickly after the publication yesterday of the White Paper, "The Citizen's Charter First Report: 1992". This is a good moment for considering the Government's wider policies on privatisation, market testing and other issues related to the management of public services.

It is true to say that fundamental change for the better has been under way in the management of the public service ever since 1979. It is worth recalling that on the day on which this process of change began—4 May 1979—the last of the debris, both literal and figurative, had only just been cleared away after the previous winter's near-anarchy, the bulk of it in the public sector. The inflationary consequences of the pay settlements with which the outgoing Labour Government attempted to buy off that chaos damaged the economy for years.

It was a squalid and disappointing, although in retrospect perhaps inevitable, end to what now appears an ill-controlled expansion of many public services without sufficient attention being paid to the forms in which they were to be managed. As Mr. Anthony Crosland had said not long before, the party was indeed over.

There had been much idealism in the early days, but the results, in practice, were all too often empire building, limited concern for efficiency, and above all excessive domination by the providers of services rather than by the interests of the users. The customers and consumers of the services were not seen, as they should have been, as the be-all and end-all of the whole operation. Complaints were always used as proof of the need for extra resources rather than as a spur to efficiency, flexibility and new ideas. The electorate was presented with a false choice—between higher taxes or poorer services. They emphatically rejected that choice in 1979, in 1983, in 1987 and in 1992. It is a lesson that, once learned, shows little sign of ever being forgotten.

The reality is that on the one hand the potential costs of the public service rise inexorably in the face of scientific and technical progress and rising expectation. On the other hand, taxpayers here and elsewhere around the world are no longer prepared to hand over 25 per cent. let alone 40 per cent., 50 per cent. or more of their income without clear evidence that the Government will make every effort to ensure that that money is spent efficiently, and to the greatest benefit of the user of the services that Governments provide.

Public services in this country are now in the process of changing fundamentally to meet that reality, and they will continue to do so. The change does not lie in the basic nature of those in the public services. As the White Paper makes clear, the Government recognise the obvious need for good public services on a continuing basis, and recognise the quality of this country's many excellent public servants. But we cannot expect a public service to work efficiently, however competent and industrious those in it, if it labours under local management which has been made powerless and unimaginative by distant and centralised control; and which lives within a structure which ignores the whole worldwide revolution in ideas about management based on putting the customer's needs first.

Ever since 1979, the Government have sought to free up the latent ability and commitment in our public services through improvements in the way in which they are managed. Initially this was done on what was essentially a pragmatic individual basis, as each one—the civil service, local government, the nationalised industries and the NHS—seemed to require. A great deal was achieved. Government withdrew altogether from many areas—especially the nationalised industries—which could demonstrably be better run by the private sector. As far as the rest of the public service was concerned, efficiency measures resulted in enormous savings—for instance, over £2 billion from the result of the efficiency scrutiny programme alone. The delegation or scrapping of unnecessary budgetary controls gave local managers the powers they needed to run their operations more effectively; and the incentive was provided to set and meet challenging targets in a wide range of areas.

The changes were essentially about getting modern management into public sector organisations. They now provide the means by which we can deliver the Prime Minister's citizens charter programme—the most far-reaching programme ever designed for driving up quality in public services. As I made clear yesterday when talking about the White Paper, for the first time since present-day concepts of public service began to emerge in the early decades of this century, we now have, through the charter, a commitment to improve and to maintain on a systematic and comprehensive basis standards of service and efficiency throughout the public sector, linked to mechanisms that can deliver them. I was grateful for the basic commitment of the hon. Member for Redcar to the programme and to the policy, although she has criticisms of the detail.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Would my right hon. Friend care to compare the constructive and helpful remarks made by the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlem) in Committee yesterday when she welcomed the citizens charter, with those of the Leader of the Opposition who, when the charter was introduced, described it as banal and damaging?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member for Redcar, perhaps persuaded by my hon. Friend's eloquent argument and by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science, may have come to understand the programme better than her leader did. I am grateful for the bipartisan spirit in which she approaches the matter.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Does the Minister agree that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) cannot decide whether he was in the House or in Committee yesterday? We did not discuss the citizens charter in Committee yesterday. In the House yesterday —either the Minister or the hon. Member for Langbaurgh may like to check the record—I said that the citizens charter was a good idea in principle. I said that we invented the idea and that many Labour local authorities introduced such charters before the Minister even thought of the idea. I also said that it was the way in which the Government had introduced the charter that made it a sham.

Mr. Waldegrave: I would not expect the hon. Lady to argue that my party could carry out principles better than her party. There would be little point in her being here if she did not believe that she could do a better job of it. I welcome in the spirit in which it was offered the commitment that we share the principle of wanting to improve public service. The hon. Lady says, as is her right, that she would carry out the charter provisions better. The citizens charter contains sensible commitments and I welcome the hon. Lady's reaffirmation of that point.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): Will the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster go one stage further in the bipartisan spirit displayed in the Chamber this afternoon? Will he pay tribute to the first public authority in Britain to introduce a citizens charter? York city council has now operated its charter for five years. Each year, it has done what the right hon. Gentleman did yesterday—produce an annual report on the progress of the charter. Will the right hon. Gentleman pay tribute to that Labour authority, which was the first to introduce a citizens charter?

Mr. Waldegrave: I certainly agree that what has been done in York is interesting. We would argue that the York charter should contain more measurable performance indicators. I make no apology. I warn the Labour party that, if it produces good ideas, we shall pinch them. There is nothing wrong with that. I shall give arguments later to show that some Labour party supporters and centre-left opinion—I shall not offend centre-left Labour Members who sit below the Gangway, as they have temporarily left the Chamber—share our approach to these matters, and I welcome that.

We saw one significant result of this radical programme of reform only last week——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Where's the beef?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman had a large amount of beef last week when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education published for the first time full tables of examination results as the parents charter had promised would be done. The Labour party's reaction to that example of openness earned it some noteworthy press coverage. *The Sunday Times* concluded;

> "Labour is a lost cause on education."

That is hardly surprising. As more than 50 per cent. of Labour Members are sponsored by trade unions, the Labour party is pretty much a lost cause in any area in which a consumer voice is struggling to be heard. Among others, *The Guardian* concluded;

> "the information will allow parents to make a more informed choice. No democrat should regard this as a reverse."

On this occasion, I wholeheartedly agree with *The Guardian*.

The White Paper is a substantial milestone in demonstrating how we are moving towards public services with high-quality outputs and with service to the citizen as an overriding concern. However, as the White Paper states, better-quality services do not happen by accident. They are being brought about by a series of policies each of which is designed to serve a key objective in improving public service management.

First, we must ensure that those working in the public services are not employed at taxpayers' expense on activities that, viewed realistically, do not need to exist at all. It is the most difficult thing in the world to abolish a function once a bureaucracy has made it its own, but it should be done sometimes.

Secondly, we believe that public services should be engaged only in activities that really need to be in the public sector. That requires regular programmes of review to discover whether all activities need to remain in the public sector. Many do not.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Can the Minister explain how I should respond to a group of people whom I have just met in the Central Lobby? They tell me that they work for the Inland Revenue and that they deal with the most private aspects of people's tax affairs. They told me that their work as typists is to be put out to a private company. The most intimate details of people's tax affairs will be dealt with by people who work for a private company in the north of England.

I heard that some Inland Revenue officers are so worried about that prospect—there has been a pilot project somewhere—that tax inspectors are now sending hand-written letters to ensure that correspondence is not typed by private firms. Is not that an absolute disgrace? Are not the Government abdicating their responsibilities by handing over that important work to private contractors whom the public will not trust on matters of privacy?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is wrong at two levels. First, at the lesser, but none the less powerful, level, the criminal law covers confidentiality in these matters. Secondly, the contractual arrangements that would be made in such a case would have to cover the question of confidentiality.

More broadly, the hon. Gentleman is falling into the mirror image of the mistake that some on the right have made in the past. It is just as foolish a mistake that way round. The hon. Gentleman says, "Private sector bad, cannot be trusted", just as some Conservatives used to say that nothing in the public sector was good. Both attitudes are wrong and the hon. Gentleman is out of date in his attitude.

On reflection, Opposition Members who are sponsored by trade unions that have a mostly private sector membership will not agree with the hon. Gentleman that people in the private sector cannot be trusted with confidential matters. That is an unusually foolish argument from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): There is real concern, as I am sure the Minister accepts, about confidentiality and the Inland Revenue. It is commonly accepted that, if something is not broken, it should be mended. In this case, I am not aware of any problem about confidentiality. However, as revealed on the front pages of *The Sun* and the *Evening Standard* today, there are problems of confidentiality in the private sector with Access. I am sure that Access does all that it can to maintain confidentiality.

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

I think it is disgraceful that information has come out. The Inland Revenue has kept confidentiality. If it is not broken, why mend it?

Mr. Waldegrave: I share the hon. Gentleman's sense of disgust about the leak from Access. It is not wholly unknown for the public sector more broadly—I am not talking about the Inland Revenue—occasionally to leak things. Nobody is criticising the standard of confidentiality in the Inland Revenue. None the less, it is right to look at public services and to see whether the same quality can be achieved at better value for money for the taxpayer. That is the right thing to do in that area as in others—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Workington, who continues to mutter from a sedentary position, knows a little about the nuclear industry. He knows perfectly well that, over the years, many highly confidential matters in that industry, as in the public sector, have been handled by private sector companies.

I repeat that we believe that public services should be engaged only in activities that should really be in the public sector. So far, 46 major activities and many smaller ones have been privatised; they range from huge industries such as steel and telecommunications, to the National Freight Corporation—at the time of its privatisation a declining business, now an internationally quoted company—and from the 17 electricity companies in Great Britain to the British Technology Group.

As a result, 920,000 jobs have passed from the public to the private sector. Even leaving aside all the benefits to the taxpayer of more efficient services, the annual charge that nationalised industries' financing makes on the Exchequer was £3·5 billion per annum less in 1991-92 than in 1979. That achievement has already largely ended the historically short and aberrant detour into nationalisation, which helped discredit the state by casting it in the role of the incompetent owner and manager of huge, inefficient and often out-of-date industries, and as the protector of powerful producer interests rather than the champion of the individual citizen.

I quote from the excellent speech on Monday to the Centre for Policy Studies by my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, whom we welcome to our proceedings:

"in 1979 Government was an oil producer, a car maker and a steel maker".

We are not any more, and we were not very good at it when we were. It seems a long time ago.

Nevertheless, we have not yet finished. The White Paper lists 11 further substantial potential candidates for privatisation, ranging from British Rail to Companies House, and my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary has recently opened discussions with colleagues to identify the scope for further developing the successful privatisation programme of the past decade, as he said earlier this week in the speech from which I have just quoted.

Thirdly, we believe in encouraging a productive partnership wherever possible——

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): The right hon. Gentleman refers to activities that it was appropriate to move out of the state sector. I am sure that he will agree that there are some activities for which privatisation is quite inappropriate and which should not be moved out of the public sector. When the present Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was the Attorney-General, he said that among the things that should not be moved out of core governmental work was work relating to national security or with other specially sensitive implications.

In that context, will the right hon. Gentleman comment on the recent decision of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to approve market testing of security work carried out for members of the public in Northern Ireland who are regarded as being under a particular terrorist threat? Does the right hon. Gentleman regard it as appropriate that that activity, which is especially sensitive and which relates to national security, should now be moved out of the core of Government?

Mr. Waldegrave: Doubtless my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will observe closely the conditions that the hon. Gentleman has quoted back at him. It is impossible for me to assess a particular case, but such considerations must certainly be high on the list that it would be proper for the Secretary of State to have before him when considering contracting any such activities out. It must be right to emphasise that.

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Govan): The Minister said that he wanted to clarify the activities that needed to be undertaken in the public sector and the activities that could be moved to the private sector: some activities could be moved while others could not. Does he agree that he is assuming that things should automatically go out to the private sector unless they have to be kept in the public sector? He is not saying, "Let us consider whether activities can better be undertaken in the public or the private sector." He is starting from the assumption that it is better for them to be out of the public sector. That does not give those providing services in the public sector a fair chance of competing. The right hon. Gentleman is weighing the balance ideologically.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. He has not quite understood my position, and it is helpful that he has given me an opportunity to clarify it. Where a policy decision is taken that the state is involved in an activity in which it need not be involved, that is a proper activity for privatisation, but where the policy decision is that responsibility should remain with the state and accountability should remain with Ministers, it is right to market-test, but there must be, and must be seen to be, a level playing field between in-house potential bidders and any out-of-house contractors. I shall come to some assurances on that in a moment.

There are matters in which public and private sectors can co-operate. Obvious potential candidates are transport and construction, and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced in his autumn statement measures to stimulate such partnerships.

At the same time, there are other opportunities for a constructive and efficient partnership. Some activities may still clearly need to be the ultimate responsibility of the public sector, as I said to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson), but can be contracted out none the less. The process of deciding whether contracting out will be the most efficient way of carrying out a function is called market testing. It works by putting the function in question out to competitive tender, with internal and external bids assessed against the same criteria. That is another key approach in our reforms of public service management. In some respects, local government is ahead of central Government in applying it; yet, like privatisation, it has relevance to a wide range of Government activities.

Results so far are encouraging, as the benefits of the process are twofold: first, it is axiomatic that where an activity is market-tested and an external bid succeeds, it will be because we can get the quality of service we need at better value for money than under the current method of provision; secondly, where an in-house bid succeeds, the process of opening up that public sector activity to competition in itself often creates opportunities for greater effectiveness. Consequently, in central Government, savings arising from market testing, at any rate in its initial stages, have typically been around 25 per cent. of the original cost even where the activity has remained in-house.

Elsewhere in the public service, much has been going on; in the NHS, market testing has been mandatory in some support areas since 1983. In 1990-91, that produced savings of over £120 million, as well as other benefits through improved management and service standards.

In the services provided by local government, compulsory competitive tendering to stimulate greater efficiency and to secure better value through competition between in-house organisations and private contractors has been going on for many years, and, as studies by the Audit Commission and INLOGOV have shown, has produced savings of, for instance, up to 15 per cent. in building cleaning and 10 per cent. in refuse collection, with improvements in the clarity and objectiveness of contract standards.

That is a valuable start, but, as I said, market testing, particularly in central Government, is still at an early stage. The White Paper makes it clear that the targets agreed for market testing for central Government activities in the period until September 1993 are enormously more ambitious than anything undertaken so far. Targets have been set for more than 20 Government Departments covering activities valued at about £1·5 billion—a more than fiftyfold increase over last year's targets.

Those activities, which the White Paper lists, range from building and estate management to internal audit, from typing services and pensions administration to information technology and training. The list clearly shows that the scope for contracting out has moved beyond the longer-established examples of support services such as catering and cleaning to activities that have traditionally been somewhat more protected from comparison with the outside world.

Mr. Trimble: The Minister is talking about contracting out—or the possibility of contracting out—to the private sector a whole range of activities in addition to those that he mentioned earlier. Has he considered the implications of bids coming from the private sector outside the United Kingdom? With the single market and modern communications, and given that back office work can be located some distance away, a significant amount of that work—particularly that of a more general clerical nature—could be contracted out to people outside the United Kingdom. Are the Government aware of the problem, and are they likely to introduce safeguards to protect against it?

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that I am right in saying that we would breach European Community single market rules if we did not advertise such contracts in the European Community journal. There is nothing new about that. When I first arrived in the Environment Department as a junior Minister, all the rate support grant work of the sort that the House debated after the Secretary of State's statement earlier this afternoon was done on American computers and bounced back over the Atlantic off satellites, because there were no computers in Britain which were big enough to handle it, which seems rather extraordinary. So there is nothing new about this.

The possibility raised by the hon. Member for Govan is conceivably real, although I doubt that it will be real in terms of the sort of work that he has specified. It is more likely that foreign-owned companies might win part of the work, but I do not think that there is any objection to that.

Mr. Davidson *rose*——

Mr. Trimble *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: I must get on. Perhaps the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) wants to intervene once more.

Mr. Trimble: The Minister says that he does not think the problem will be serious. I assure him that it may be a serious problem for Northern Ireland, which has the only land frontier in the United Kingdom. I do not think that he should discount the extent of the problem in the south of England. The continent is not that far away.

Mr. Waldegrave: The benefit of the single market is that we are part of the continent, according to my political perception. The single market works both ways. It is possible for private sector companies to get work from other countries. I have no doubt that some of them get work from the United Kingdom or from other Governments in Europe.

Mr. Davidson: Does the Minister agree that there is a genuine danger that data processing work could end up going to other parts of the world? Is he aware that a company in the Philippines has bid for data processing work for the Metropolitan police? As I understand it, the company meets all the criteria. That puts a different slant on the Government's dispersal policy. The Government have a view on dispersing civil service and Government work from the south-east of England. I am in favour of that because I should like to see work dispersed to areas such as mine, not to areas such as the Philippines. Does the Minister agree that there is a genuine danger under his policy that work will go to all the airts and pairts, not to areas to which the Government would want it to go?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is scaring himself unnecessarily. I believe that he is a sensible man. He, like hon. Members on this side, has argued passionately for the ratification of a GATT agreement to free international trade. One of the results of freeing international trade is that such trade takes place, and that must be welcomed. It is unlikely that there would be international trade in software, because the British software industry is extremely strong. However, if we have international trade in software, we must judge the benefit of such trade to the consumer and to citizens against other considerations.

[Mr. Waldegrave]

We should not frighten ourselves too much. After all, local government, which has undertaken competitive tendering for years, has not yet managed to transfer all its work to the Philippines, as far as I know.

I know that public service employees, the unions, Opposition Members and, indeed, those on the left in politics often express opposition to market testing. The view is not unanimous. Among those who have paid tribute to the opportunities and results of market testing are contributors to the Institute for Public Policy Research/Trades Union Congress publication "Meeting Needs in the 1990s" who acknowledge:

> "There have been gains from Government legislation . . . the councillors had organised services but they had never specified what those services had to achieve. Now they have had to make the governmental decision—they have had to choose what standards of service they want".

Two years later we find the general secretary of the Federated Union of Managerial and Professional Officers in local government writing in *The Times:*

> "there is no doubt that it"—

compulsory competitive tendering—

> "sharpens up the way that we manage services".

Nevertheless, people continue to be concerned. Some of that concern comes from defence of the existing status quo and an unwillingness to see whether services can be better provided—indeed, from traditional producer vested interests. I cannot deal with that concern, but some concern comes from misunderstanding and can be addressed.

Ms. Mowlam: It would be helpful if the Minister did not continue to quote selectively from documents. The conference of the IPPR/TUC to which he referred acknowledged that there were some pluses for examining efficiency through market testing. However, it did not follow the Minister's logic on the concept of contracting out as one option and privatisation as another. Equally, many local authorities, including Mr. Jeremy Beecham from Newcastle—whom the Minister seems to quote all the time—voluntarily acknowledged the value of competitive tendering before the Government put the other C in front to make it compulsory.

Mr. Waldegrave: That is no more or less than what I was saying. I was not claiming support for privatisation; I had departed from that part of my speech. I was claiming support for the process of competitive tendering, which, as the hon. Lady confirmed, is widespread among some local authorities—although, I must say, not all.

Let me deal with some of the concerns which I may be able to put to rest. Although the White Paper sets clear targets for the amount of Government activity which is to be contracted out, it would be meaningless to set such targets because we have no preconceived view of whether any particular function can be more cost-effectively provided in-house or on a contracted-out basis. The result in each case will depend on the outcome of the competitive tendering process. So there is no hidden agenda. The House well knows that, when we believe it is right to privatise, we do so. We have no need for hidden agendas. Market testing is first and foremost a management reform within the continuing public sector.

Let there be no doubt that what we are talking about here is the explanation of functions to see whether they can be carried out more cost-effectively in partnership with the private sector. Those functions are, by implication, activities which are considered to be essential. They will still be carried out—and carried out better than before this exercise. The work and the jobs needed to do it will continue to exist. Even when the market testing of an activity results in a contract being placed with the private sector, Government employees may be redeployed or taken on by the new contractor. That has happened in the vast majority of cases over the last four years.

In addition, let me make it clear that Departments which achieve savings through market testing and contracting out will be able to apply those savings for the benefit of their programmes. This policy was set out in the "Competing for Quality" White Paper which launched market testing in the civil service last year. It has not changed.

There will, of course, still be very substantial areas of activity which, after review, it is agreed should be left in the public sector and still be carried out by the public sector. We aim to improve management standards by looking for other ways of exerting an equivalent discipline to that of competition. Indeed, it is essential that we do so, since, when there is no choice, the supplier has a greater, not a lesser, responsibility to the customer.

Much is being done to promote better management in these areas. We are getting decent financial management systems in public services. We have now established in most public services proper purchaser/provider relationships as the basis for their operations. We have freed managers to use their delegated budgetary powers to buy services wherever they can find the best deal for their customers.

The creation of executive agencies has had a dramatic effect on Civil Service management. The agencies are run by chief executives who are usually appointed by open competition, ensuring we have the best person for the job from inside or outside the civil service. All agencies have published framework documents setting out key objectives, responsibilities and targets, set annually by Ministers and monitored by them. They have published annual reports and accounts and, in many cases, corporate and business plans. About half of all civil servants now work in executive operations run on those lines. By 1995, that number could be as high as three quarters. That means that, within a few years, the civil service is likely to consist of a relatively small policy-making core, and a series of devolved delivery organisations. Some of them will, by themselves, be as large as or larger than the core and will be expected to focus increasingly on their customers.

The citizens charter White Paper shows that agencies are indeed delivering a better service to their customers. Services are now being delivered quicker: for example, the Driving Standards Agency has reduced waiting times for a driving test to just over five weeks as against 13 weeks in 1988, and the average time for issue of a passport by the United Kingdom Passport Agency has come down from 3·5 weeks in 1988 to seven days. Agencies are carrying out research to find out what their customers want and agencies like Companies House and the Public Record Office have introduced longer opening hours in response to public demand. All agencies now publish full information on their activities and the way that taxpayers' money is being used in their annual reports and accounts.

Next week I shall be publishing the third annual review of the next steps programme, which will give detailed information on all the agencies set up so far and other organisations established on a next steps basis, together with information about future candidates and an overview of the effectiveness of the programme as a whole. This so-called next steps structure opens up the opportunity for delegation of managerial responsibility and accountability to a degree that had previously been impossible. The central Departments will be the more able to help agencies take advantage of this opportunity under the enabling provisions of the Civil Service (Management Functions) Bill which has just finished its Committee stage.

Of course, the operations of the delivery organisations —the executive agencies—may in time suggest further scope for change and improvement. I am concerned to establish an adequate balance between stability and the need to take advantage of further developments. Once an agency has been set up, the question whether privatisation has become a serious possibility should be considered during the review of the framework document—usually after three years of operation. If privatisation has become a serious possibility, it should be investigated fully. If agency status is confirmed once the review is completed, people will have reasonable security from further upheavals ahead of them.

Thus, we are setting in place throughout the public service a clear structure of management by service agreement, with Departments purchasing from private or public sector, the services that the public need against charter principles and charter targets. That that is the right way forward is again not just a view from the right. The former general secretary of the Fabian Society, who writes in the current edition of the *Fabian Review* argues:

"the model developed in the NHS reforms of splitting the function of purchasers from that of provider should be applied throughout the public services".

That is my objective too.

Finally, the citizens charter underpins and links all the different initiatives that I have described.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster says that he is reaching the end of his speech, and I must express some disappointment about one subject that he has missed. He began in good style, reminding us of the events of the winter of discontent. It is crucial for Opposition Members—as it is for Conservative Members—to say that such behaviour is totally unacceptable and that we have no intention of allowing such developments again. Without doing so, we stand little chance of success. The right hon. Gentleman also made much of the importance of the customer in services and that is right because it is proper in principle and because there are a lot of votes in it—we should not think that that means that it is a wrong principle.

During the past 14 years, the Government's attitude to people who work in the public sector has changed. Many such workers, including my constituents, feel that, rather than first-class, they have been made third or fourth-class citizens. The right hon. Gentleman is far too civilised to make statements similar to those that his colleagues have made about people who deliver services. Does he care to comment on how he values public sector workers, and on the fact that in any discussion of improvements in the delivery of services—which is crucial—a secondary but important matter is how we treat and pay our staff?

I listened to the Chancellor, but when he talked about improving services he never mentioned what he will do about some of the appallingly low wages in the public sector. As part of the process of more open government, will he tell us how many public sector workers still earn wages which qualify them for family credit?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman with the factual answer to his last question.

In the earlier part of my speech I paid tribute—perhaps too briefly—to workers in the public sector. It is difficult to do so without it sounding like a cliché, but my tribute was real and the hon. Gentleman's point is well taken. I tried to argue that case with the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). It is just as foolish to say that all private sector workers are bad as it is to say that all public sector workers are bad. If some Conservative Members hold the latter view, they are mistaken—just as the few Opposition Members who held the opposite view, and who persecuted the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) in his constituency, are wrong.

The citizens charter programme gives the Conservative party and the Government the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to the need for long-term public services. I was happy to join the hon. Member for Redcar to make that commitment yesterday, and to pay tribute to those who work in the service. I do not believe that that relieves us—the public sector—from the relentless pursuit of efficiency in the interests of the services that we provide. I know that the hon. Member for Birkenhead would not think that it did. Therefore, I respond warmly to his invitation to pay tribute again to public sector workers. They are not third or fourth-class citizens, and they are both providers and consumers of the services that we are trying to improve.

The principles of the charter—standards, information and openness, choice and consultation, courtesy and helpfulness, redress for mistakes, and value for money—are especially important in those areas of Government which are not subject to ordinary competitive pressures. The more we devolve management responsibility, the more explicit we must make the public service principles and ethos that we want to run through all those devolved organisations.

Hon. Members will find, both in the first report on the charter, and in the many individual published charters, innumerable specific examples of how those principles are being implemented. The more we establish throughout the public service the new structure of management by clear service agreement—whether contract, framework agreement or internal service-level agreement—the more powerful the mechanism becomes for delivering those charter standards and ensuring better public service provision.

I hope that I have made clear to the House the nature and scale of the changes and improvements that the Government have, and are continuing to introduce into the public service. I also hope that Opposition Members will be able to move beyond their sterile belief that, if only some huge but usually unspecified increase in resources could be made available and given to existing provider organisations, all would be well. Poor services do not come free or cheap either, as was discovered in the 1960s and 1970s. For any given level of resources, it is always possible to provide better services, which are more cost-effective and more responsive to the needs of the citizen and customer. It is the Government's constant and fundamental aim to ensure that that happens.

6.27 pm

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): I welcome the debate. It would be churlish of me not to do so, since I asked for it and the Minister granted it so quickly. He would have been disingenuous if he had not known when he granted it that the Government were going to publish the citizens charter White Paper the day before, so it allows time for another four or six hours of debate on the matter in the House.

I am pleased that, in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster acknowledged his support for public sector workers. Charming though he may be at times, his colleagues are not charming to the public sector, which causes great concern to the many people who work in it. I am sad that he could not express such charitable views on local authorities. The right hon. Gentleman said that he found the work that York he had been doing interesting. It would have done him no harm to say that York and many other local authorities did a good job on charters in response to quality services before he or the Prime Minister dreamed of nicking our idea. That would have been a positive step.

As the right hon. Gentleman keeps trying to cosy up in this debate and to say how often the two sides of the House agree, it would be useful to put on record briefly the aspects of public services management about which we agree, or do not agree. First, both sides agree about the need for quality public services. Another point we have in common is that the Opposition also believe that a citizens charter is one mechanism to improve the quality of public sector services—we wrote about the concept before the Conservatives had even thought about it, and many local authorities implemented it before then.

We differ drastically with the Government about the mechanisms by which quality services are achieved. We believe that they are best achieved at the local level, with local accountability and with people being held accountable for the services that are offered by the local authoritiy or other local body.

The Government take the opposite position. They believe that quality services are achieved—the Minister said it more clearly than I have ever heard it said—by direct privatisation, by market testing as a precursor to considering an outside bid. That involves contracting out of the national civil service or the next steps executive agencies. Although the latter are at present operating at arm's length, in terms of their framework document, they could be privatised in the future.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Is the hon. Lady saying that she is totally opposed to market testing now and for all time, even if it is shown that savings of perhaps 25 per cent. could be achieved by using market testing? Those savings could be re-employed to improve the quality of the services.

Ms. Mowlam: I have no objection to the use of indicators of a quantitative and qualitative nature to test the services of a Government Department or local authority.

Mr. Brandreth: Oh?

Ms. Mowlam: The hon. Gentleman expresses surprise. Local authorities have been doing that for ages. They may not have put the same label as the Government on the activity, but many efficient local authorities and other bodies have been doing it. So I agree with increased efficiency and the use of internal mechanisms to achieve it, and we can discuss many of them.

I disagree with the way in which the Government are hiding behind market testing and, instead of saying, "We are putting this out to competitive tender," are avoiding using that language. Had the Minister made the position clear and said that the Government were putting this or that out to competitive tender, large sections of the national civil service would have been aware of precisely what the Government were doing. People get a totally different view when the Minister says, "We shall do market tests and look at external contracts and so on," and dresses the whole thing up in language of that type.

Mr. Waldegrave: I said that market testing was the precursor, should outside bids be better, to contracting out. I am not sure that the hon. Lady answered my hon. Friend the Member for the City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth). Is she in favour of market testing as a mechanism?

Ms. Mowlam: I have no difficulty in looking for quality and efficiency of service using quantitative and qualitative indicators. I am not satisfied when market testing is put in the context used by the right hon. Gentleman today, which is in preparation for competitive tendering—*[Interruption.]* Does the right hon. Gentleman find my remarks confusing? What is his problem?

The right hon. Gentleman described the competitive tendering which the Government are intent on implementing as taking place on a level playing field, and I hoped from what he said that he intended to describe the nature of the playing field, but he did not do that. I shall show how the playing field is far from level, which causes much of the problem. The Minister puts on a facade of citizens charter quality services, but beneath that lies his desire for a very different national civil service.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): The hon. Lady is discussing an important and interesting point and I am unclear about precisely what she is saying about her attitude and that of the Opposition to market testing. She said that she was in favour of market testing, except in the context of competitive tendering. Is she aware that market testing and competitive tendering are absolutely integrally related? I hope that she will clarify the point. We shall make considerable progress if she does.

Ms. Mowlam: Let us stay with the point until it is resolved.

Mr. Frank Field: What is my hon. Friend against?

Ms. Mowlam: I shall tell my hon. Friend what I am against. We are against compulsory competitive tendering if it represents the privatisation of our national civil service. Once that has been privatised and there is trouble with contracts that have been put out to competitive tender, there will be nothing left of the civil service to which to complain. If those responsible make some of the mistakes that local authorities have made, where shall we go from there? There will not be a national civil service to deliver what the citizens have a right to demand.

It is important to appreciate precisely what I am saying, because many Opposition Members have experience of local government and know what delivering quality service is about. We believe in having the ability to measure efficient quality so that, for example, cost centres in local government can be compared. We can thereby reveal efficient ways to improve a service.

In that context, it is still a public service and it is accountable to the citizen. The service has not been contracted out or privatised, at which stage it is not accountable to anybody but is run by private companies which are driven by the profit motive and which believe in short-termism. Their activities are certainly not based on the long-term interests of the people.

Mr. Davidson: Does my hon. Friend agree that market testing is being used by the Government artificially to divide the various functions of Government—for example, by taking the clerical services out of a general activity and creating sub-units which are tendered in a disruptive manner and in such a way that the various sections are not able to come together to provide a unified whole and a better service? That is market testing designed to disrupt and destroy a service rather than enabling like with like to be compared on an external basis.

Ms. Mowlam: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention, which helps to show why the national civil service and local authorities, as they have functioned in the past, are important.

Mr. Robert Jackson: It becomes clear that the hon. Lady is in favour of market testing on the basis that no contract is awarded to any outside bidder.

Ms. Mowlam: We have discussed matters of this type time and again. We want a national civil service that is part of the nation's heritage. We want it to be efficient and to deliver what the people need—*[Interruption.]* The Chancellor of the Duchy seems to find that amusing. What we are debating is crucial to the future of our nation. We must have a civil service that delivers to the people the quality services to which they are entitled.

We accept the need for increased efficiency. That involves having indicators and testing, nationally or decentralised, to achieve the delivery of quality services. But it is clear from the Minister's remarks that the Government do not believe in a national civil service. They want it divided up into next steps agencies, privatised or, in some limited cases, remaining with Government. That would give us a totally different animal from what we want for the future.

We accept that it may be necessary for a Department to contract out the odd service. I have explained that local authorities have been doing that for years. A small rural local authority will contract out, say, its legal system because it is more cost-effective. The Government have not given a democratic choice for people to achieve that type of accountability at the local level. Their plan is compulsory, even though the Minister talks about the way in which it would be a good idea to decentralise certain matters. He says that national Government should not dictate. What is compulsory competitive tendering?

It is not as though the right hon. Gentleman is allowing local authorities the right to decide what services to run and how to run them. Local authorities have elections to make them accountable. Instead of having the ability to choose, they are being told that compulsory competitive tendering must be the way forward. That is the degree of centralised control that the Minister is imposing on them.

I hope I have explained the view of the Opposition to the satisfaction of Conservative Members. There are certain crucial differences between the two sides of the House. We believe in local accountability, while Conservative Members do not. We believe in quality services and that they cannot be achieved simply by privatisation. I will give some examples to show why privatisation is not the answer.

As I listened to the Chancellor of the Duchy, I presumed that he had again been reading the book from which he often quotes, "Reinventing Government" by Gaebler and Osborne. The Library copy has gone missing, so it is difficult for me to check whether the structure of what the right hon. Gentleman is proposing is in conformity with that publication. If he has it, we would welcome its return to the Library.

My hon. Friends and I have a commitment to the public sector which the Government do not have. The right hon. Gentleman said at the conclusion of his remarks that he agreed that the public sector was important. If he believes in the future of the public sector, I should appreciate it if he and the Financial Secretary would distance themselves from the Treasury and say that they disagree with the Treasury document issued in 1991 called "Selling Services into Wider Markets". That document states:

> "The Government's policy is to restrict the size of the public sector and in general the presumption is that services should wherever possible be provided by the private sector rather than the public sector . . . This presumption applies in particular where a public body would be competing with the private sector".

I presume that when the Minister says, as he did today and yesterday, that he wants to continue with the public sector, he disagrees with the Treasury.

Mr. Waldegrave: When the civil service trade unions used that quotation to make the same point, I wrote to the *Financial Times*—the hon. Lady may have seen my letter—making it clear that that guidance is about the completely different subject of trading. It is no secret that the Government and, I suspect, the modern Labour party are against state trading. If there is a trading activity, the presumption is that it should be in the private sector. If state organisations want to expand their trading, they cannot do it on the basis of their privileged access to public sector borrowing but should be privatised.

Ms. Mowlam: Then the Minister will distance himself from his statement to *The Times* conference in June, when he stated clearly that he believed that the private sector was superior to the public sector in delivering services. The Minister cannot have it both ways. He keeps saying that the public sector is far superior and that he wants to keep it, but when we get down to the detail of what the Government want, we find that they want to privatise the public sector.

As I have tried to explain to Ministers, the private sector model cannot be imported into the public sector because the private sector is driven primarily by profits and short termism. It is demand-led to satisfy the customer. In a demand-led system with limited resources—the public sector—one must decide between the allocation of resources, make political decisions and be

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held accountable. Local democracy and public sector services are important because it is crucial for the public sector to remain in control.

The Minister said that both sides of the House agree on the citizens charter, but the Labour party holds a different concept of the citizens charter. The Minister's view of the citizens charter is that individuals who pay council or poll tax receive services in return. That is a direct contract, just as in the private sector, between the individual and the local authority.

The difference is that the Labour party views the citizens charter more broadly, believing that citizens have rights and that they support services which they do not necessarily use. I have no children but I believe that local authorities should provide services for children. Similarly, I believe that community care, such as care for the elderly, should be provided by local authorities. That is not a direct contractual relationship between individual and provider, which is how the Government perceive the citizens charter. It is a fundamental difference in belief about the role of the individual in relation to the community.

For the Labour party, citizens' rights are not just about the consumer contracts which the Government are trying to provide but about access to information and choice, and equal treatment. We consider those matters to be crucial, which is why we find the Government's hypocrisy so bad when they try to deny access and information to the individual. It was made clear yesterday in the discussion on legal aid. How can the Government say that they are interested in increasing access and information to the individual when they are taking people out of legal aid and allowing only the very rich or very poor to have a chance to use the legal system? No wonder the public are cynical about the Government's belief in the citizens charter and individual rights. For us, accountability is crucial.

Towards the end of his speech, the Minister said how efficiently next step agencies had been performing. I have a couple of statistics that contradict that. The right hon. Gentleman said that the agencies had met their financial targets and some of their standards. The quality targets for 1991 show that only 37 of 53 quality targets, 20 of 28 financial targets, and 28 of 38 efficiency targets were achieved. The Central Office of Information, the National Weights and Measures Laboratory, Vehicle Certification, and Veterinary Medicine achieved not a single quality target.

In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead, the Minister said that pay in the next steps agencies remained comparable. Let us take, for example, the pay negotiations with Her Majesty's Stationery Office. The Treasury target of £4 million meant that the pay settlement for HMSO workers had to be delayed for four months because the agency could not meet the targets set by the Treasury and still pay the HMSO employees the amount that they had been promised. In the end, it was able to offer only 4·7 per cent., which was not the target set elsewhere.

The Minister's suggestion hat the next steps agencies are meeting those quality targets, that the service in the next steps agencies is up to scratch or that the workers are receiving a fair wage when they are taken out of the direct national civil service is belied by the facts.

The subject of ministerial accountability for next steps agencies has been discussed in the House on numerous occasions. The thousands of letters that Opposition Members receive about disability living allowance problems are legendary. I received a wonderful letter dated 12 November about a constituent in South Bank in Cleveland. We wrote to ask for compensation or an apology from the DLA agency and, after months of delay, that benefit agency finished its letter by saying:

> "Would you please convey to Mr. and Mrs. . . . my sincere apologies".

That is the degree of direct communication between the Department and individuals. If that is the quality service in next steps agencies which the Minister mentioned, the delays in which affect people surviving on minimal benefit under disability living, no wonder Opposition Members are cynical.

If the Minister is committed to quality public services, why cannot he understand—anybody in the private sector will tell him—that, when there is low staff morale and a constant air of uncertainty in an organisation—a sword of Damocles hanging over civil servants' heads day in and day out—we cannot achieve high quality services and encourage people to work efficiently. It undermines much of the good work that has been done in the civil service and civil servants' desire to improve the quality.

The Minister also discussed local authorities and, where contracting out had taken place, how the Audit Commission and the Institute of Local Government Studies had said that they had met their financial targets and therefore things were looking great. May I give some statistics which show that, although they may have met their financial targets, the quality of service that they offered was so poor that many of their contracts had to be cancelled and the service taken back in house.

For example, in the building cleaning section, 39 per cent. of contracts across local authorities are held by the private sector. There have been problems with more than a quarter of those contracts, leading to almost one in 10 of them being terminated. That compares with only 3·5 per cent. of the in-house contracts being terminated. In catering, the figures are similar, with 20 per cent. of contracts held by the private sector, a quarter of which have been terminated. Only 9 per cent. of contracts in the school meals service are held in the private sector, and there have been problems with almost half of that 9 per cent. Of the in-house contracts—the majority—only four were terminated. Some 28 per cent. of refuse collection contracts are held by the private sector, and there have been problems with 40 per cent. of them, compared with problems with only 12 per cent. of those awarded to in-house contractors.

With such a record, I do not know how the Minister can say that local authorities have delivered a quality service. Contracting out has produced not quality services but the exact opposite. In answer to a question from the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), the Minister said that certain services would never be contracted out or privatised. He said that services relating to security could fall into that category.

Security in the Ministry of Defence has been privatised. It started as far back as 1980. By 1988, the MOD had issued 16 contracts to guard 44 sites. They included—as I am sure the hon. Member for Upper Bann will remember—the Royal Marine barracks at Deal, where Reliance Ltd. was responsible for security. The IRA bombing in 1989 resulted in the deaths of 11 people. In the aftermath of that bombing, a House of Commons Select Committee report finally forced the Government to review the policy of privatising security. The Committee found that there was

> "too high a turnover of staff",

and it identified low pay—to return to the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead—as a particular problem contributing to the breach of security. That is an example of a sector that the Minister said might not be privatised but where contracting out has produced unsatisfactory security arrangements.

Elsewhere in central Government, security is still being contracted out, despite the repeated experience of security companies failing to vet employees properly. The West Midlands police found that 20 per cent. of Burns International's applicants had criminal records. If we continue to privatise and contract out services when there are difficulties of low pay and poor security—as shown by the examples that I have given—we shall clearly face problems in obtaining the sort of services to which we are entitled.

Another example that the Minister gave in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson) was computerisation. The Minister gave cases involving the many contracts that go out to external companies because the in-house computers are not big enough to deal with the demand. Electronic Data Systems was given contracts to run two of the huge new social security computers in 1989, although it had previously been sacked from the English, Scottish and Northern Ireland national boards for training nurses. The English board director said that a five-year contract worth £250,000 was cancelled because

> "we were unable to test the costings given to us by EDS and couldn't tell if we were getting value for money."

If we look in detail at each of the examples given to us by the Minister this afternoon—computerisation, security, local authorities—we see examples where contracting out has not delivered adequate services. One example not yet mentioned is that of Windsor castle. Let us consider the fire there. In preparation for the privatisation of the Property Services Agency, responsibility for fire protection of royal buildings was transferred to the royal household. Therefore, the fire at Windsor castle provides the prime example of where, if the property had remained in the public sector and the Property Services Agency, pre-privatisation, had been responsible, there might—it is difficult to prove—have been a different outcome.

The Government closed the Crown Suppliers, which was responsible for providing expert advise on fire protection—*[Interruption.]* The Financial Secretary to the Treasury giggles, but the Government could not privatise that service as nobody wanted to purchase it, so they closed it. Therefore, the people responsible for providing expert advice on fire protection were not available. Given the record of those two organisations, I hope that the Government will reconsider their plans to privatise English Heritage, the only organisation left with the skill and ability to deal with the problems at Windsor castle.

The Minister mentioned confidentiality. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) spoke of the Inland Revenue, and the fear that the same confidentiality as applies in the civil service would not remain. The Minister did not mention that today. On previous occasions he has said that we are proud of the confidentiality and impartiality of the national civil service.

It would be useful if the Minister could explain the position were the Inland Revenue to be privatised. He mentioned criminal proceedings occurring "after the fact". What use is it to have confidential and price-sensitive information at the Inland Revenue if, when it is privatised, that information is then available for potential leaks to companies? In a takeover, that could make a crucial difference. It is no good stating that criminal proceedings would result, as that would be after the fact, and would be of no help to those involved in the takeover.

The secretarial and information technology services of the Inland Revenue are being put out to tender to private companies, which means that those companies will have access to the tax records of individuals and firms. A problem of confidentiality will obviously arise. Some high profile individuals and companies may have difficulty in keeping their records private.

It is interesting that Members' records are kept in a secure section—PD1—in Cardiff. It is unclear whether Members' tax returns will be privatised or put out to contract. If that section is excluded from privatisation, does it mean that the Government do not trust the private sector for Members' records but are happy to let private companies have access to everyone else's records? If Members' records are not excluded from privatisation, are Members aware that their tax and financial records are to be taken away from the civil service and placed in the hands of a private company?

Earlier today, the Minister said that he was disgusted that information on the Chancellor of the Exchequer's private finances had been leaked. I agree, but surely that provides a classic example of what can happen to confidentiality and impartiality when organisations are privatised. It is a living example on the front pages of most of today's newspapers, but it does not seem to cause concern to the Minister.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): That is the very point made by the unions at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. The agency's computer contains the criminal and medical records of people with driving licenses, which could be handed over to a private contractor.

Ms. Mowlam: I thank my hon. Friend as he has voiced our concern exactly. We are worried about the DVLA, which is why we have debated the issue a number of times in the House. We want to explain to Ministers that it is not simply a matter of privatisation, but involves obtaining quality service for individuals and our fears about the information that could come into the public domain as a result.

The Government are trying to skirt around another issue related to contracting out. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster did not mention it, but I am sure that his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will do so when he winds up the debate. I am speaking of the recent changes in the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, forced on the Government by the European Court of Justice.

Ministers present and their colleagues on the Committee on the employment Bill are trying to brush aside the fact that their entire market testing programme

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to date has sidestepped the acquired rights directive to rig the competition for contracts in favour of the private sector. The competition should be run on the basis of efficiency and best practice, but has been run on the basis of cuts in staff pay and conditions. That is why the Minister was being economical with the actualité when he said earlier that there would be a level playing field. When services have been contracted out, there has been a cut in staff pay and conditions. That is why the Government have avoided implementing the TUPE regulations. It is no good the Minister denying that.

The truth of my assertion is borne out by those people involved in contracting out who, when faced with the implementation of TUPE, have made the following comments. John Hall, the secretary of the Cleaning and Support Services Association, which represents contract cleaning companies, said of TUPE:

> "This will make tendering totally unattractive. It is staggering news. It is probably the most serious challenge ever to our industry and we will fight it tooth and nail."

Mr. Hall, who is also chairman of the Confederation of British Industry competing for quality committee, added:

> "If this clause goes on the statute book then there will be little point in our members getting involved in public sector tendering."

So it would be useful to find out about the situation with regard to TUPE. I can assure the Minister that a number of people will be taking it to the European Court if the Government try to wriggle out of it again.

On another point of clarification—my penultimate point, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I am pleased that the Financial Secretary finds that good news. I hope that he listens with as much generosity and openness when other people's jobs are put on the line as a result of this Government's policies. Those people will join the unemployment queues, and he sits there completely satisfied with the kind of policies and unemployment that this Government have brought about. I find the arrogance of Ministers like him appalling.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Have you noticed that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury has been here throughout the debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): As I have not been in the Chair for the whole of the debate, I cannot comment, but I understand that that is the case and I am sure that it has been recorded accordingly.

Ms. Mowlam: I readily acknowledge that the Financial Secretary has been here all the time. I did not deny that. I simply suggested that his attitude was arrogant when we were talking about people's jobs being under threat. That is a completely different point.

Will the Minister undertake this evening—the Minister skated over this point—to guarantee that there will always be an in-house bid for services to be contracted out? The "competing for quality" document failed to give this assurance and I believe that, in the interests of fair and open competition, the Minister ought to give it tonight. It was implied in Committee that, if there was an in-house bid, it would be accepted, and in order to be fair to employees in the civil service departments, if the Government goes ahead, there should be such an assurance.

It would also be appreciated if some assurance could be given that, if certain Departments are contracted out, there will be regulations to ensure that commercial interests are not involved. For example, if the present status of the Office of Fair Trading changes and it goes to a private contractor, there should be an assurance that the private contractor who gets the job could not have an interest in the work of the Office of Fair Trading. Quite clearly, such regulations would need to be put in place.

We believe that the citizens charter is part of the Government's plans, along with market testing, for cutting costs and—this is a crucial point—transferring responsibility for sometimes poor quality public services to individual managers and workers, who cannot hope to influence change on the scale required. Quality services require guaranteed adequate resources and highly motivated and well trained staff. The Government claim that the charter upholds the principle of free choice; the only principle guiding the Government is that the private sector knows best. Where is the choice for an individual who cannot change the person who empties the dustbins or the person who deals with tax matters?

The Opposition believe in the future of the public sector and in the quality of public services. We believe that the way in which the Government have handled the citizens charter is a cynical facade to cover the sustained destruction of the public sector and the wholesale transfer of many of its assets and responsibilities away from the citizen to private sector. That is not for the benefit of the citizens of this country.

7.3 pm

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I am very pleased to take part in this important debate. In a sense, the two opening speeches have summed up the dilemma. In my view, the solution to many of these problems is for us somehow to achieve the kind of efficiency that one sees in the best private companies, without necessarily going through the process of privatising those parts of government that do not really lend themselves sensibly to privatisation.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the citizens charter and his excellent initiatives and on much of the privatisation that has taken place so far, but sometimes, sound government, both local and central, is better than new legislation in helping us to cope with many of our problems. It is the quality of leadership and management in the public service that is crucial. Before changing structures, whether of local government, the health service or education, we ought to examine carefully why existing structures are not working—structures which until now, perhaps, have worked well and stood the test of time. As I have already said, some services do not lend themselves readily to privatisation.

The key, surely, to all this is leadership and responsibility at every level of the public service, with the Government themselves displaying those qualities as well as holding firmly to account those charged with delivering services to the public. The way in which men and women carry out their duties may be influenced largely by the leadership they are given within the structure in which they work. Perhaps some of our existing structures are now unworkable and have come to the end of their useful lives, but perhaps not. Many of them have developed and have been tried and tested, and we should give careful thought to each before changing them.

I shall give a few examples of issues which are of concern to me. The water industry has been privatised. I do not say that that is a bad thing, because I appreciate the problems in raising capital to fund much of the work that is needed. However, I am greatly concerned that enforcement, where people were polluting our waterways, was not carried out as it should have been and, as a result, many of our rivers and streams are badly polluted. Why was there not that enforcement? Why, over all those years, did the people responsible for ensuring that industries did not tip their waste into our rivers allow those industries to carry on doing just that? The responsibility lies not only with the individual who is charged with visiting those companies but with his manager and, at the end of the day, the very senior individuals in the water authorities whose job it was to make sure that rivers were not polluted. Why was that allowed to go on? Why were those responsible not brought to task?

We are now in the business of reorganising the health service. We have done that before. We had districts, which have now gone, we now have our regions and our areas. I believe that the present reorganisation will be helpful, but I want to ask one or two questions about other aspects of the health service.

I well remember talking many years ago to a consultant in the health service. He shocked me by displaying total disregard for any responsibility in his hospital for efficiency or waste—waste which he knew was taking place on a daily basis to the tune of tens of thousands of pounds. He saw it as no part of his responsibility as a medical consultant to do anything about it.

I have been particularly keen over the years to have matrons brought back into our hospitals. I wonder why they ever went. Matrons were brilliant at their job. They knew how to deal with patients and relatives, consultants and surgeons. They also kept a good eye on the efficient running of their hospital and looked out for waste. Why did they go? Whose idea was it that they should go? To a great extent, the lack of that kind of efficiency has affected our view of our hospitals and resulted in the changes that we have been forced to make.

I served on the Committee that considered the role of the health ombudsman and I was amazed at the cases that were brought before us. Often, there had been a complete breakdown in communications between doctors and patients. There was also the jargon which was used. On one occasion, we were told that the default lay with the "line manager". I made the point to the witness whom we were interviewing that there might well be line managers at Ford of Dagenham but I saw no place for them in our hospitals. That impersonal way of discussing things relates very much to the way in which people deal with each other, the kind of leadership shown in hospitals and the way in which they were organised.

In education, standards have fallen greatly in recent years. During that time, what have our inspectors, who are charged with the task of keeping up standards in schools, been doing? What have local authorities being doing all that time? Have they been doing the job that they are paid to do? I suspect not. So, because the education system is not what we want it to be, this House decides—or rather the Government decide—that drastic measures are needed to restore standards. But if the people originally charged with the responsibility for keeping up standards had done their job, perhaps the subsequent changes would not have been necessary, and many children would have had a better education.

The relationship between central and local government is extremely complicated. In the old days, it was sensible and happy; central Government decided how much local government should spend and, by and large, local government was happy to accept that money and to spend it sensibly. There was a reasonable relationship between the House and local government. Then, a few years ago, Liverpool and the Greater London Council started to behave in what the Conservative party thought was an unreasonable way. We had to take steps to change the rules and the framework, because the people who had taken control of some authorities had to be restrained.

What have we achieved so far with these changes in local government? We changed from the rates to the community charge and then from the community charge to the council tax. We are already discussing another reorganisation of the structure of local government. The basic problem remains, however. It concerns the relationship between the House and local authorities: how we trust them, how they trust us and how we work together. Unless that relationship is healthy and happy and restored to a sensible basis, no amount of changes to structure or system will bring about the sort of relationship that we want.

How much is wrong with British Rail? Is the problem its structure, or its management? I use British Rail regularly, and I think that the management of the system is what is wrong, not the system itself. How many organisations or businesses of any other kind would think of changing the structure of their organisation before being sure that the fault did not lie with the management? Now we are looking into how to make British Rail more efficient; but I strongly believe that if we change the company's structure dramatically without first having ascertained that the present one will not work much better under a different managerial system, we will do the country a great disservice. I suggest that we go slowly in this direction.

Tonight, the privatisation of Whitehall has been mentioned. It may well be a good idea. I have always thought that we have one of the best civil services in the world—it is widely respected. Perhaps it is not the most efficient of organisations, but we cannot have everything. Perhaps it is a good idea to privatise Whitehall, but for heaven's sake let us look first at ways of making our civil service much more efficient in its present form before we reach too readily for the privatisation lever.

What is the role of the Minister in all this? What is the role of our Secretaries of State in running their Departments? They have a duty to look inwards at the Departments to find out whether they can improve their running. That is part of their responsibilities.

The Inland Revenue is a good example of a body that has to be handled extremely carefully because of the confidentiality of many of its activities. It is also a good example, therefore, of why we should first try to do everything possible to make it more efficient in its present form before trying to change it radically.

The Government, they say, want to reduce legislation. They are introducing 28 Bills in this Session of Parliament —a fair amount of legislation, resulting in a lot of disruption. If changes are to be made, there will obviously

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be disruption; but unless something really needs changing, an unwarranted amount of disruption may be entailed. Sometimes that disruption lasts so long that one wonders whether it has all been worth it.

Although it may sound as though I am criticising the public services, I am not. We should appreciate the job that public servants do. If they are well led and rewarded, their job can be rewarding for them and they can provide an excellent service for us all.

I am conscious that I have posed more questions than I have answered. I have already said that I think that the citizens charter is excellent in principle. I do not suggest for a moment that privatisation is wrong; it is usually right. Nor do I suggest that structures must never be changed, but I do say that before any structure is changed, its leadership and management should be examined so as to ensure that it is the structure, not the management, that is at fault. Sometimes a fresh appraisal, a new management and a new approach are needed within existing frameworks. The quality of service to the public is often more likely to be improved by sound, firm government every day than by a never-ending flood of legislation.

7.15 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): This is the second time in the opening months of this Parliament that I have dealt with what has been termed a flagship of Government policy. The previous occasion was the debate on the poll tax legislation; now we have the citizens charter. It may be instructive to examine the reactions to those two measures to get some idea of the reaction to the Government.

The previous Prime Minister, at the end of her time in power, had a peculiar knack of splitting her party and uniting the country against her; certainly, that is what the poll tax legislation did. This Prime Minister seems to have more of a knack of making everything grey, torpid and languid—at least until recent weeks.

In debating the flagship of the Prime Minister's Administration we have a virtually empty Chamber. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster may have been hoping for some support from Back Benchers, but not many of them have shown up to offer it, and the one speech so far by a Conservative has shown at best half-hearted support. That is because the charter has been extraordinarily narrowly focused and unambitious.

The principles behind the Minister's version of the charter are, of course, shared by all in the House. He makes a great deal of welcoming support from both sides of the House, but that support is hardly surprising. Of course public services should be responsive to consumer preferences and should meet the public's need for high-quality services—no one can doubt statements put in those terms. The issues that need to be debated concern how such a charter should be shaped, how its provisions should be delivered and guaranteed and how much real change it should bring about. Unfortunately, Ministers seem content to ignore all alternative views on those matters.

The Conservative charter has been shaped too much by Ministers and by a Government who are unprepared to fund public services properly or to back the charter with full access to information. The Government's limited agenda was epitomised in the Minister's speech tonight. Contrary to the Government's view, most of the public take a more pragmatic view: they think that management can be improved, savings made and alternative avenues explored, but they also take the view that they need to know more than the Government allow them to know. They cannot trust Ministers to run every local service centrally. Above all, they take the view that many services will be improved only by greater investment in them. Why else did 78 per cent. of people polled during the general election campaign say that they were prepared to pay an extra penny in the pound on income tax to fund improvements in education?

In the House yesterday, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster spoke of the transformation of public services brought about by the citizens charter. In the past few days, I have had letters from constituents concerned about bed closures and the introduction of car park charges at my local trust hospital. I have heard from a friend stuck in the underground waiting without explanation while a tube simply did not move, and from others who daily have to stand on packed trains on their way to work.

A constituent, trying to collect his daughter from a railway station late at night, was unable to discover why the train was delayed. He telephoned Paddington but received no answer; he contacted the station but it was no longer staffed; and he telephoned the information bureau at Truro, but that was no longer staffed either. Eventually, his daughter arrived some two hours or more late.

I received a letter today from an elderly person who had received a warning of an overdue bill from what was formerly a public service, desperately upset by the tone of the letter. Many people have contacted me during recent weeks and months after experiencing problems with the disability living allowance unit and getting not so much as an answer to a telephone call or even a letter of explanation.

Those people will not recognise that there has been a transformation in public services; nor will the majority of people who regularly use public services, as opposed to Ministers who do not. The charter is weak on real commitment and vague about compensation schemes, because the funding is not there.

Having set the targets, what are the mechanisms for delivering them and making progress? When targets are not met, who will knock heads together or put in extra funding, and who will take decisions on what is needed? Where services prove that they cannot meet the standards set by the charter, will their funding be reconsidered? Shall we have a report in the Budget or autumn statement process telling us how the charter failures match up to the Government's investment proposals?

Some charter proposals are not funded at all—for example, the citizens charter set the response time for an ambulance to arrive at an emergency in rural areas at 19 minutes. In Cornwall, the health authority is dependent on the air ambulance even to come close to that target. Cornwall has many remote areas and, especially in the summer when the roads are choked with caravans, it would be ludicrous to expect land ambulances to reach people in 19 minutes. Everyone in the county knows that the air ambulance is vital, yet despite the fact that the Government say in the citizens charter that people can expect such a service, they will not fund it. It relies entirely on coffee mornings, fetes and other fund-raising events supported by the generosity of the people of Cornwall.

It is hypocritical of the Government to claim credit for the citizens charter when it is the charitable donations of a low-wage area such as Cornwall that delivers their pledges, not Government investment in order to bring services up to scratch.

Another example of how the Government's supposed transformation of a public service, its management and the delivery of the service does not come up to scratch was the recent decision, approved by Offer, the Office of Electricity Regulation—the body which is supposed to protect the ordinary public—to increase electricity prices in the far south-west by 5 per cent. and to cut electricity prices for those nearer to power stations. Businesses therefore face a 10 per cent. price differential in areas where the costs of running those businesses are already higher than in most parts of the country.

Not only are people suffering from that increase, but when I raised the matter with a Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry, he was not even aware of it. When Conservative Members of Parliament from the south-west told the Prime Minister that their seats were at risk to the Liberal Democrats because of that decision, he did not know what was happening.

The transformation in public services is not an improvement. All that has changed is that things get worse and Ministers and Prime Ministers no longer know what is going on in the basic services on which people rely in their homes and businesses.

The basic elements of a good service may be obvious, but to what extent did Ministers consult to discover which aspects of services people felt were most in need of improvement? Too much of the early round of the citizens charter consisted of asking Ministers and civil servants what targets they should be setting, not asking the people on the receiving end what they needed, be they suffering from a disability, in education or the consumers of a service.

Have the Government insisted, Department by Department, on proper, early and responsive consultation with the users of public services in future before setting the charters and updating them? Too often Ministers have answered the questions themselves, guided by their own ideological assumptions about what people ought to want and ought to know, not what they want and what they want to know.

An example of that is the school league tables. Did Ministers ask parents' representatives what kind of information would be useful to them in choosing a school for their children? I do not mean at a meeting of the Conservative supper club or at a Conservative fete or raffle. Did they comprehensively and rigorously consult to discover what people wanted?

Parents point out that exam results are not the be-all and end-all. They are concerned about the atmosphere in a school, the quality of the facilities and class sizes. Above all, they recognise that the social background of pupils will have an impact on examination results, making comparisons of raw results difficult or even meaningless.

Information is a good thing, but it must be adequately provided in the form which people want and in which they can use it. The Audit Commission has shown that value-added league tables can work, but the Government have still made no pledge to publish such information in a form which will be readily usable. They tell us that parents will be able to obtain the information from the tables. The Government could not even get the data in the tables right, so how do they expect parents to extract that information? The Government design systems too much to suit their own political priorities and not enough to suit those of the consumer.

That brings me to an essential point in the process. Ministers like to stress the importance of information, but they must be prepared to accept the pressing need for a freedom of information Act. Citizens are free only if they have rights of access to information at their determination, at their choice, not merely to information that Ministers choose to deliver to them.

As I said yesterday, in the documents that we now have, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is reported to have pressed his colleagues, Alan Clark and the noble Lord Trefgarne, to make available to the public information on the reinterpretation of the guidelines governing Iraqi arms sales, but that advice was not followed. The Minister lost his argument.

Now that he is in a stronger position, he should be pressing the Government for a freedom of information Act. Such legislation would have made it unnecessary for us to rely on him in his losing battle or on the chance decision of a judge in court to make the information available. Above all, individuals would have been able to rely on the legislation in order not to be sent to prison when not only were they not breaking the rules but they were being encouraged by Ministers to act as they did.

For a Government to hail the citizens charter as a flagship policy yet to refuse to give the public the basic entitlement to information that a freedom of information Act would provide, suggests once more that the citizens charter is shaped more by what Ministers decide that people should know, rather than what the public want and need to know.

The Government are repeatedly criticised for their changes to legal aid and for tackling the problem of lengthy cases and the costs to which they give rise not by reforming the system, to make it easier to obtain access to justice, but by cutting back finance to limit the numbers who can hope to have any chance of enjoying justice in the first place. The question is not whether a public or private service, or public individuals or private individuals, are involved. Everyone should be able to seek redress through the courts without being financially blocked. We hear no complaints about that from Ministers with responsibility for the citizens charter.

I do not deny the need for an efficient and value-for-money civil service; nor do I deny that there can be real value in market testing, but it must be used with discretion—on that, the Minister is woolly and unclear. Neither he nor anyone else has expressed concern about confidentiality within the Inland Revenue, yet everyone accepts its importance because there can scarcely be an area of government where confidence in the security of information can be more important to the ordinary person.

Only today, we saw how unreliable confidentiality can be in the public sector. I was appalled when I saw the front page of *The Sun* this morning, but not because of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's actions. I overheard one hon. Member—his identity and party do not matter—say, "Mind you, it looks like his account is in pretty much the same state as mine." I suspect that is the general reaction—but most members of the public would not

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expect to see such details about themselves on the front page of *The Sun* and repeated on the front page of the *Evening Standard* tonight.

I do not suggest that any privatisation will necessarily undermine the charter's confidentiality clause, but confidentiality is crucial in the case of the Inland Revenue—and, as there is no problem with that Department, if it is not broken, why try to mend it?

There is a silly continuing debate about who first thought of the citizens charter. My right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) published his book, "Citizen's Britain", and then Labour and the Government published their charters. They are merely different interpretations of party interests in serving the system better. My right hon. Friend's book came first, but we should not make anything of that.

Different views are expressed in the House about what should be done. The Government are market-orientated and tend to assume that if something is market-tested or privatised, it is likely to become better—unless someone can prove otherwise. Probably, the proof of that pudding will only be in the eating.

Members of Labour's Front Bench—perhaps because civil service trade unions are a little too influential—tend to protect the status quo and the public sector. Inevitably perhaps, my party tends to call for more root-and-branch reform of the way that our democracy works. It is not just a question of localising and decentralising, in which I support Ministers. It is a question of giving ordinary individuals real political control, of decentralising political control as well as management, in both central and local government, as Tower Hamlets has done with its neighbourhood councils; of giving the public more control—not of privatising services but of democratising them; and of not having schools opting out of local democracy but giving them even more of it and of maintaining local democratic control over those schools.

It is a question, too, of a far-reaching root-and-branch reform with a Bill of Rights, so that the public can have real access to justice and freedom of information. That is the kind of citizens charter that we need and the kind of citizen's Britain that we need—but it is the kind of agenda that the Government signally fail to address.

7.34 pm

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) referred to the number of right hon. and hon. Members present in the Chamber, but omitted to touch on the quality. Were the Liberal Democrat Benches stuffed to overflowing, they would not present quite as much intellectual firepower as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Civil Service, seated alone on the Government Front Bench. Throw in the Whip, my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick), and add my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for the Duchy of Lancaster and one is talking about a veritable All Souls on wheels.

I would not throw myself into that intellectual cocktail, but it is worth recording that the last occasion on which I spoke in the presence of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State was a quarter of a century ago, when sitting at our feet admiring us was the President-elect of the United States. He went west, and it worked out slightly differently for him.

The civilised nature of this debate might suggest that there is no real division between the two sides of the House, but I suspect that there is—despite the courtesies that pass to and fro. Opposition Members give the impression that they are determined to see the worst in everything, whereas my right hon. and hon. Friends and I are determined to bring out the best, particularly in our public services.

Since the arrival of the citizens charter, Opposition Members have been cynical at worst, sneering at best, and grudging with their praise. Perhaps they are irritated because, having thought of it first, they were not quick enough off the mark in making the public realise that, or perhaps because we thought of it first. That is a foolish game to play.

More seriously, perhaps Opposition Members are irritated that ordinary people believe that the charter stands for something important. The Opposition's patronising attitude towards the charter annoys those who use it not simply to obtain a better level of service for themselves but to deliver better services to others.

The charter and the new office that it creates will, for the first time, offer accessibility, courtesy, punctuality, and openness—all central to the agenda of public service. Opposition Members dismiss the charter as gloss, public relations, and hype—not realising that those who use our public services are crying out for higher standards, and that the providers of our public services want to do a better job. Many of them welcome the challenge that the charter presents, and are proud of the charter mark.

I have long wondered why there is only one Monopolies Commission, so I warmly welcome the fact that public bodies having that monopolistic status—such as the Benefits Agency and the courts—are to be confronted by a series of ever more stringent standards, designed to deliver the best service and value for money. Being treated courteously and quickly by a named official is not trivial but a fundamental change of approach. Standards are important, but so are incentives, and for half a million civil servants now to receive performance-related pay is as it should be.

The good news is, all that is begining to work. After yesterday's statement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy, I mentioned that I happened to be the grateful recipient of a refund from British Rail after travelling on a severely delayed train. Of course we would all prefer our trains not to be late; but the refund not only compensated me completely for the money that I had spent and lost, but will help, cumulatively, to concentrate the mind of British Rail.

At this point, the Opposition will no doubt cry—certainly they should cry—that the answer lies in further investment. So it does, but it does not inevitably and solely lies in further cash investment. Investment is also possible in terms of better management, better practice and better service.

The British Rail passengers charter, published in March —happily, on my birthday; I see the whole thing in personal terms, and the joy of the citizens charter is the way in which it relates to the citizen as an individual—is just one part of a package of measures designed to make life easier for the rail traveller. The targets have been set;

performance is being monitored, and the results are being published; fares are being adjusted to take account of different standards of service on different routes.

Previously, such disciplines have been conspicuous by their absence. It is no use Opposition Members saying that everything is all right as it is. Without the charter, the standard to which I have referred would not have been introduced. Under the charter, British Rail has introduced the standards of reliability and punctuality that passengers should be able to expect. Every four weeks, as part of its "track record" initiative, British Rail is publishing up-to-date performance figures. The results show that, while many routes are meeting their targets, some are still failing to do so. On routes where British Rail continues to under-perform, season ticket rebates of up to 10 per cent. may be triggered by the charter.

The principles of the passengers charter are to be extended in the future: British Rail has now committed itself to publishing conditions of carriage that are fairer, simpler and easier to understand, and the 1993 reliability and punctuality standards for Inter-City, regional railways and Network SouthEast will be published this month.

I should like the passengers charter to be extended to cover the quality of railway stations, as well as services on trains. The conditions in ticket offices, waiting rooms and public lavatories are often an absolute disgrace; perhaps, in the fulness of time, the charter will get to grips with that. Incredibly, the ticket office at Chester station—where I shall be in a matter of hours—is currently located in a Portakabin. That is not a temporary measure; it is to remain there for a couple of years. Would hon. Members fly on an airline that made them buy their tickets from a nissan hut? No: they would feel a certain lack of confidence about the validity of their tickets.

The city of Chester is historic; it is the jewel in the crown of the north. *[Interruption.]* Forgive me; it is the jewel in the crown of the country. We may have to wait for the privatisation of British Rail for a solution to the problem—although I prefer to think of it as private investment in the railways. No railway station that had benefited from private investment, and from the attitudes that are prevalent in, say, the British tourist industry—attitudes that should be prevalent throughout public services—would allow the lavatories and ticket office at Chester station to remain in their present condition.

The parents charter is another of the successes of the citizens charter movement. In England and Wales, school examination results are now published, and comparative tables showing examination results in local secondary schools are now being made available to the parents of children who are about to transfer to such schools. From autumn next year, national curriculum results, truancy rates and the routes taken by pupils when they reach school-leaving age will also be published. Already, parents are receiving written reports on their children at least once a year; they are also reminded of their right to appeal if they are not successful in their choice of school. School prospectuses and governors' reports must now include examination results and truancy rates.

I am delighted at the breadth of the welcome for the publication of the tables. Noting the approval of *The Guardian* and that of the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), we begin to wonder whether the Government are on the right track; but, given that all the parents to whom I have spoken also approve, I realise that the Government certainly are. I was also delighted to read in today's press that the Opposition are apparently now back-tracking in their objection to the league tables. At least they are consistent in their back-tracking: I commend them for that.

The Opposition's earlier attitude was extraordinarily patronising to parents, who understand full well that, although examination results constitute a fundamental test of a school's performance, they are not the only test: a range of other performance indicators contribute to the overall picture. I hope that, as the parents charter progresses, those other indicators can be developed more fully. Inevitably, the cultural and the sporting life of a school will be involved. Let me declare an interest as chairman of the National Playing Fields Association. Such aspects as the number of well-used school playing fields are elements of the equation that adds up to a successful school. I hope that we shall also be able to develop performance indicators in relation to a school's commitment to the community, careers advice and further education advice, and that parents will gain easy access to those indicators.

I know full well that parents in my constituency will not only look at the league tables, but visit the school to which they intend to send their children and look at it in the round. Let me cite two schools in particular. Blacon high school has made a substantial contribution to technical education; it also has a wonderful team of handbell ringers. Currently that is not to feature in the league tables, but in time, if we can develop the right kind of indicators, we shall be able to incorporate it. Similarly, Bishops high school, in my constituency, has a marvellous community library. Its role as a community school is very important to it: the school library is shared with the community at large.

The White Paper that was published yesterday contains much encouraging material. It is, moreover, a stylish publication, featuring good English and clarity of presentation, which is important. It seems that putting over information in an accessible, clear way is now dismissed as gloss and hype, which is a pity. So much of the paper is good that it is difficult to know what to highlight. Personally, some people might wish to highlight the various commitments in relation to the Inland Revenue —which, I must confess, wants to take more from me than I earn, and is writing to me from a variety of addresses with a series of different but equally indecipherable signatures.

I share the concern that was expressed earlier about confidentiality. If we cannot trust our bank, it is a little depressing. I have read the scurrilous stories about my right hon. Friend and flexible Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I must say that I do not believe them for a moment—but, if they were true, how marvellously courageous my right hon. Friend was last night in voting with Conservative Members who decided to support the pay freeze. A man in those personal circumstances has a chance to offload his own problems with a single vote—and what does he do? He thinks of others first.

Although I speak in a slightly jesting manner, there is a serious undertone to this, because some 90 Opposition Members voted for a wage increase at a time when wage restraint is being urged on those in the public sector and forced on those in the private sector by the recession. It is a serious issue, particularly in the light of this afternoon's statement on the standard spending assessment.

Mr. Davidson: How many other sources of income does the hon. Gentleman have, and how much do they amount to?

Mr. Brandreth: They are negligible. Since becoming the Member of Parliament for City of Chester, I have devoted myself completely to my role as a Member of Parliament. If the hon. Member were here as often as I am, he would know that I have no time to be anywhere else but here or in my constituency, where I am committed to being a full-time Member of Parliament—fortunately, with experience from elsewhere, which I hope helps to inform my judgment.

As a constituency Member, my greatest concern is about the Benefits Agency. I am pleased that it published its customers charter at the beginning of the year. It sets out minimum national targets, including, for example, the fact that income support claims should be cleared in four days, which is down from a target of five days for the year 1991-92; that 65 per cent. of child benefit claims should be cleared in 10 days; and that 60 per cent. of family credit claims should be cleared within 13 days.

By the end of 1992, each of the Benefits Agency's 159 districts will display local targets, standards and information on performance achieved against them. Its annual report will be available at every local office. I shall study that with interest and concern, because although those standards are commendable they still are not good enough by any manner of means. I hope that it is an on-going programme, because we need to jack up standards each year.

The Benefits Agency charter commits the agency to telling customers about their appeal rights each time a decision is made about a benefit, explaining that customers who have a complaint about the service they receive can contact the customer service manager, who will respond within seven days. It has set a target that at least 85 per cent. of customers should say that they found the service satisfactory or better. I do not think that 85 per cent. of customers in my constituency are yet finding the service satisfactory or better, but I am glad that the standard has been set and I hope that we can achieve it, sustain it and then improve on it.

The major development outlined in the Secretary of State's statement yesterday and amplified today is the extension of market testing. This obviously must make sense. We want the highest standards and best value in all our public services, and all that market testing means is to test a particular service in the market to see whether it can be done better. I did not understand the semantic by-play that was going on earlier, because the issue seems quite simple: if an agency or department is delivering the goods, it has nothing to fear. If it is not, let us find something that can.

The list of Government Departments where market testing will take place, which was published yesterday, is very impressive: the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Customs and Excise—I was delighted to see that —the Ministry of Defence—I was delighted to see that; we have plenty of opportunities for it in Chester—and the Department of National Heritage, where several items caught my eye, such as the national lottery. The lottery will obviously be handled most effectively by an independent agency with the right guidelines. There will be forms, a contract will be agreed and the standards will be established. All we are attempting to do is test it against the market to see who can deliver the goods most satisfactorily in terms of quality and price.

I was pleased to see the royal parks and historic royal palaces mentioned in the list. The monarchy was not listed, although it has little to fear, as I doubt that another team could do the job more effectively or could provide better value for money.

The Labour party has an enviable record for changing its mind on almost every public service reform introduced by the Government. I think I am right in saying that it opposed the next steps agencies, yet now its leader supports them, although I was a little confused by what the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) said this afternoon. It used to oppose parental choice, but now it claims to back it. Last week, it opposed the publication of examination results, but this week—at least according to the news report that I read this morning—it now supports them.

I wonder how long it will be before Opposition Members drop their objections to market testing. There was a little semantic by-play this afternoon, leaving the options open, but perhaps the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) will clarify that. It would be wonderful to have a simple yes or no on whether Labour agrees with market testing.

It is understandable that some people are frightened of market testing. People are often frightened of the real world. I understand that and sympathise because I come from a family of good public servants. My mother is a teacher. I have a sister who is a teacher, another sister who is a nurse and a third sister who is a social worker. I have a sister-in-law who is a teacher and a brother-in-law who is a civil servant.

Mr. Waldegrave: Not more!

Mr. Brandreth: This is beginning to worry my right hon. Friend. Half a dozen members of my family are on the public payroll—and now me, too. A "magnificent seven" of us are living off the state. For us, the funds continue to flow in, and with any change we feel threatened.

I mentioned the threat that was clearly felt by the 90 Members who decided last night to vote against a pay freeze, despite what people are feeling all over the country and the effect that it might have if the example were followed in local authorities, which have been given a 3·7 per cent. increase. Seven tenths of local government expenditure goes on salaries, but if authorities keep to the guideline of up to 1·5 per cent. that will not force cuts on anybody. But cuts will be forced if people follow the example given by Opposition Members, including, I believe—I am ready to be corrected—Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen, who voted to put their own snouts in the gravy at a time when restraint is called for.

A survey of Members conducted at the last general election showed that 79 per cent. of the new intake had no experience of business or manufacturing. They were teachers, social workers, lawyers—dirty work I know, but somebody has got to do it—journalists, trade union officials and political researchers. It is a pretty depressing litany and we have to break the mould. We must confront the real world, which is what market testing is all about.

We must break the mould and cope with change, because without it and without being ready to confront change, we shall not achieve any improvement.

I have a distinguished—I use the word nicely—forebear by the name of Jeremiah Brandreth, who was the last person to be beheaded in this country for treason. He was executed at Derby on 7 November 1817. I do not believe that my ancestor was guilty of the sedition with which he was charged, but I must share with the House the family secret that he was a Luddite. He was known as the hopeless radical; it is a funny feeling knowing that his soul descendants are on the Opposition Benches—the other side. That is why I have that nice familial feeling tonight.

My ancestor was a Luddite; he could not cope with change. There are people—sadly, they include Labour Members—who believe that we should go on doing things exactly as we have always done them, simply because they have always been done that way. Unlike Jeremiah Brandreth, I believe in change. In Lord Liverpool's day, those who were locked in the past may have been executed; happily, today we have a much more civilised approach. We call it the citizens charter.

8 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): We were promised quality rather than quantity from the Conservative side tonight, but we seem to have had a fair amount of quantity from the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth).

I was glad to see "The Citizen's Charter—First report: 1992" yesterday. One of my first contributions in the House after being elected in April was a call for the Government to follow York city council's example in being the first public authority not only to produce a citizens charter but to publish an annual report on its successes and failures in implementing its charter standards. At that stage I was not given a firm assurance that that would be mirrored by the national charter, so I am delighted that only six months later the report has appeared. I wish that all Cabinet Ministers would listen as readily to my suggestions, and I congratulate the Ministers concerned on producing such an important part of the citizens charter initiative.

I was interested in one comment made by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he introduced the White Paper yesterday. He said:

> "more than 90 per cent. of the 150 or so initial commitments"—

I find it slightly odd that he should talk about "150 or so" commitments rather than a precise number. The right hon. Gentleman said:

> "more than 90 per cent. of the 150 or so initial commitments in the citizens charter White Paper have been met or are in hand".—[*Official Report*, 25 November 1992; Vol. 214, c. 869.]

I ask the right hon. Gentleman how many commitments have been met and how many are in hand. I would gladly give way now if he wished to give me the information—or perhaps the question will be answered by the Minister who sums up.

I ask that question because I carried out my own survey, if that is how it should be described, by asking parliamentary questions in the summer, on the first anniversary of the publication of the citizens charter. I wanted to find out how many of the 10 key promises which the Prime Minister made in introducing the charter to Paliament on 22 July 1991 had been fulfilled. I found that only one had clearly been achieved one year after the charter was published. That achievement, which has already been mentioned, was to reduce the waiting time for driving tests to a little more than five weeks. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said earlier that in 1988 the waiting time was 13 weeks, but that by the time the charter was published it had fallen to seven weeks. Since publication, the time has been driven down by a further two weeks.

I do not belittle that achievement, but I wish that such demonstrable benefits could be shown in more of the areas in which the charter made promises. To say that a matter is in hand is not the same as to say that what has been promised has been done. It is a little like saying, "My cheque is in the post." It is promise rather than fulfilment.

Shortage of time prevents me from commenting on all the areas covered by the charter, but I have picked out one—the health service and the patients charter—partly because I am familar with the subject and partly because the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was Secretary of State for Health when the charter was published.

"The Citizen's Charter—First report: 1992", which was published yesterday, lists 10 key rights and entitlements under the heading of patients and the patients charter. I refer back to the document published a year ago, the patients charter, which listed 19 key rights and entitlements. What has happened to the other nine?

Among the missing rights is the patient's right to be referred to a consultant acceptable to him or her. We know that the internal market now means that patients can go only where the contract is placed. A second missing right is the right to a second medical opinion. A third is the right to ensure that everyone, including people with special needs, can use services. A fourth missing right is patients' right to have their community care needs settled before being discharged from hospital. A fifth is the right to have one's complaint, if one has cause for complaint, dealt with promptly. That was one of the three key new rights introduced in the patients charter—but it does not appear in the one-year report.

Other rights which appeared in the patients charter have now been subtly and quietly watered down. The patients charter said that patients should be guaranteed admission for treatment by a specific date. The new document says that the patient should

> "be guaranteed admission to hospital for virtually all treatments by a specific date".

That is a subtle introduction of new words which allow some treatments and conditions to be exempted. Why has the commitment been watered down, and why are the reasons for watering it down not spelled out? Why is the public sector's performance against the standards set in the "150 or so" commitments not spelled out? It is spelled out for some but for many it is not.

For instance, the patients charter promised that out-patients would be given a specific appointment time and be seen within 30 minutes of that time. In the summer I asked the Secretary of State for Health to find out in how many cases that promise was being met. The answer which I received was:

> "This information is not collected centrally."

Another patients charter promise was that patients would be seen immediately for an initial assessment on arrival at an accident and emergency department. I asked the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of patients were seen when they arrived at an accident and

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emergency department within five minutes, within 15 minutes and within 30 minutes. The answer which I received was:

"This information is not collected centrally."

I asked about the commitment in the patients charter to the effect that

"your operation should not be cancelled on the day you are due to arrive at hospital." *[Official Report,* 13 July 1992; Vol. 211, c. *516* and *514.]*

I asked the Secretary of State what proportion of patients had their operations cancelled on the day that they were due to arrive in hospital. I received the same answer—the information was not collected centrally.

The patients charter says that the patient has a right to have his complaint dealt with promptly, so I asked what proportion of complaints from patients were dealt with within one week, within one month, within three months or within a longer period. Again, the answer was that the information was not collected.

The patients charter says that health authorities should ensure that services can be used by everyone, including people with physical disabilities, by ensuring that buildings can be used by people in wheelchairs. That is a laudable aim—so I asked the Secretary of State what proportion of NHS buildings were accessible to people in wheelchairs. I was told that the information was not held centrally.

I could cite many more examples in which the answer to such questions is, "Dunno, mate." I ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how he could be so sure when he told the House yesterday that 90 per cent. of the promises in the citizens charter were being met, when information on so many of them is not collected by the Government. How does he know?

I do not want to be uncharitable, so I point out that some of the standards are being met. The driving test standard has been met. The redundant workers charter promises that 80 per cent. of claims for redundancy payments will be paid within 14 weeks. I checked and found that the figure was 84 per cent. The charter standard has been out-performed. Some standards have been massively out-performed. Ninety per cent. of work permit applications were processed within eight weeks, against the charter standard of 75 per cent. In this area, it seems that the Government are taking a leaf out of Joseph Stalin's book. He managed dramatically to out-perform all his five-year plans by setting standards that were easy to achieve.

All the evidence tells us that if, as in the case of the work permit office, the Government set the standards low, it pays to set standards low. If, perhaps under pressure from a Minister, a civil servant is tempted to aim high, he can always get off the hook. Either the data are not collected so that no one can measure success or failure against published standards or, if the data are collected, the findings are not published in the annual report on the citizens charter. If the Government are really on the hook, the wording of a promise can be changed. The promise, for example, that patients will be treated within a certain time becomes a promise that patients will receive surgery within a certain time in almost all cases.

The golden rule seems to be that people can do what they like as long as they do not let on. If they do not let on, nobody will ever notice, they hope. As Members of Parliament, it is our job to notice and to hold the Government to account, as we are doing tonight. It is noticeable that there is no Select Committee that deals with citizen charter issues. The separate departmental Select Committees can examine the promises and the performance of individual departments, such as the Department of Health and the Department of the Environment, but there is no point at which the strategy of the citizens charter is open to scrutiny in the way that the work of individual Departments is. Why are the Government so shy? What have they to hide?

8.12 pm

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): You may remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from your days at school that there was an English king of whom it was said:

"Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York."

To a certain extent, it is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley). I prefer to say that the sun has come from Chester this evening. The speech by my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) surpasses many this Session. I have a secret to impart to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in addition to those already revealed by my hon. Friend. We agreed to swap speeches before my hon. Friend delivered his speech. His speech was a tour de force and I congratulate him.

There are four limbs to the citizens charter programme: privatisation, where it is appropriate; competition, where it is possible; the devolution of decision-making; and the application of charter principles, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Chester spoke so eloquently.

There has been a good deal of progress in privatisation since 1979. Some 46 major activities and many smaller ones have been privatised, to the benefit of the British public. That scheme of things has caused annoyance, dismay and alarm on Opposition Benches. There is alarm and dismay because, as the programme unfolds year by year, Opposition Members see the good sense of it and they see the poverty of their own arguments levelled against them. Why should the British public be imprisoned by monolithic, state-run organisations? The Government—the state—had no business being involved in so many of the activities that have now been privatised. I am sure that many of my constituents welcomed the privatisations of the past few years.

We know that there are to be further privatisations, and we welcome that in matters in which the Government have no proper role and in which there is no constitutional need for them to be involved. Why on earth should the Government—the state—be involved in the running and day-to-day management of an agency such as Companies House? It is ludicrous and unnecessary for the Government to be involved in such detailed work. The work could clearly be covered by an agency and I trust that it will be before long. Other examples are the docklands light railway, the drivers and vehicle operators information technology department, the National Engineering Laboratory, Parcel Force and the vehicle inspectorate. They are all areas of national life that are capable of being dealt with by non-governmental agencies. The sooner they are, the better they will be.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chester has dealt eloquently with the concept of market testing and I do not propose to add to what he said on competition. The third area is the devolution of decision-making, which, in essence, means taking decisions closer to the customer. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said, in instances where, for whatever reason, there is no choice but public ownership and no chance of competition being applied, the third of the four elements must come into play.

Our role must be to devise and apply disciplines that, in their own way, are no less demanding than open decisions. Why should we not bring to the public sector the disciplines of the private sector? As my right hon. Friend said, the system that we have used has been the creation of next steps executive agencies at arm's length from Whitehall. I understand that such agencies are increasingly, although grudgingly, being accepted as the proper way forward by Opposition Members.

The next steps programme, which was initially opposed by the Labour party, has revolutionised the organisation and management of the civil service. Some 76 agencies have been established and a further 27 candidates have been announced. Half the civil service is already working along next steps lines. I very much look forward to the day when the other half does the same.

The fourth element of the proposals is the citizens charter. The charter brings to bear on the public services a range of additional disciplines including the monitoring of performance and the publication of results, and consultation with service users to ensure that services are geared not to the convenience of the providers, but to the needs of the public. Why should Opposition Members fear that? Surely we are here to provide the public with a service and not a straitjacket. The third discipline is the introduction of truly independent inspection procedures so that public services are assessed not only by expert professionals, but by members of the public who use and rely on those services.

An area of the citizens charter of which I have some knowledge from my work as a lawyer is the courts charter and its application to the criminal and civil justice systems. Hon. Members may have had a chance to glance at the first report which deals in some detail with the citizens charter's application to the criminal and civil justice systems. Those of us who work in the justice system well know the frustration of clients, whether plaintiffs or defendants, or members of the police who are helping with prosecutions.

We know well the frustrations felt by jurors who come involuntarily to court to assist in the system of justice and of other lawyers who wish to get before the court when our case has finished. We know the existing deficiencies of the system, which the courts charter seeks to address. It will now be necessary for witnesses to be given more information before they arrive in court, and it will be essential, the charter promises, that they are kept in touch with the progress of their case on the day. That is not unfair; it is entirely reasonable and should be advanced as quickly as possible.

The courts charter also provides that arrangements should be made for vulnerable witnesses, such as elderly people, children and rape victims, to visit courts in advance of the proceedings. Going to court as a witness —be it involuntarily or voluntarily, to assist a friend—or as a party to a civil action, can be one of the most terrifying experiences for a member of the ordinary public. Imagine what it must be like for a person who is wholly unused to the somewhat Dickensian atmosphere of the High Court or a county court in a town or city far away from his or her own small town or village to have to come to terms with that strange environment and get used to giving evidence high up on a pedestal.

I have only had to give evidence once—at Wandsworth county court—and although by then I had had 10 years' experience at the Bar, I can assure the House that it was much more frightening than appearing before the Judicial Committee of the House of Lords, which I did not so long ago.

The charter also includes national targets for reducing delays in bringing cases to court, which were published last July together with details of performance against those targets. One of the great frustrations that both parties and lawyers face is the problem of listing. Often, a case listed for a particular day cannot be reached because the cases in front of it have been delayed—for good or bad reasons.

I am glad to see that the courts charter deals with that, because it seems to me that a revised and modernised system of listing, which can make use of all the computer technology now available to us, will enhance the role of the listing officer at the county court or the High Court so that we get a proper standard of efficient throughput. I fully accept that there is no justice in rushed justice. If a case requires a week, let it take a week. Equally, though, there is no justice in delayed justice. A man whose case is not reached on the day on which he expects it to be has good reason to be aggrieved and will think the less of our justice system for it. The courts charter will deal with that or do its best to do so.

Some 30 per cent. more cases have been transferred from the High Court to the local county courts, which, by definition, are easier to access for parties and witnesses. I know from my own experience of the High Court here in London that many civil jury cases, particularly those dealing with false imprisonment and malicious prosecution—cases against police forces—are now being referred to county courts in and around London, especially to the Croydon court centre. That has enabled the throughput of cases to be increased greatly over the past two years.

That procedure should be encouraged, and cases that are simple as matters of law and matters of fact—albeit important to those involved in them—should be transferred to a forum as close to the citizen as possible. I applaud the trend to move cases out of the High Court to the county court. I add to that a plea that there should be sufficient judges appointed to meet the new load on the county courts, that sufficient courts should be made available for judges to sit in and that the judges should be adequately remunerated for their work—but that may be a debate for another day.

It is essential that the greatest efficiency is brought to bear on our criminal justice system and our civil justice system. Without it, the system will crumble. Without it, well-founded feelings of annoyance will exacerbate the frustrations that we all feel when Big Brother lets us down. It is vital that, with the Government's encouragement, we proceed rapidly towards the fullest possible use of the citizens charter throughout the system of government.

8.24 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I agree with the hon. Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) about one thing: I, too, have given evidence in court, and I agree with him that it is a frightening experience for anyone to be a witness, especially in a Crown court. I have

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not had the experience of being dismissed or declared redundant, but I imagine that that, too, is a frightening experience. That is one of the things that the debate should be about, and I shall come back to it later in my speech.

I want to deal first, however, with the speech of the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth). It is silly for Government supporters such as the hon. Gentleman to pretend that Labour Members are satisfied with the way things are and to claim that we accept low standards of performance from the civil service. The civil servants working in the city of Birmingham would tell him that it is Labour Members who are most demanding, who have the highest expectations and who set the highest standards of performance for civil servants. That is because we believe in the public service. We want a better public service and we are entitled to ask our civil servants to perform to higher standards, just as they are entitled to say to us that, if we want the highest possible standards, we must pay respectable wages in return. That, too, is one of the things that the debate should be about.

The hon. Member for City of Chester was too easily convinced by the targets set by the Benefits Agency. I recently went to the local office of an executive agency in my constituency and discussed with the local manager the performance targets that had been set for that office. Of the nine performance targets, seven showed no improvement this year over last. The other two showed a deterioration. In other words, the target for the current year is worse than the performance last year. When I asked that manager, "How on earth have you got away with this? How have you managed to convince your boss that you should have seven targets that are no better and two that are worse?", he told me, "Mr. Davis, I am better than the national average, so of course my boss lets me slip back a couple of performance indicators." That is how targets are operating locally.

Market testing has nothing to do with trying to get the best out of the civil service or with improvements in its quality. It is not—as the hon. Member for City of Chester said it was—something to do with getting things done in a better way. Market testing has nothing to do with the improvement of service; it has to do with two Government objectives, the first of which is cutting costs—reducing the cost of the civil service. As most of the cost of the civil service goes in civil servants' wages—it is a labour-intensive service—one can only reduce that cost by reducing civil servants' wages. It has nothing to do with measuring the human cost and everything to do with cutting the financial cost. We are talking not about doing things better but about doing them more cheaply.

The second Government objective is to privatise as much as possible. The hon. Member for Harborough was clear about it. He tore away the veil of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and I respect his integrity. He is dogmatic, and believes that privatisation is better—that things are done better by private organisations. He does not realise that, as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster says, some things may be done better in the public sector.

The reason the Government want to privatise the civil service is that they want to create profit opportunities for private firms, both large and small. Those companies care only about making a profit. It follows that, if they are to do the work more cheaply and make a profit, they must pay lower wages and provide poorer conditions for the people who do the clerical jobs and dirty jobs in the civil service. It is inevitable that the workers will be paid less and enjoy poorer conditions.

The way in which market testing will work is that the Government will market-test a particular activity in the civil service. A contractor will tender at a price which is less than the calculated cost of the civil servants who do the work at present. The contract will be given to the outside contractor, and the people who do the work will have two possibilities.

The first possibility is that they will simply be declared redundant—at the expense of the taxpayer. The second is that they will be taken over, as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster confidently forecast, by the outside contractor who wins the job. There is no guarantee that the workers will be taken over by the private contractor, or that they will enjoy the same wages, negotiating conditions and terms of employment which were so hard won by the civil service trade unions. The workers will be expected to work on exactly the same basis as so many people in the health service, who are expected to do the work that they did before the service was contracted out.

Many people who do the dirty jobs and domestic jobs in hospitals, and security guards in hospitals, are paid less than they were previously for the same work. I have met unemployed people who say that they used to work at the local hospital. They do not work there any more because the work was contracted out. They were offered a job at a reduced wage by the private contractor who won the bid.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), who spoke for the Liberal Democrats, said that his party was all about giving people control over their lives. I cannot imagine anything that takes away someone's control over his or her life more than being unemployed. Being unemployed gives people no choice whatever. It is the total destruction of their personal liberty. Their status, income and everything else depend on having a job. Not only their financial resources but their psychological value in society depend on their being employed. Therefore, the Liberal Democrats should recognise that it is nonsense to tell people that the citizens charter and market testing are all about giving people control over their lives.

Some people will become unemployed; other will keep their jobs because the civil service will be forced, in the market-testing procedure, to bid and to put in tenders for work that is already done by the civil service. We have seen the way in which the Government impede that process. The Government may say that they want to see what the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster always calls a level playing field. I remind the House what a level playing field is in practical terms. We have had some experience of it.

Several of my hon. Friends mentioned the Inland Revenue. When the Inland Revenue prepares in-house bids, it is required to include an on-cost to take account of the civil service pension scheme. The on-cost is 13·5 per cent. of the wage bill because the Government have calculated that the value of the pension scheme for civil servants is 13·5 per cent. Of course, the figure takes into account everybody in the civil service—not simply people on the lowest wages who do not have a good pension but those on the highest wages who have good pensions. The process is therefore weighted against the civil servants whose jobs are market-tested.

A group of typists in Bristol who are subject to market testing took the initiative and went to an insurance company for a quotation for their pension scheme. They were told that it would be 6 per cent. of their wages. That figure compares with the 13·5 per cent. that the Government make management include in the bid for the work that those people do at present. If management cannot find other savings of at least 7·5 per cent., workers lose their jobs and become unemployed. That is a scandal. It loads the dice against the people who do the jobs at present.

Another Bill is going through the House at present. The Civil (Management Functions) Bill introduces local pay bargaining and settlements for precisely the same reason as we have discussed tonight. The purpose is not decentralisation, which many of my hon. Friends support. It is to break national pay agreements and have pay agreements negotiated locally. That will enable managers to keep the work by having lower wage rates than they have at present.

Market testing is a one-way street. We never hear about market testing the other way. We never hear about the civil service being given the opportunity to quote for private work. Why should we not have public enterprise? Why should the civil service not be able to do the work it does well? If the Chancellor means what he says, he should accept that there are some things that the civil service does very well. Why should the civil service not quote for work from private companies? Apparently, that idea never crossed the mind of this dogmatic Government.

Market testing is not the only one-way street; there are others. Many of my hon. Friends have mentioned confidentiality. Indeed, some Conservative Members have made the same point. When we read this morning's newspapers, we were horrified to see the breach of confidentiality involving the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I shall not make any jibes about that. It is scandalous that the Chancellor's private affairs should be put on the front page of newspapers. I should condemn that breach of confidentiality whether it involved a Conservative or an Opposition Member. But that is not the point. The point is that there must have been a breach of confidentiality.

The Inland Revenue is not the only organisation with confidential information. The Department of Social Security has a great deal of information about individuals, their families and their relationships. The Employment Service has a similar amount of information about individuals, their families, their relationships and their dependants. All that information is at risk. It would be ridiculous to suggest that there would be leaks from all private firms in the country. We do not have leaks from all banks.

The difference is that, in the case of Access and the National Westminster bank, which owns Access, an individual citizen has a choice. If we believe that there is a risk of breach of confidentiality with regard to our Access or bank account, we can go to another bank. We will not be able to choose another Inland Revenue, regardless of whether its work has been market-tested and contracted out. There will only ever be one Inland Revenue, one Department of Social Security, one Benefits Agency and one Employment Service. Individuals have no choice between private and public or between different private firms. Individuals will go to the Inland Revenue, the social security office and the local employment office. What is more, they are required to give private personal information to those agencies and departments.

We can choose how much information we give our bank; we have no choice whatever about the information that we give to the Inland Revenue, the Department of Social Security or the Employment Service when benefits are calculated. We are required by law to give that information. All citizens and all hon. Members should be concerned about the clear risk of confidentiality shown by the experience of the Chancellor in his personal affairs.

Not only civil servants but all of us are affected. Civil servants are especially affected because their jobs are at risk. Their jobs will go as a result of market testing. That is why more than 800 typists and secretaries at the Inland Revenue—they are hardly a militant group of trade unionists—came to London today to protest about their work being market-tested and their jobs being put at risk. They are bewildered and angry, and they cannot understand why the Government are doing that to them. They have given years of service to this Government and previous Governments. Many of them have worked in the civil service for 20 or 30 years.

They have experience and proven loyalty over many years; but loyalty is another two-way street. Civil servants cannot understand why the Government are not loyal to them. The Government are prepared to sack them to get the job done more cheaply for lower wages, despite their service in the past. It is not surprising that civil servants feel that the Government have no confidence in them and place little value on their years of service. The time will come in three or four years when those civil servants will have an opportunity to say that they have no confidence in the Government.

8.38 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis). I find it depressing that he scorned and jeered at the importance of trying to instil value for money and standards in the civil service, when we spend taxpayers' money on running it. I find it rather cheap that he should deliberately go in for scaremongering tactics, suggesting that jobs are at risk because contracts are being put out to the private sector. He suggests that people will automatically be paid less. Jobs put out to the private sector mean more jobs in that sector—it is merely a shift from one to the other.

We must ask ourselves; who is paying for our civil service? Undoubtedly, the answer is the hon. Gentleman, me and the taxpayer. I sometimes find it galling that the Opposition totally fail to connect Government spending with the fact that all that money comes out of every working man and woman's pay packet. Let there be no doubt about the Government's commitment to cutting waste. It is a moral responsibility, and it is admirable that they have got around to it. I welcome their initiatives in that direction.

In these belt-tightening times, it is even more appropriate that we should ensure that our civil service gives value for money, in much the same way that the private sector does. It is salutary that we should have the guts and the courage for close self-analysis.

We are talking about improving public services—improving the way in which they serve their customers and

[Lady Olga Maitland]

ensuring that they provide value for money. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Hodge Hill said, market testing is a good way to achieve that. I find it strange that, just for the sake of principle, he is determined to knock it down.

Market testing has been a significant step forward and the Government have been working on it for some time. It is salutary that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster yesterday announced that £1·5 billion of Whitehall work is to be exposed to competition. The Government have been developing that policy for the past four years and when they began, the amount was only £25 million. We should congratulate the Government on extending that commitment fiftyfold.

It is essential for all competing services to offer better value for money than the civil service. If work can be done cheaper outside, without any loss of quality—we set great store by quality—*[Laughter.]* It is true. We must use outside contractors if work can be done cheaper, as that is a far better use of taxpayers' money. The service must be exposed to competition. It has never had that pressure in the past, but the taxpayers' money now comes first.

If we consider areas where private sector companies and service users have been put in the same category, we learn a great deal. An article in the *Financial Times* today mentions value and the fact that tendering is good news for taxpayers, service users and private sector companies alike. It states:

> "Yesterday's announcement that more than 44,000 jobs in the United Kingdom civil service are to be put out to tender is good news for companies that are well-placed to bid for the contracts . . . the prospect of almost £1·5 billion of new business in the next 10 months is welcome. But it is also good news for the taxpayer, who can expect significant savings in public expenditure—and better quality services to boot."

Let us examine the services that could be dealt with in that way: financial services, such as basic clerical functions; audit services; payroll duties; keeping the books; and some legal services could be included. Why cannot property and estate management be contracted out? The Department of Health is relocating one of its offices to Leeds. Why not use a private firm to look after the maintenance, cleaning, heating and lighting of the property, instead of recruiting the civil service? It would be far better if the task where leased out. The Government will maintain control of what I call the hands-on function, but it will be privately managed. In that way, one can get the best of all worlds.

What about information technology? Should not the maintenance of computer hardware and programming be put out to private contractors? What about financial legal services, such as conveyancing of Government property —for example, when the Department of the Environment buys land for roads and other projects? Many companies could compete and, with the peaks and troughs in the market, the advantage for the Government is in not having to keep on full-time staff unnecessarily. They could rise to the occasion and take advantage of outside contractors. The saving on full-time employees is obvious.

I remind Opposition Members that we would be shifting civil service employees to the private sector. There is no suggestion that they would lose their jobs. Customs and Excise debt collection is another possibility, which is also subject to variations in demand. It must be more economical.

Mr. Terry Davis: The hon. Lady says that there is no question of civil servants losing their jobs and that they are simply shifting to the private sector. Is she prepared to give a firm guarantee to that effect?

Lady Olga Maitland: I am sorry, but I did not catch the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Davis: Is the hon. Lady prepared to say unequivocally that, as a result of market testing, civil servants will not lose their jobs, but will simply change employers?

Lady Olga Maitland: It is simply a matter of market forces and of moving from one area to another by natural selection. That is important. It is more economical to use half the civil servants on a permanent basis and to use half in the private sector according to need; hence the need to use local solicitors.

Home Office dog training is a more quixotic area, which could be contracted out. Until now, guard dogs and dogs that sniff for drugs have been trained by civil service dog trainers. Does one need in-house dog trainers? The Home Secretary could survive very well by using an outside service, from which I am sure he would get cheaper service and, in many cases, better value.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food uses the Royal Navy to mount surveillance on foreign fishing vessels which operate inside the limit. Why not use outside contractors with their own patrol boats instead? I understand that British companies are already providing such a service for companies overseas—for heaven's sake, let us use them at home.

What about engineering services? The Ministry of Defence has sub-contracted aircraft maintenance, instead of using its employees.

Catering could be contracted out. Five years ago, there were more cooks than economists at the Treasury—a strange state of affairs. Why did not the Treasury manage better and apply its financial rectitude to cookery? The answer is to contract out, put catering in the right hands and get better food, more efficient use of staff and value for money.

Why should the civil service pensions administration be considered a great sacred cow and have to be dealt with internally? The pensions work could be managed by an outside contractor. There are scores of private sector businesses providing the service for other employers. The whole pensions sphere should not be considered sacrosanct.

We can learn many lessons from the past. Where there has been competition in sections of central Government, savings have averaged 25 per cent., with no loss of quality. It is interesting to note that, when contracts have remained in-house, after close examination with outside competition, the same saving has been achieved. We must have more stringent examination of our affairs. The fact that that has not happened must mean that outside comparisons have not been made.

The Government have had great strength of character in examining the way in which we examine our affairs. They accept that we must no longer believe in the old adages about the state providing all, with other people's money being spent. We must have a more reasonable way of looking at life.

Labour Members have thrown several red herrings into the debate. For example, they talk about confidentiality.

Safeguards apply in the civil service whether the work is done in-house or outside. For example, the defence industry would not flourish if the Ministry of Defence could not trust outside contractors. The code of conduct that has existed all along works very well indeed.

Why should the honesty and integrity of private sector employees be considered any less than that existing in the public sector? In many cases, a criminal offence would be committed if information were divulged, irrespective of whether employees were in the public or private sector.

I remind the hon. Member who referred to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's affairs that if the details had been exposed to the public through a leak by the Inland Revenue, a criminal offence would have been committed. Had the work been contracted outside the civil service to a contractor, my right hon. Friend's affairs would still have been sacrosanct. Opposition Members seem committed to opposing any privatising of the civil service. They are opposed to change, irrespective of reality and modern methods of working.

I remind them that we are talking not about the core work of the civil service but about its support services, so we should concentrae on the core business of the civil service, which we are good at and can conduct efficiently, and let the experts deal with what might be called the subsidiary work. In other words, let us ensure that the country gets real value for money.

8.53 pm

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Govan): Conservative Membes have indulged in some knock-about debating and general abuse of Labour's position. It is important for us to explain precisely what we favour, because our view has been rather parodied.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) said, we are in favour of rigour in the provision of public services. We want efficiency, effectiveness and economy. We are also in favour—more so than Conservative Members—of equity in the provision of those services.

We support the concepts of decentralisation and devolution of implementation and we recognise that the public services must be under constant review. We have always appreciated the need for making improvements where possible, and we are keen to ensure that new ideas and systems are applied to the public service. That demonstrates our commitment to change.

We accept that the civil service should be modernised and we want many sections of it to move away from a safety-first and cannot-do attitude. The agency system has helped in that process, and we welcome it.

While the Government claim to be engaged in an exercise to improve the public service, we are bound to be cynical about their commitment to the public sector. Many people believe that the Conservative recrod shows that the Government want to destroy the public service and cast everyone concerned with it to the vagaries of the market, apart from law and order and defence—items that go to create a strong state—and a few other sectors which they feel obliged to maintain in the public sector.

The Government make the assumption that everything should go out to tender unless, for some reason, it must stay. My hon. Friends and I do not say that everything must stay in-house. We prefer to take an objective look at where services are best provided. That is the way to determine where they should be performed.

We are in conflict with the Government on certain issues. I shall concentrate on the question of devolution as compared with contracting out. In some instances there is a discrepancy between the policy of the Government of devolving management and their determination to contract out the work done by certain agencies.

The decision whether to contract out work should be determined by whether a better service would be achieved by contracting out or by leaving the service where it is. The Government seem to have a prejudiced view and think that everything would be better done in the private sector. That has led them to try to sectionalise the work of individual units or agencies.

That has led the Government to seek to break up the work of a complete organisation, such as the National Savings bank. They then identify a section of activity, such as clerical services, cost it and make it compete. That results in the staff involved, competing for their own jobs, having an inevitable self-interest in trying to minimise the amount of work that they undertake for other sections beyond the contract that has been undertaken. There is pressure on them to have a narrower focus on what they are doing, concentrating on their own self-interest.

Managers in the public sector should be set clear targets and be left to get on with determining how best to achieve those objectives. Agencies should be examined as a whole. The managers and staff should be given an opportunity to take a realistic perspective, which does not mean artificially chopping off certain sections and contracting them out. I am not aware of staff in the private sector having artificially set targets involving a proportion of work being put out to a subsidiary, to the private sector or to the public sector. Nobody in the private sector operates in that way. People make their own decisions.

There is a contradiction between saying that targets should be established for agencies and telling people how to achieve those objectives. If the Government were genuinely committed to the principles of decentralisation and devolution, they would set rigorous targets and output figures and then tell managers, "It's your responsibility. We shall not tell you exactly how to carry out those functions."

To do otherwise is to centralise. In many ways, the Government are being more centralist than previous Governments by directing managers how to go about achieving their goals.

The process of examination and review that has been going on in the public sector over a long period—not rigorously enough, in my view—shows that the existing system can modify itself. An onus should be placed on the Government to give the existing system an opportunity to self-reform before they artificially divide work tasks.

The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) said that she believed that all was likely to happen was that people presently working in the public sector would be moved into the private sector. That is unrealistic because, for many of the tasks now being contracted out or market-tested, the main expense is that of salaries and the main source of competition must come from people who undercut on salaries. That is a clear attempt to drive down wages and conditions of service. Indeed, it is a Darwinian approach. It is how the natural law of selection works.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will the hon. Gentleman give us evidence to back up his comments?

Mr. Davidson: Certainly. My former local authority lost public sector cleaning contracts to a private sector company solely on the ground that it undercut on wages. The hon. Lady may look puzzled, but it is true. If she wishes, I could take her to schools in Strathclyde where there is difficulty in recruiting, retaining and motivating cleaners because of the low wages that are being paid.

Many Conservative Members recognise the real difficulty. If local companies are competing on the basis of wage rates alone, in areas of high unemployment the bids —the cost of that work—will inevitably be driven down. But we end up with people who have been recruited because that was the only job available and who have no loyalty because as soon as a better job comes up, they are away. There is great difficulty in retaining those workers and the staff have no enthusiasm for their work.

If the Government insist that managers must market test, the managers involved must be left free to pick from the bids as they see fit, according to the criteria that they wish to apply. There is more to bids than cost. Local authorities have been obliged to accept bids solely on the basis of cost and have not been allowed to take quality into account. It is important that they be allowed to take multiple indicators into account when assessing bids.

Another point that I discussed in Committee was where the policy of contracting out clashes with another announced Government policy—dispersal. I am keen as are many of my hon. Friends from deprived areas of the country—areas which a Conservative Member called "the provinces"—to ensure that Government functions are transferred to our areas. We must be clear about what happens in circumstances where there is a clash between how a contract is allocated, if it is done solely on price, and the Government's regional policy.

An example was given earlier of the possibility of the Metropolitan police data processing contract going to the Phillipines, and the Minister treated it as if to say, "Oh well, that may happen."

People in my area would be horrified if an enormous amount of data processing work in the National Savings bank, which is one of the largest single-site employers in the entire west of Scotland, was alloweed to go somewhere else in the world. That would have a serious effect on the area's economy. The Government must be prepared to recognise that there is a clash between their policies. I hope that they will be prepared to bear in mind my point about the importance of regional policy.

From all that we have heard in this debate, it appears that Conservative Members are biased towards breaking up the public service. We have heard, in Committee and in the Chamber today, that a process of on-going review is under way. I understand that an organisation will be examined for its suitablity for agency status, an examination will be carried out with a view to contracting out and market testing, and subsequently there will then be an opportunity to sell the whole thing off. In those circumstances, it will inevitably be difficult to promote enthusiasm among the staff. If they achieve the targets, they will be working themselves out of a job.

The Government must say whether or not other principles will override their ideologically driven policy which pays little regard to the objectives of public service —to provide a first-class service to its recipients—and has everything to do with their ideological commitment. Such a commitment should not be the main purpose of Government policy.

9.5 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): I shall be brief, as I am aware that two Opposition Members wish to speak and, subject to catching your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, they will.

I have long sought this opportunity to pay tribute to the ideas and ideals of the citizens charter and to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary on their excellent work. They are putting firm flesh on the bones of the ideas and ideals contained in the citizens charter and raising standards all round in a thoroughly practical way.

I shall also take the opportunity to thank my right hon. and hon. Friends for funding the Agricultural and Food Research Council—theirs is a wide-ranging Department, which is appropriately represented at Cabinet level. We would have liked more money—we would always like more. It came as something of a culture shock to some of the professors on the council when they realised that they might have to co-operate with the private sector to obtain backing for some of their work. That was their initial reaction, but they are now getting thoroughly used to the idea of lunching, and wining—without an "h"—and dining with industrialists, which is good news.

We must be careful, where we have a successful line of near-market research for which independent backing is obtained, that additional funding is not reduced from traditional methods of funding. I thank my right hon. and hon. Friends for their support and the interest that they take in the council. I can assure them that all those involved are grateful to them.

I heard the excellent speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier). I am glad to hear that we are even attempting some reform to obtain higher standards in the legal profession. I hope that over the next few decades something might be achieved. I also listened to the excellent speeches by my hon. Friends the Members for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) and for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland). I am afraid that they will have to listen to just three or four minutes from this old lag as I comment on the four headings originally identified by my hon. Friends.

The first topic is privatisation where appropriate. I know that when other capitalist countries started to privatise things, the Labour party was against it. When it came to selling council houses, the Labour party was against it. When other socialist countries such as France started to privatise things, the Labour party still opposed it. When Russia started to privatise things, the Labour party went a little quiet. Now that Albania is starting to privatise things, the Labour party is becoming very quiet.

I am pleased to see that the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) is present. I enjoyed a trip to America, the home of capitalism, with him, and I can see from his expression that he is taking in every idea for privatisation. Perhaps there are ramifications for the Dundee Labour party—who knows?

It is true that we have sold much of the family silver —I am proud of that and of the fact that so many other countries are following our example. To some extent, in cash terms, but not quality terms, we are now talking about the silver plate. Let us privatise British Coal, British Rail, Companies House, the docklands light railway, the driver and vehicle operators information technology department, London Buses, the National Engineering Laboratory, Parcel Force, the vehicle inspectorate and anything else where standards can be increased and we can raise a bob or two. I am not entirely sure, because the period of research available to me tonight was not sufficient, exactly how standards are to be maintained and performance related at the national engineering laboratory, but I am sure that there are no insuperable problems there.

Competitive tendering matters and market testing were so capably dealt with by my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) that I will pass them over. There are very few sectors that are such a natural monopoly that there cannot be some competition, or comparative competition, brought into them. Initially we were criticised because British Telecom, for instance, would have a monopoly, but it is quite clear, after a period of years and the growth of the market, that competitors are increasingly coming to compete with British Telecom. No doubt it will welcome, in due course, the increased competition.

I was very glad to hear that my right hon. Friend has said, with regard to taking decisions close to the customer, which must be our constant aim,

> "in those instances where, for whatever reason, there is no choice but public ownership and no chance of competition being applied . . . our role must be to devise and apply disciplines that, in their own way, are no less demanding than open competition."

Since he said those words a few months ago, he would no doubt agree with me that the more we look into things, the fewer the cases we find in which some competition cannot be instilled. The aim of introducing competition, I believe, is that, unlike the monolithic structures of a few years ago, nowadays the buck has to stop somewhere.

I was very pleased to have the booklet "Citizen's Charter News" with the charter logo and the heading "Raising the standard"—I am not sure whether it should not be "raising the standards". From the original ideas, we now have a good idea of the very wide spread of my right hon. Friend's activities, on health, education, travel, street works, services areas—and, my word, some improved standards are needed there on a bank holiday—driving tests, railways, London Underground, utilities, post offices, employment service, the Benefits Agency, and much more besides. Everything is to do with the improvement of standards; that must be our constant aim.

There has been some criticism this week of the tables produced for certain schools. It is no great secret that in one or two cases, in the compilation of statistics, the suggestion "might do better" could apply. The basic difference between this side of the House and the other is that we believe that parents are entitled to this information and that they have enough intelligence to know that this is one of a number of factors likely to guide and guard them in choosing schools for their children. This is not a privilege for parents; it is a fundamental right. It may be that in some rural areas, such as the one that I represent, because of geography parents may not be able to make full use of those extra privileges which are rightly theirs.

In conclusion, I say to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench: well done to date; keep up the good work.

9.12 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Conservative Members, in particular the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), seemed to take great offence at the suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) that privatisation leads to wage cuts. The hon. Lady called for evidence, and she was given some by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson). I will give her some direct from the civil service itself.

The Inland Revenue in Nottingham has recently contracted out its typist and secretarial contracts to the private sector company Blue Arrow. Civil Service rates for typists are in the pay band up to £9,405 outside London; the Blue Arrow rate is £7,800, with a 20p productivity bonus. The civil service rate for personal secretaries is in the pay band up to £11,521; the Blue Arrow rate is £8,775 —considerably less. If the hon. Lady does not understand now, she had better come to understand in the future that you get what you pay for. If people are looking for real value for money in the public services, they should keep jobs inside the civil service, where people are properly paid and where they reach the proper standards expected of important Government Departments.

When the Chancellor of the Duchy introduced the citizens charter White Paper in the House yesterday, he spoke of a future agenda for further action. A key part of the agenda is the extension of compulsory competitive tendering and market testing. The right hon. Gentleman told the House that these and other measures would be at the heart of the Government's agenda for the 1990s.

Before the right hon. Gentleman thrusts market testing and CCT to the heart of the Government's agenda for the next decade, he should try to understand the full implications of those processes. For instance, does he fully understand the implications of the TUPE regulations? He will know that they are the regulations that protect workers whose employer changes hands as a result of a legal transfer or merger. He will also know that the very core of the regulations is that workers' existing contracts of employment are automatically continued under the new employer. They may move from the civil service to the private sector, but under TUPE they should get the same wages, conditions, holiday entitlements and redundancy agreements.

The Thatcher Government did not introduce the regulations on their own initiative. The natural instinct of her Government was to undercut workers' rights, not to protect them. The regulations were introduced in 1981 as a result of European Community law, because they were meant to implement EC directive 770/187, which first came into force in 1979.

It took the then Tory Government two years to pass the United Kingdom legislation to give effect to this directive. Even then they tried to get off the European hook of being forced to protect workers' rights under existing contracts by excluding from the TUPE regulations transfers in the public sector described as involving non-commercial ventures. The exact words were:

> "Does not include any undertaking or part of an undertaking which is not of a commercial venture".

Since then, the phrase

[Mr. John McAllion]

> "not in the nature of a commercial venture"

has been interpreted as excluding from the TUPE regulations the contracting out of public services such as catering, laundry services and cleaning services. With the ever closer European union of which we are now a part, the Government could not go on getting away with this for ever. The TUPE regulations are clearly in breach of the European directive.

Recently, the TUPE regulations' credibility received two massive blows—first, from the ruling by the European Court of Justice in the Sophie Rodmond Stichting case; and, secondly, from the High Court ruling secured by the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education, in the judicial review against the Secretary of State for Education.

The European Commission has already begun proceedings against the United Kingdom Government for failure to implement the directive correctly since 1979. Moreover, clause 26 of the new Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill effectively accepts that TUPE is in breach of the directive and goes some way towards trying to remedy that. It is clearly an attempt by the Government to head off the European Commission before it drags them through the European Court for being in breach of the directive—an attempt which is unlikely to work because clause 26 goes nowhere near meeting all the EC criticisms of the Government's failure to implement.

All this leaves us in an interesting situation. A number of civil service departments are already beginning to apply TUPE to contracting out. The Central Office of Information has applied TUPE to the contracting out of its photocopying services. The Department for National Savings has applied TUPE to a catering contract that it is putting out to tender, and many other Departments have delayed their market testing programmes while they seek legal advice.

A report in the *Financial Times*—dear to the heart of the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam—is headed:

> "FO drops plan for contracting-out".

It goes on to say:

> "The Foreign Office announced last night that it had suspended preparations to contract out services because of new regulations protecting workers' pay and conditions when they transfer to the private sector.
>
> The Foreign Office lead is likely to be followed by other departments and underlines the extent to which the government's £1bn programme of contracting out has been thrown into confusion by the regulations."

The Minister may try to deny it, but the source for the story was an official Foreign Office on-the-record briefing, given at its press office to the journalists concerned.

I also have a copy of a letter from the Welsh Office to general managers of district health authorities and other groups which says:

> "The issue has arisen as a result of a request for guidance for South Glamorgan Health Authority in relation to catering contracts and we have suggested to the Authority that they should take no further steps to let contracts to a private contractor until we have legal advice. We are drawing this to the attention of all Health Authorities and NHS Trusts so that they can take the fact into account in current market testing exercises."

I also have a letter from the Home Office to the Home Office trade union which says:

> "The application of TUPE to contracting out is a very complex area and ought to be considered, and legal advice taken if appropriate, before the tender documents are sent out since it will significantly affect the position of any tenderer. The general line the Home Office intends to take is that pending clarification from the centre, Invitations to Tender would make it clear that TUPE does apply unless Legal Adviser's Branch have confirmed otherwise."

Some might ask whether all this matters. Yes, it does matter, because if TUPE applies to the transfer of workers from the civil service to the private sector, many contractors will be deterred from bidding for such work. The only way in which the in-house bid can be undercut is by slashing the wages and conditions of the workers involved.

A transcript of the Radio 4 programme "Face The Facts" records John Cutner of Onyx UK, one of the companies involved in trying to win contracts from the public sector, as saying:

> "I think it would slightly emasculate what the Government's intention was behind the Compulsory Competitive Tendering regulations which is to reduce the costs to local authorities by opening it up to private sector tendering which would mean that if the private sector win, the employees would effectively be employed on normal private sector conditions."

That means lower wages and worse conditions.

> "Therefore, if the regulations are changed, and we would be obliged to take over the ex-council employees on the existing conditions, this of course would mean that our price would be higher and the price of all our competitors would be higher."

Mr. John Hall, chairman of the CBI's competing for quality committee, has already been quoted. He has said:

> "On the face of it, there is no longer any point in companies taking part in tenders for public services."

Mr. Hall said that contractors might find it hard to take on existing work forces profitably.

The Minister may argue that it does not matter if the private sector does not try to get the jobs that he is putting through the market testing programme, but it does matter. How else will the 44,000 new jobs be market-tested and put into the private sector if no private sector companies are prepared to pay for existing wages and conditions in the civil service?

The Minister once said that he was interested only in the most competitive supplier and that whether it was public or private did not matter to him; he was interested only in value for money. That is what he tells the House of Commons, but I have here a note from the Treasury which was sent to the principal finance officers, principal establishment officers and others, paragraph 2 of which clearly says:

> "The Government's policy is to restrict the size of the public sector and in general the presumption is that services should wherever possible be provided by the private sector rather than the public sector".

The Government's policy is to privatise as much of the public sector as possible. If the TUPE regulations are to be applied they will not be able to achieve the aim of privatising those jobs.

In the past decade, tens of thousands of workers in local government, the national health service and the civil service have lost their jobs or had their wages cut and their conditions made worse as a result of contracting out. Clause 26 in the new employment Bill cannot be applied retrospectively and nor can the TUPE regulations. But the European directive, which came into force in Britain in 1979, can be applied retrospectively.

Trade unions will be making sure that applications are made to the European Court to apply that directive retrospectively to workers affected by it since 1979. Far from contracting out being at the heart of the

Government's agenda in the 1990s, the Minister will find that it will be driven off that agenda by the application of the European directive.

9.24 pm

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): As time is short, I will go to the heart of the matter. It has been argued that this debate is about different issues. We heard from the hon. Member for the City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) that it is about the state of a portakabin on Chester station, and from the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) that it has to do with matters such as dog training. Earlier, the Chancellor of the Duchy said that it was nothing more than a question of management adjustment, yet important voices outside the House who understand the issues—I do not mean just the civil service unions—say that market testing is a major constitutional change and ought to be treated as such.

A new managerialism is sweeping across public services throughout the western and eastern world, and it encompasses all ideological perspectives. The key issue is the terms on which it is implemented, yet the House has not quite grasped that. I may add that, although it is late on Thursday evening, it is shameful that only a dozen right hon. and hon. Members are present in the Chamber to debate such a major change.

The Government are determined to cut the public sector, costs and size of the civil service using a variety of strategies and from a number of directions. The terms on which they are doing so give everything away. Are the Government really concerned about the citizen rather than consumers? The apostrophe in "The Citizen's Charter" is very important. A consumer is concerned about a school's position in the league table, whereas a citizen is concerned about the quality of all the schools in the league table.

That is the crucial distinction between the approach to public services on this side of the House and that taken by the Government. One attitude is, "I'm all right, Jack," and the other is, "How is Jack down the road doing?" That will always be the fundamental ideological difference between the Labour and Conservative parties.

If cost-cutting were not the thrust behind the Government's actions, we would be considering the quality of public services and, for example, measures to extend the activities of the National Audit Office. The most recent report of the Comptroller and Auditor General states that there is massive scope for fast dealing —for making a fast buck and for fraud—in the contracting-out process.

We would also be arguing, given the new spread of Government activity, that only 50 value-for-money audits annually are inadequate. If cost-cutting is not the Government's prime consideration, they would not have resisted the establishing of a Select Committee to examine the citizens charter process. We are told that the charter goes to the core of Government policy, yet they refuse monitoring and regulation and do everything themselves.

The danger signs are seen every time that a right hon. or hon. Member receives a letter from a Minister—as I have, every week for the past three weeks—stating, "Don't write to me any more about these issues—write to the head of the agency." The danger signs are seen every time that we see the fragmentation of the civil service and hear from constituents about quality being driven down because of a preoccupation with cutting costs.

Last week, a local authority carpenter asked me, "Why am I told to use wood that I know is rotten? Because that is the only way that we could get the contract." The same story is told across the length and breadth of the public services, because no independent, external, regulatory agency is monitoring what is happening.

Conservative Members completely misrepresent our approach to public services. Two approaches are currently on offer. The first can simply be called "business government". We have heard of it through the ages: it basically means, "Turn the business of government over to business men." In the past, it has been presented from time to time as an eccentric opinion; this is the first time that it has been taken seriously and placed at the heart of government.

My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley) talked about Stalin, but that approach is really Lenin's idea of getting rid of policy and turning it into administration. What the Government are offering is one version of the end of politics: politics, representation and participation become irrelevant, and everything is dissolved into administration.

The second approach on offer is our approach. We propose a renewal of the public service tradition, to make it much more powerful and responsive to users. One approach renews the tradition; the other damages it, and may even destroy it.

9.30 pm

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): Despite the small number of hon. Members who are present, I applaud the quality of the debate—even if I cannot applaud the quantity.

Opposition Members feel strongly that we are tremendously well served by our public service—in the civil service, local authorities, the national health service, schools and, indeed, the House. Certainly the civil service is represented in the Officials' Box in terms of quantity, and I presume that there is quality there, too.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson) summed up Labour's position admirably. We are in favour of efficiency and quality, but we are also in favour of extending access and choice. We want to empower people. However, we are also in favour of change when it is proved to be necessary. The Government seem to view the public services purely in terms of a contractual relationship between consumer and provider. We care about the consumer too, but many of our citizens are in no position to have their needs met, and the Government and the community must help to meet those needs.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam), I have no children—indeed, tonight's Opposition Front Bench is very much a childless one. That, however, does not lessen my commitment to extending and developing the provision of good-quality child care for everyone.

Let me mention some aspects that the Minister has not dealt with in detail. First, the citizens charter promised to make the business of government more open and acceptable, and therefore more accountable. Similar claims were made at the launch of the next steps programme. The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee's last report on next steps made the following recommendation:

[Ms. Kate Hoey]

> "The provision of information is vital if agencies are to be accepted by Parliament and the public. We consider it a necessary counterweight to the Minister's voluntary relinquishing of control over matters of routine."

The Select Committee welcomed the publication of business and corporate plans and recommended that

> "all agencies should publish them, unless there are pressing commercial reasons which make this inappropriate".

The Government added that it was necessary

> "to protect other sensitive information".

There are, in fact, at least 41 agencies whose corporate plans are tagged "commercial—in confidence", and are therefore unavailable for public scrutiny. At least 30 agencies' business plans are similarly restricted. The situation reaches farcical proportions in some agencies. For example, the Transport Research Laboratory describes its business plans as "commercial—in confidence", but they are available for £995. That is commercial, but it is confidential only to the general public. The only people who will benefit are large motor manufacturers and the road industry lobby; few members of the public will do so. We heard little about open government from the Minister.

I am pleased that the Government are catching up on our commitment to decentralise such services closer to the communities that they serve, but I repeat that many of their policies often serve to erode local democracy and accountability.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster added little to the prospects for improving the civil service. The announcement that up to 44,000 of the 560,000 civil service jobs are to be market-tested will have been a sharp pre-Christmas blow to the morale of the service. The Minister has conceded that good morale is vital to the implementation of quality public services, and we agree, so how on earth does he expect the morale of the Inland Revenue's typing and secretarial staff in Glasgow to be anything other than at rock bottom when they read in an advertisement in *The Times* that their jobs are likely to be given to others in January?

Many hon. Members have expressed concern about the serious issue of confidentiality. The independence, impartiality, objectivity and confidentiality of the civil service are being undermined by market testing and privatisation. Much sympathy has been expressed for the personal difficulties of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but many of our constituents constantly experience similar problems with debt companies, hire purchase companies and, indeed, banks. That is the reality of private sector involvement in confidential areas.

The role of the civil service is solely to serve the Government of the day. The role of private companies is much more varied and they have a number of different interests. Civil servants in the Inland Revenue have an exemplary record on confidentiality. The civil service is respected as being objective and free from outside influence. If we go ahead with this proposal, we shall be going down a slippery road indeed.

Mr. Knapman: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Hoey: I cannot, because I know that the Minister wants 20 minutes compared with my 15 minutes.

If the Government are determined to push through such changes on dogmatic grounds, I hope that they will at least have the good sense to agree to our request to implement all necessary measures to ensure objectivity. I call on the Minister to accept our invitation to form an independent body to advise on the maintenance of confidentiality in services being considered for privatisation and to regulate and monitor confidentiality post-privatisation.

I move a little from the civil service to draw some parallels with public servants in local authorities. Compulsory competitive tendering has been central to the Government's approach to local government. How can they seriously propose to introduce market testing and privatisation into branches of the civil service at the whim of Ministers, as was stated tonight, and on a strategic basis without considering an in-house bid? The Minister must reply to the questions that we have asked about in-service bids. If a service is efficiently and effectively provided by civil servants and if local managers and workers believe that they can beat off external bidders, are the Government saying that managers and workers will not be allowed to bid? That would not offer a level playing field and would be similar to ordering the team off before they had been allowed to start the game.

Many examples have been given, particularly by my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley), of good practices by Labour authorities that owe everything to good management and local accountability. My hon. Friend the Member for Redcar cited many examples of privatised services getting it wrong, and I shall contrast that with one or two examples of how Labour councils have got it right, in-house.

York has already been mentioned, but I also cite the London borough of Merton, which, after moving to Labour control, found itself able to rebuild many of the services which had been dismantled by the former Conservative administration. In the aftermath of the utterly conclusive rejection of opting out by schools, including the Prime Minister's school, the council has been able to offer in-house cleaning contracts of a better standard and at a winning price, compared with the existing privatised service That has been achieved through better management, and by paying a sufficiently decent wage to avoid the problems of low morale, high turnover, frequent sickness and low commitment to the job. Better pay and conditions, happier staff and cleaner schools are all possible, because the council is not trying simply to make a fast buck out of the exercise.

Newcastle city council provides another example. It runs an architects department so successful, especially in designing energy conservation schemes, that it is in great demand from the private sector. The market has shown that the service is not only cheaper but better overall. Only the Government's absurd rules prevent the department from selling its expertise to the private sector, insisting that it be sold only to other councils.

I hope that their own experience will enable hon. Members from both sides of the House to see through the Government's boasts about cutting costs. The hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) made an interesting speech, showing an intelligent scepticism and open-mindedness. Unfortunately, he is no longer in the Chamber—or perhaps it is just as well that he cannot hear me praising him. The hon. Gentleman pointed to many of the deficiences in the Government's handling of the move towards privatisation, and he asked, as we all should, whether we are going down the right road to improving quality.

The hon. Member for Suffolk, Central urged caution over British Rail privatisation, too. Despite the rail charter, InterCity has already applied to the Department of Transport to downgrade some of the standards and Network SouthEast has applied to downgrade the Kent coastal line services on the grounds of inability to maintain operating equipment due to lack of investment and falling passenger receipts. A charter for train passengers is not much good if they do not have a train to travel on in the first place.

Elsewhere, in other branches of public service, the Government are forcing through change for change's sake. Will they not concede the basic principle that quality and value for money are improved by good and responsive management and by motivated work forces, working to meet the aims of their local communities? Those shared aims are not achieved simply as a result of being in the private sector or the public sector. They are certainly not achieved by cuts in funding, which inevitably lead to cuts in services.

I hope that the Government have taken on board the many constructive comments which have been made this evening and will feel able to build on the areas of agreement and deal with the concerns raised, rather than simply exaggerating and misrepresenting the areas on which we fundamentally disagree. I hope that the Minister will undertake to return to the House with some answers and some concrete and positive proposals to address those important questions.

9.43 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): I begin by welcoming the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) on what I believe was her debut at the Dispatch Box—and very elegantly she carried it out.

A combination of events this week has given the House a full opportunity to discuss the future of the public services. There was question time on Monday; we published the citizens charter White Paper yesterday, and there was a statement and a debate on that. We had debates last week on the Second Reading and the Committee stage of the Civil Service (Management Functions) Bill. Tonight we have this debate.

We can all agree that that has been a welcome opportunity to debate an important set of subjects. I agree with the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) on that, and I share his regret that others have not seen the importance of the issues at stake in this debate.

The debates have brought out clearly the range, the depth and the strength of the Government's commitment to the public service and to the improvement of the public service. They have also brought out clearly the strength of our commitment to the public service, to its staff, to its traditions, to its values and to its ethos. Nothing in our reforms is inconsistent with that commitment.

I was also happy to note how this debate has brought out the extent of agreement between the parties about what our objectives for the public services should be, and about the need to maintain and to improve the quality of our public services. That was very welcome. However, from the speech by the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) and from the tone and the temper of many other speeches by Opposition Members, it appears that there continue to be some disagreements between the Government and the Opposition about the means to the shared end of public service improvements.

I can express the difference simply. The Government are committed to public service; the Opposition are committed to public provision. A real difference in perspective is summed up there. The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood spoke briefly, but pregnantly, when he pointed out that there was a new managerialism sweeping the world. That has led the Government to seek to identify clearly each particular function within the public service and to put it on to a more businesslike basis. The key to that—I will deal with the point made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson) later—is a clearer specification of the objectives of each function and the embodiment of those clearer specifications in contracts.

The hon. Member for Redcar does not seem to quarrel with that stage of the analysis. She appears to go along with the view of the left-wing think tanks and of some of the progressive Labour authorities in favouring the idea of management by contract. However, she seems to draw back—this is the key point between us—from the next logical stage of the process.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) percipiently asked, having established a contractual relationship between a Minister and a public sector adviser, why not test the competitiveness of the potential public sector contractors by enabling the private sector to compete for the contract? I put it to the hon. Member for Redcar that it simply is not logical to say, as she seems to, that she is in favour of market testing provided that the private sector is not permitted to compete for the contract. After all, what else is market testing but testing in the marketplace? Why are the Opposition caught up in that illogicality?

I can think of only one explanation, which was sapiently pointed out by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), who told me that he could not be here for the winding-up speeches. The explanation is the Labour party's prejudice against the private sector. That was reflected all too eloquently—it made up most of the speech by the hon. Member for Redcar—in the catalogue of petty criticisms of the private sector. It embodied all the old Labour party prejudices against private business.

Mr. McAllion: Will the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 apply to every civil service job that is put out to competitive tender?

Mr. Jackson: I will come to the hon. Gentleman's point about TUPE, so he does not need to remind me of it.

Another old Labour party prejudice was on display tonight—the prejudice in favour of high spending on producer interests. I pick up a point made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) by referring to a point that was well made by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland).

It is surprising to hear a distinguished member of the Public Accounts Committee speak slightingly of the Government's perfectly proper concern to ensure that the cost to the taxpayer of providing public service is kept at the lowest level compatible with satisfactory quality. How can the hon. Gentleman allow himself to slight that approach—especially as he will, I am sure, have heard what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of

[Mr. Jackson]

Lancaster said about our agreement with the Treasury that all savings from market testing will be retained by the Departments concerned and will be ploughed back into the services they provide to the public?

The hon. Member for Vauxhall asked me about two points of detail, the first of them on in-house bids. We encourage in-house bids in the context of market testing but we are not insisting that they should be mandatory. That would, in effect, give a veto to the employees concerned. We cannot compel employees to put in a bid: if they do not come forward, that should not exclude market testing.

Confidentiality has arisen again and again. We do not accept the Opposition's idea, which seems to be that servants of the public who work in the private sector have a lower standard of integrity than public servants who work in the public sector.

To the hon. Members for Truro and for York (Mr. Bayley), I would say that it is not good enough to complain that some targets for public services are not being met. Of course some of them are not being met. It would be deeply suspicious if all our targets were met.

I see that the hon. Member for York is in his place. He asked a series of specific questions about performance against targets under the patients charter. They were good questions and I shall come back to him later on the detailed points that he raised. Meanwhile, I remind him, and others who have made comments about targets, that targets for the public service are now being set for the first time and that the performance of those services against those targets is now being monitored for the first time. That is what is new and what is important.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) on a graceful and witty speech and on acting during the debate as my honorary parliamentary private secretary—he will soon be a real PPS, I am sure. He brought out well the important point that the Government's programme for public service reform is welcomed by many people working in the public service who see in that programme opportunities to do better, both in terms of assuming new responsibilities and in terms of providing better-quality services. My hon. Friend was also right to stress that investment in the public service is not only a matter of investment of cash; it is a matter of investing in new thinking, new structures and better management.

I should not like to forget the point made by the hon. Member for Truro, to which I now return. He asked whether the Government were ensuring that the users of public services were being consulted about the setting of targets. The answer to his question is yes, and I invite him to look at the citizens charter White Paper, which details our plans for regular surveys of the customers of public services.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) made an eloquent speech, bringing home from personal and professional knowledge the importance of the new courts charter launched yesterday. I hope that he will maintain his close interest in the courts charter and assist us in the Office of Public Service and Science and the whole House in the work of applying that charter and progressively improving its effectiveness—because we intend that our charters should be upgraded and improved in the light of experience.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam made a valuable point about the concerns expressed, especially by the hon. Member for Hodge Hill, about jobs in the civil service. She pointed out that market testing does not necessarily entail any net loss of jobs. Jobs will stay in house if the in-house team provide the best value for money. Where contracting out offers better value for money, I give the assurance that contractors will be encouraged to take relevant staff; otherwise, Departments —again, I give an assurance—will make every effort to redeploy staff or absorb them through natural wastage. That has happened in the vast majority of cases in the past four years, and I see no reason why it should not continue to be the pattern of market testing in future.

The hon. Member for Govan continued in the thoughtful and constructive vein of his speeches on Second Reading and in Committee—where he made an active contribution—on the Civil Service (Management Functions) Bill. He articulated his fears about the fragmentation of the civil service and the loss of what he called a holistic sense of responsibility in the new regime by the management of contracts and competitive tendering.

The Government recognise that that could be a danger, but it will happen only if the policy is pressed to exaggerated lengths, which I do not believe will happen. Our watchwords in the policy of market testing will be balance and common sense, and I have no doubt that that will be in conformity with the mood of public servants who, like the hon. Member for Govan, exhibit a sense of balance and common sense. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), asked about the implications of the TUPE regulations for market testing. I am happy to give the hon. Gentleman the assurance he sought: the TUPE regulations do not conflict with the contracting out or market testing of work in the public sector.

Mr. McAllion: Will the TUPE regulations apply in every case in which a civil service job is put out to competitive tender?

Mr. Jackson: The TUPE regulations have always applied to transfers. The amendment to another Bill that the Standing Committee is examining simply makes it clear that the regulations can apply irrespective of the commercial status of the employer. That being the case, organisations tendering under the compulsory competitive tendering programme must take into account the possible effects of the regulations and directives. There is nothing new in that.

I turn to the characteristically thoughtful speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord), who emphasised the importance of leadership. I agree with him. The key point which I hope he will recognise is that the changes which we are making to the structure of public services will create new opportunities for leadership in the provision of public services.

The central theme of our management changes is devolution and decentralisation of responsibility, together with a much clearer specification of the performance standards. Local leadership is responsible for the delivery of those standards. My hon. Friend will have seen that leadership at work in the schools and hospitals in his constituency. The principle will be applied increasingly widely in other fields of public service.

Many of the speakers in this interesting and worthwhile debate about the public service have focused on the citizens charter. That is right and proper, because the citizens charter is the part of the Government's public service reform agenda which is most visible to our constituents. I stress the connection between the citizens charter and our public service reform agenda.

Too many people, especially in the London media, have not yet understood that the citizens charter is not simply a set of pious aspirations. The charter is integrally bound up with the far-reaching changes that we are making in the machinery of government. The essence of the changes lies in the combination of decentralisation and responsibility for service delivery with the specification of performance targets and the embodiment of those targets in contracts which are increasingly open to competition. That will provide a powerful mechanism for systematically drafting standards of quality and performance in the public sector.

Let me simply say that this is the agenda for the 1990s. Although we are grateful for signs of support from the Opposition for the agenda, I am nevertheless happy that this debate has confirmed that the agenda continues to be dominated by the Conservative party.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

UN Peacekeeping Operations

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

9.59 pm

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I am delighted to have this opportunity to draw to the attention of the House, as I last did in an Adjournment debate in March 1989 and 10 years before that, the expansion and success of the United Nations peacekeeping operations. I also want to mention some of the current problems and put forward ideas on future developments.

I warmly welcome my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who has recently taken over responsibility for this area of policy. This short decade will given him the opportunity to tell the House his personal thinking on this topic and the official views of the Foreign Office. His speech will be listened to and read in *Hansard* tomorrow with great care.

The award of the Nobel peace prize in 1988 to United Nations peacekeeping forces highlighted the renewed interest in that form of intervention and its part in the peaceful settlement of disputes. It highlighted the ending of the vastly disagreeable, dangerous and wasteful cold war. It gave a new emphasis to the work of the United Nations and its charter.

Russia now supports the United Nations in the peacekeeping aspect of its international responsibilities. There have been many—clearly far too many—new demands on United Nations peacekeeping. Commitments have grown far faster than resources. Let me define my terms. I see peacekeeping as the use of an international——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Mr. Townsend: I see peacekeeping as the use of an international force by invitation to reduce violence. I am not discussing the use of military force to liberate a country such as Kuwait, impose order or suppress an opponent. I shall not refer this evening to the protection of the Kurds in Iraq or the need for better protection of the marsh Arabs in southern Iraq. My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister will be interested to know that I hope to have a chance to refer to the marsh Arabs tomorrow morning.

As a former regular soldier, I believe that peacekeeping has become an essential part in the 1990s of the work done by the United Nations for international harmony and, above all, security. Obviously, peacekeeping must always be properly and carefully considered and then authorised by the Security Council in New York.

I am acutely aware of some obvious problems today, but surely there is one area of United Nations activity in which we can build on progress already made. It would be a dereliction of duty not to try to do so. I am describing an invention of the United Nations which is still evolving in a variety of forms to match a range of problems. It may take the form of patrolling buffer zones between two armed opponents or checking troop levels or even making sure that elections are not disrupted by violence. Nothing quite like that role existed for the old League of Nations. It is not even mapped out in the charter.

[Mr. Townsend]

For several decades, at least one United Nations force has been on duty at any given time in some corner of the globe. Many thousands of soldiers have given their lives while attempting to keep the peace. Substantially more than 100,000 soldiers from one third of the world's armies have worn the pale blue beret or helmet. Japanese soldiers have just joined the ranks of the United Nations.

United States forces watched over the two truces of 1948 between Israel and its Arab neighbours. In 1949 they watched over the ceasefire in Kashmir and showed the world that a relatively small number of military observers could help to maintain a ceasefire. In 1956, after the Suez fiasco, they supervised the withdrawal of Israeli, British and French forces. In 1960, events in the Congo tied up 20,000 United Nations soldiers for four years.

I suggest that UN peacekeeping has been shown by experience since 1948 to be more effective than unilateral, bilateral or multilateral intervention from outside the control of the United Nations. The ill-fated multinational force in the Lebanon, in which the United Kingdom took part under American control, helps to make my point.

I turn to Britain's sterling contribution to United Nations peacekeeping. I only wish that it were better known. One purpose of this debate is to give it some publicity. British soldiers have proved themselves particularly good at peacekeeping. They know how to be firm but fair. Years of using minimum force in aid of a civil power in Borneo, Aden, Belize and Zimbabwe have given them an enviable record, which few other countries can match.

Peacekeeping is superb training for our defence forces, giving them a rare opportunity for overseas service outside Germany, which has real value for the young non-commissioned officer and the newly joined soldier who seeks a bit of excitement.

Recently, British signallers served with the United Nations force in Namibia. They performed with every satisfaction and, I have no doubt, reaped enormous benefits from their time with the other troops in the United Nations transitional assistance group, UNTAG, in a fascinating part of southern Africa. It was no surprise to me that Britain was subsequently asked to send a training team to Namibia, which leaves in April next year, its work being completed.

I am not convinced that the study of UN-style peacekeeping receives sufficient attention in the British Army. I am advised by those in a position to know that training in peacekeeping of officers and units could be further improved. They know a lot—they do not know all there is to know. The Nordic countries are perhaps better than us at co-ordinating the training of staff and technical officers for duties within United Nations peacekeeping forces.

The Minister will know that British soldiers will be asked to do far more work for the United Nations and they must be 100 per cent. trained for it. May I please be told in a letter how much time a British officer gives in cadet and staff colleges in 1992 to the study of United Nations peacekeeping?

A few years ago I spent a fascinating morning with 40 Royal Marine Commando, who were on duty with the United Nations along the so-called green line in Nicosia and had reached a rare peak of proficiency. I should like to ask the Minister about the United Kingdom contribution to the United Nations force in Cyprus. We play the main role within that force, which has been in Cyprus since the ethnic fighting in 1964, and we administer it from our sovereign bases—a major undertaking.

The United Kingdom force is to be reduced by 100, from a total of 755, as part of a general reduction in troop levels. Of the other three contributors, Denmark plans to withdraw its entire 341 strong contingent; Austria is to reduce its commitment from 410 to about 300; and Canada will reduce its 575 troops to 510. We are told that those countries feel that their contributions could be better deployed elsewhere; and of course there will be financial considerations. Incidentally, it is wrong that the burden is borne by the Foreign Office and not by the Ministry of Defence.

The latest effort to solve the Cyprus problem has failed and our decision has been ill-received in Cyprus. What talks took place with President Vassiliou—a wonderful Commonwealth leader—before our announcement? Turkey has an occupying force of more than 20,000 in the north and the Greek Cypriots believe that a thinning out of United Nations forces will put the south at a disadvantage. It would also suggest a lack of interest in Cyprus. As a guarantor power, Britain has a special and unique responsibility for that beautiful but tragic European island.

I move on to Cambodia, where I am proud of our experienced military observers with the United Nations transitional authority in Cambodia, UNTAC. However, the news from that unfortunate country is very disturbing and the United Nations peace force may collapse, endangering United Nations troops taking part in that large and expensive operation. There have been all too many ceasefire violations. Violence and intimidation are widespread and the elections are in jeopardy. I hear that the dreaded Khmer Rouge is increasing the area it controls. The House will want to hear the latest news on the situation from my right hon. and learned Friend.

Hon. Members will wish me to raise the question of our involvement in the former Yugoslavia, where there are well-armed warlords, thugs and bandits as well as the established military forces. While I fully supported the dispatch of medical personnel, engineers and signallers to the UN forces before the House rose for the summer recess, I have grave reservations about the dispatch of the Cheshire Regiment, a fine, down-to-earth and highly professional unit with an outstanding commanding officer. They have been placed in a difficult and vulnerable position. The carrying of humanitarian aid is normally left to United Nations agencies and civilian transport. I wish the battalion well and know that it will perform well, but I hope that it will be withdrawn before too long. The Government know as well as I do how easy it is to commit troops and how difficult it is subsequently to withdraw them.

We are grappling with centuries-old feuds in difficult, heavily wooded and mountainous country. There is a strict limit on how much can be achieved and how much Britain should get involved. In that respect, Turkey and eight Balkan countries have urged the development of UN forces in Kosovo. Where do the Government stand on that request?

I must refer to the UN forces in Lebanon. Few people appreciate that Britain administers that force, too, from our sovereign base in Cyprus. Since it was established in

1978, the force has suffered 200 fatalities. Its mandate must be strengthened. Israel is responsible for the South Lebanese army, which regularly fires on UNIFIL soldiers. I deplore what has been happening in southern Lebanon. Israel should withdraw forthwith, as required by UN resolution 425, and UNIFIL must be allowed to deploy to the international border.

The time is ripe to look anew at the money and machinery for, and conduct of, UN peacekeeping operations. At a time when the UN has acquired a wider and generally more accepted role, it is essential that some changes are made. At present, there is a crisis over funding. Britain has a superb record of paying the UN the full amount on time. The United States has a disgraceful record and owes $202 million to the separate and vital peacekeeping account. It plans to pay that over a five-year period, but the money and example are needed now.

Does the Minister support the call for the reactivation of the military staff committee with a wider membership and better terms of reference? Why should countries such as Canada, Nepal and Fiji, which can boast considerable peacekeeping experience, be excluded in the 1990s? Does he consider that the standard operating procedures for United Nations forces are adequate and, if not, how can they be improved?

I would like to see the assembling of a cadre of international experts to facilitate the dispatch of United Nations forces. It would include specialists in logistics, communications and training. They should be given a proper database which would cover who could be called on and how much notice would be required. In recent years, the construction of the United Nations force has frequently looked clumsy and amateurish.

It is important also that United Nations peacekeepers have access to the latest appropriate technology. That includes satellite communications and navigational aids, night surveillance equipment, including infra-red aids and listening devices such as our troops employ at night in Northern Ireland. To illustrate my point, electronic devices could help to reduce the possibility of surprise attack across the border and help to reduce tensions in the area.

Could consideration also be given to that cadre at the United Nations having a highly-trained and mobile disaster relief element? That could assist particularly in poorer and less developed countries after earthquakes, cyclones or major chemical or nuclear leaks.

I hope that I have said enough to activate the Government. Britain could and should use its privileged position as a permanent member of the Security Council to strengthen the world body's peacekeeping role. Unless we are careful, demand for United Nations peacekeeping will far exceed the United Nations' military and financial resources.

Experience suggests that a comparatively small United Nations force can reduce tension and limit aggression, thus giving diplomats a chance to reach a peaceful settlement of an international dispute. United Nations peacekeeping has proved itself. It is good news and practical. It is no woolly, over-idealistic pipedream. The blue helmets have been a success in many difficult and complex situations. It would be splendid to see this country mark out the way forward at the United Nations.

10.15 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on selecting this subject for the Adjournment debate. It is an important issue which he has raised in the past and it is right that the House should focus on peacekeeping by the United Nations. I accept my hon. Friend's definition of the term "peacekeeping" and I think that I can respond within the definition to many of the questions that he has posed.

One has only to look at the newspapers to see evidence of the increasingly important role being played by the United Nations in conflicts the world over. In Croatia, Bosnia, Cambodia, Angola, Mozambique and Somalia, United Nations personnel are engaged in trying to solve a range of different problems. Those are only the operations receiving current attention in the newspapers. There are many more: Cyprus, central America and the middle east, all of which contribute to the resolution of local conflicts.

There has been a dramatic expansion in United Nations peacekeeping in recent years, in terms of both numbers of operations and numbers of troops on the ground. Since 1988, 13 new peacekeeping operations have been established—the same number as in the whole period between 1948 and 1987. At the beginning of 1992, the number of United Nations civil and military personnel deployed on peacekeeping operations was about 11,500. Today, the figure is some 51,000, and rising.

Not only has the number of operations increased; so, too has the complexity of those operations. The United Nations transitional authority in Cambodia, the United Nation's biggest and most ambitious operation to date, is effectively administering the country in the run-up to the elections, in addition to its talks of repatriating refugees, training in mine clearance, holding human rights education campaigns and registering voters—to name but a few of UNTAC's responsibilities.

The United Kingdom's involvement in UN peacekeeping operations has also increased substantially in recent years. With the recent deployment in Bosnia, there will be more than 3,000 British troops on the ground under UN command, making us the third largest troop contributor after France and Canada. We have also seconded experienced military staff to the field operations division in the UN to help to improve the logistics back-up for UN forces on the ground.

My hon. Friend rightly said that the United Kingdom forces bring great skills to bear, and there are further skills that they can learn. He was correct to identify the Nordic countries as a source of those further skills. We are looking to the Nordic countries for the possibility of further training. My hon. Friend is entirely right when he says that service with peacekeeping forces will become an ever-increasing part of the military career of the average British soldier.

My hon. Friend referred specifically to Bosnia. You, Madam Speaker, and other hon. Members will have watched with considerable pride and concern the deployment of British troops in Bosnia, particularly those from the Cheshire Regiment. They are clearly doing an extremely important job in circumstances that are difficult and that are sure to become more difficult as the winter closes in.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces covered our involvement in Bosnia in detail

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

in last week's debate, so I shall not go into too much detail now. My hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath raised the issue of the length of deployment, which is 12 months. We shall review the possibility of a further extension of that deployment towards the end of the 12 months. At the end of that period, we must determine whether it would be right further to extend the time that British troops spend in Bosnia.

As my hon. Friend well knows, the purpose of the troops is humanitarian. Their purpose is, essentially, to convey humanitarian supplies, and also, in appropriate circumstances, to escort refugees. Their purpose is not to fight their way through but to proceed by negotiation, although they have the ability to defend themselves and those for whom they have responsibility. They have already opened fire for that purpose.

My hon. Friend spoke of Kosovo and asked whether we would accede to the Turkish suggestion that there should be a United Nations peacekeeping force in Kosovo. It is important to remember that Kosovo is part of Serbia —a sovereign state. That fact distinguishes it from other parts of former Yugoslavia. At present, a team of observers from the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe is in Kosovo. The observers' principal purpose is to diffuse tension.

I see considerable advantages in the presence of a United Nations team of observers in Kosovo, as they could reinforce the efforts of the CSCE team. However, that would need the consent of the Government of Serbia because Kosovo is part of Serbia. I do not think that, at least for the foreseeable future, we shall see a peacekeeping force of the sort that I think that my hon. Friend envisages, in Kosovo. I make a distinction between a peacekeeping force and a team of observers.

The involvement in Bosnia demonstrates clearly the complex situation faced by United Nations forces on the ground—the appalling combination of ethnic conflict, territorial disputes and humanitarian tragedy is, unfortunately, becoming more and more commonplace, and does not make it an easy environment for United Nations troops.

The increase in the range and complexity of peacekeeping operations is putting enormous pressure on the Secretary-General and his staff. It was the recognition of this new environment that lay behind my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's proposal at the Security Council last January, endorsed by colleagues, for a report on ways in which the United Nations could reinforce its capacity for preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacemaking. The Secretary-General's report in response to this proposal was published in July.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in his speech to the United Nations General Assembly in September, the Community believes that the report contains a very important collection of proposals. Among these proposals are a number of new areas for United Nations activity, some of which are already resulting in concrete activity.

A good example is co-operation with regional organisations, and a good example of that is the way in which the United Nations and the European Community came together in the London conference to address the tragedy of what was Yugoslavia.

Another example also to be identified within what was Yugoslavia is preventive diplomacy. A current proposal to consider a pre-emptive United Nations presence in Macedonia is a good illustration of that. My hon. Friend did not particularly mention Macedonia, but I think that he too would welcome the possibility of a United Nations team of observers in Macedonia to assist in the defusing of tension.

Against the background of these positive proposals, a dialogue is going on between the United Nations secretariat and member states on the sort of forces that they might be prepared to make available to the United Nations for peacekeeping operations. The dialogue also addresses the kind of specific questions that my hon. Friend posed—for example, the question of the military committee. I believe that it would be premature for me, or indeed any other Minister, and probably for any Minister of any participating country, to reach any conclusive views at this stage.

My hon. Friend posed the question of the peacekeeping force in Cyprus and he is right in saying that this is another area where United Kingdom troops are playing a key role. There are about 800—he said 750, my brief says 800; there is not much between us—United Kingdom troops on the ground. The security position in Cyprus is now a great deal more stable than at any time since 1974 and it is the subject, of course, of continuing political dialogue under United Nations auspices. I very much hope that an agreement on a lasting settlement can be reached.

I certainly accept that the force has played a vital role in maintaining a climate in which it is possible for a settlement to be negotiated, but I think that the size and format of the force that is required to stabilise the situation have changed over time and I believe that it is possible to reduce the force present to enable contributing countries to contribute more troops to other parts of the world where the position is more acute.

I say specifically to my hon. Friend that I do not believe that the thinning out of the United Nations force in Cyprus reduces the security that is acquired by its presence. I do not believe that it is the numbers of the United Nations force in Cyprus that give stabilising security; I believe that it is the fact of its presence. Therefore, although I listened very carefully to what my hon. Friend said about the consequences of thinning out, so long as there is a substantial presence of United Nations forces in Cyprus, the strategic objective is attained.

A range of other questions will have to be addressed over a period. My hon. Friend, I know, has won the ballot for 4 December and I am to have the pleasure of responding to his debate then. I fancy that he and I will be pursuing this debate for some time to come, including tomorrow morning, Madam Speaker, because my hon. Friend hopes to catch your eye or the eye of one of your deputies in the course of tomorrow's debate. I look forward, therefore, to pursuing this discussion with my hon. Friend tomorrow and on 4 December.

That being so, I think that I have said enough tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 27 November 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

The Arab World

9.34 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I beg to move,

That this House calls for a reassessment of relations with the Arab world, in particular supporting the lifting of sanctions by the United Nations against Libya, encouraging the re-establishment of direct air-flights and diplomatic relations between London and Tripoli, discussions on the Lockerbie Pan Am 103 bombing, and the 1986 bombing of Tripoli and Benghazi, by Crown Office and Libyan lawyers, the lifting of sanctions by the United Nations against Iraq and the establishment of a United Nations Conference on the supply of arms across frontiers; and calls on the Minister of State at the Foreign Office to make an interim response on behalf of Her Majesty's Government to the allegations broadcast on the Dispatches programme on Channel Four on 25th November relating to Sarkis Soghanalian, Wafic Said, Prince Banda, Nhad Ghadry, Howard Teicher and Mark Thatcher.

A Friday in Parliament can be a day for dissenting and unpopular opinions to be heard.

I shall present my credentials for being entitled to such views—something that I have never done before in more than 30 years as a Member of this House—because the motion contains propositions that may be as ill-received by some Members on the Opposition Front Bench as by Ministers.

Both my parents spoke fluent Arabic. Fred Pearce, the author of a remarkable book "The Dammed", has written:

> "Only early this century did Sir William Willcocks, Britain's top imperial Victorian water engineer of the day, attempt to recreate the ancient irrigation systems, and in so doing fashioned much of modern Iraq. Central to his plan was the Hindaya barrage, completed in 1914."

My father was Willcock's military secretary and I have childhood memories of being taken to see my dad's friends, such as Freya Stark, the intrepid traveller, and Sir Leonard Woolley, the archaeologist of Ur of the Chaldees and excavator of the ziggurat at Ur. My father subsequently worked on the staff of Sir Percy Cox, who set up Kuwait.

On my honeymoon, when I was lucky enough to go to Egypt, I was invited to the private house of President Nasser—as was his wont—at midnight. I confess to being charmed by him. Sadly, he said, "We know that your mother and father spoke Arabic. Don't you think that you ought to learn?" My excuse is that British politics did not allow it. Albeit a non-Arabic speaker, with the perspective of having been influenced by the Israeli-oriented Dick Crossman, when I was his Parliamentary Private Secretary, I shall gently offer some proposals in keeping with my lifelong knowledge of, respect for and friendship with Arab people.

First, we should seek a new relationship with Libya, or rather return to our traditional friendship.

Yes, the shooting of Yvonne Fletcher was a crime. I am glad to see the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) in the House—on this occasion I shall call him my hon. Friend because his relationship with Libya has been entirely honourable and potentially to the great benefit of our country. I look forward with extreme interest to his speech.

Yes, the destruction of Gaddafi's home in Tripoli, the killing of his three-year-old daughter and the bombing of working-class homes in Benghazi in 1986 by bombers based in Britain was also a crime. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant)—whom I am especially glad to see in the House, as he has done so much good for Britain in many areas of the third world—will have more to say about that.

Yes, Lockerbie—as David Leppard put it in his book, "On the Trail of Terror"—was the biggest crime against western civilians since 1945. I went there.

Young policemen from the Lothian and Borders police, from my area, helped to clear up the human horror. I would not wish to be told that I underrate Lockerbie in any way.

But we should ask ourselves the mirror image question: would we British hand over to the Libyan judicial system—which, incidentally, has impressed those hard-headed Edinburgh lawyers involved—two Britons accused on evidence that has never been presented and which, in relation to Malta, has raised doubts in the minds of such men as Dr. Jim Swire and Father Patrick Keegans, of Sherwood crescent in Lockerbie, the men who have lost most?

If Jim Swire can go and meet Colonel Gaddafi and they can talk movingly about their lost daughters, so can the British Government proffer the hand of reconciliation. I ask the Minister of State to say something about his meeting with Dr. Swire on Monday, which I greatly welcomed.

The leader in *The Scotsman* of 14 November put it succinctly when it said:

> "The other major concern has been the way in which blame for the outrage has been pinned exclusively on Libya. There are well founded suspicions that Syria and Iran were implicated in the plot and that Iran may indeed have instigated the bombing. Yet officially the role of these two countries was swept under the carpet. It is therefore a step forward that the US president-elect, Bill Clinton, has told the family of an American victim that he intends to ensure that the question of Iranian and Syrian involvement will be addressed and fully answered."

What will the Government say to the new American Administration on this subject? The leader continued:

> "There will be an opportunity to broach the subject of tightening the UN sanctions after next month's meeting of the sanctions review committee; but any attempt to harden the economic stranglehold on Libya should be resisted until Clinton has had time to act on his promise and the role of Syria and Iran has been properly exposed."

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Hear, hear.

Mr. Dalyell: I note my hon. Friend's reaction. What is the Government's reaction to this? The leader also stated:

> "Libya, with friends, makes a convenient scapegoat—rather than stirring up trouble with two Middle Eastern states who are of greater importance to Western policy in the region. One can argue that this is *realpolitik* but that is no answer. Britain and the US owe it to the victims and their families to attempt to uncover the real circumstances and call the culprits to account. Clinton is right to want the truth—the whole truth—surrounding the Lockerbie bombing to be uncovered."

As was said at great length on Wednesday in European Standing Committee B, when my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) was present on the Front

[Mr. Dalyell]

Bench, there are grave concerns about the role of Iran and Syria in this matter. We should remember that one of the two accused, through his wife, has far more close relations with the terrorist gangs of Beirut than he has with Tripoli. There is a big question as to whether the Libyan state was involved at all.

I want to refer to another article in *The Scotsman* under the byline of Alan Hutchison—I have checked it with Father Keegans himself, the Catholic priest in Lockerbie, who has just been to the United States. The article states:

> "Fr Keegans claimed: 'The British and American governments want it all finished and parcelled up neatly. They have no real intention of bringing the Libyans to trial. I think they are just making noises.
>
> The cat does not want to catch the mouse because the mouse would not just squeal, but scream and implicate Syria, Iran, Bush and Thatcher.'"

That is Father Keegans' quote, not my gloss on it. If that is what the priest at Lockerbie thinks, I think that there should be an explanation of the agreement that has been widely reported, attributed to March 1989, between Mrs Thatcher and the United States President, Mr. Bush, to play Lockerbie down. What is the truth or otherwise of that? What was said between those two?

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Would it not be much easier to get at the truth if the Libyans were willing to send those who have been accused of this crime to the United Kingdom? It is all very well for the Libyans to shield them and then for the hon. Gentleman to weave his story, but it would be much better if those men faced British justice, which is known throughout the world to be impartial.

Mr. Dalyell: One answer to that question was given in European Standing Committee B on Wednesday. There are complications because if that was done Colonel Gaddafi might well be toppled in favour of militant Islam, because one of those accused is a member of the tribe of Major Jalloud, Colonel Gaddafi's very powerful second-in-command. My hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham knows what I am on about.

The other answer to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) is possibly a much easier one. If evidence were not presented, what would the hon. Gentleman say if two of his London constituents were dispatched by the British Government to Tripoli in the circumstances of the mirror image? I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has made as powerful a point as usual.

I believe that the Crown Office, about which, as the longest serving Member representing Scotland, I am pained to be deeply, deeply critical, should initiate a dialogue with Libyan lawyers on neutral territory. A year has passed since I went to see the then Lord Advocate, Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, to urge that action, but we are no further forward.

As my motion says, I believe that we should re-establish diplomatic relations with Tripoli. The Libyans, whose ancestors were among the greatest artists of the Roman empire and builders of the incomparable Leptis Magna, are a cultured people, yearning for contact with Britain, where many of them were educated.

If we had treated the Libyans with greater understanding and dignity in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, it was my impression from the visit that was organised through the good offices of my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham last year that the Libyans might never have been so misinformed as to become involved with the IRA in the first place. That would not have happened if we had remained, sensibly, on good relations with them.

We should re-establish direct air flights between London and Tripoli, both on the basis of medical need —about which my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham may talk, because he has raised the matter in the House frequently—and the needs of the 5,000 British citizens working in Libya. I do not just quote my opinion, because I telephoned and talked with Viscount Weir, the head of G and J Weir and Company Pumps, not exactly a pillar of the Labour party. The quote that we agreed that I should read out in the House from William Weir reads as follows:

> "I find little merit in posturing where trade is concerned and —in common with many exporters—prefer taking, as you do, a pragmatic and practical line in cases like Libya. Given our present balance of trade, little purpose is served in cutting off important markets of that kind when foreign competitors will supply them if we don't."

That is the view of one major industrialist.

I spoke about the matter last night with Gordon Law, managing director of Babcock and Wilcox. I have also raised with the Prime Minister the views of John Lacey, Babcock's managing director. So it is clear that yet another major British engineering firm other than Weir believes that we should re-establish relations and gain at least something from participating in some of the great projects that are taking place there, such as the great, ecologically sound man-made river project.

As the motion says, we urge the United Nations and the United States Administration to lift sanctions. I hope that next week, with the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) being first on the list, we shall return to the subject of the position of the United Nations.

I come to the question of Iraq, as raised in the motion. I begin from a totally different departure point from my Front Bench, though not from some of my hon. Friends who are here today and who care and know most about the issues of which I speak. I knew perfectly well that we were exporting considerable quantities of arms to Iraq. I knew from a UN official, for example, that he had to queue for his breakfast in the restaurant of the Rashid hotel in Baghdad, so packed was the place with arms salesman from Europe, including Britain.

I have been concerned for a long time with the question of arms sales. I recall the occasion in December 1979 when, on the Consolidated Fund Bill at 5.12 in the morning, I raised the subject of the joint centrifuge project at Almelo. I began my speech by saying:

> "Remembering Alan Nunn May, Bruno Pontecorvo, the Rosenbergs and even Klaus Fuchs, with his overall grasp of the concept of the physics of the atom bomb, it is arguable whether any of them, or, indeed, all of them together, jeopardised world peace to a greater extent than the activities, in the second half of the 1970s, of Dr. Abel Qader Khan.
>
> Certainly the effect of anything that Anthony Blunt may have done pales into trivial insignificance compared with the probable results of Dr. Khan's handiwork.
>
> We now have the real threat of regional nuclear confrontation in Asia or the Arab world, laying a powder trail to a possible world holocaust.
>
> So-called vertical proliferation is one thing. More nuclear weapons in the same hands do not necessarily increase the likelihood of nuclear war.
>
> That is why, even at 10 minutes past 5 o'clock in the morning, I do not apologise to an Under-Secretary, who has

> been very good-tempered and had to wait a long time for this Consolidated Fund debate, for keeping him out of his well-deserved bed and rest."

The then Under-Secretary of State for Energy, who replied to me at 5.47 in the morning, was one Mr. Norman Lamont, who began:

> "The hon. Member for West Lothian (Mr. Dalyell) certainly need not apologise in any way for keeping the House up at this late hour. He has raised an extremely serious matter. I assure him that the Government share the concern that he has expressed today. We consider that the consequences of what has happened are potentially very far-reaching.
>
> The hon. Gentleman was kind enough to give me a copy of his speech—in advance."—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1979; Vol. 976, c. 565.]

I refer to that debate not so that I can say "I told you so," but to show that I am not a Johnny-come-lately on this subject. I am anxious to recall that 13 years ago the Government said that they were concerned about the matter.

Throughout the 1980s I used to chat about such matters with my friend, then and now, Alan Clark—hardly the most secretive of parliamentary colleagues. I say bluntly that nobody in the House—of any party, on any Bench or in the Press Gallery—has an excuse for saying, if he or she claims to have a modicum of interest in Arab affairs, that we did not know what was going on.

A particular aspect of the whole situation puzzles me. If one does not want to export arms and arms-making material to a country such as Iraq, one does not have in the Government, let alone anywhere near the Ministry of Defence or the Department of Trade and Industry, a man like Alan Clark. What on earth could anybody believe he would do? He has never made any secret of what he thinks. The fact that he was there at all seems absolutely to undermine any excuse that any Minister, be he the Foreign Secretary or the Prime Minister, might have for saying that he did not know.

I did not know what I understand to be the now held view of Dr. Ekeus that exports reinforce one's capacity to make chemical weapons. Can the Minister say whether the Iraqi capacity to make chemical weapons was reinforced? While I do not know the answer to that question, I must make the general point that if I and many others knew all that, how on earth can the Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister now say that they did not know?

In particular, what about 29 September 1989 when the Prime Minister had a meeting with Tariq Aziz? What explanation does the Foreign Office have for its apparent failure to brief the Prime Minister? A wry, informal Foreign Office explanation is that "We were so busy trying to teach the new Foreign Secretary where Africa was that we may not properly have briefed him." But that will not do. Frankly, the Prime Minister is quick on the uptake and I cannot believe that what we have been told represents any sort of convincing explanation.

How could such competent people—I refer to private secretaries in the Foreign Office private office—apparently not do what they clearly should have done? It must have been regarded as a crucial briefing, and not to have briefed the Foreign Secretary seems a dereliction of their professional duty. One does not send a Foreign Secretary to see Tariq Aziz without telling him of the various problems, especially problems of such a sensitive nature.

Will the Government comment on the allegations published in *The Sunday Times* on 22 November by Mr. Mark Higson, a former Iraq desk officer in the Foreign Office, who described how he and other Government officials connived at the export of arms-making equipment to Iraq?

Will the Minister confirm that Mr. Higson worked for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1989 and that among his responsibilities was the vetting of licence applications for exports to Iraq by British companies, including Matrix Churchill?

Will the Minister confirm that that happened while the present Prime Minister was Foreign Secretary? Why was he not aware that the exporting of arms-making equipment was going on? Mr. Higson is quoted as saying that the export of munitions-making equipment to Iraq in which he connived was unacceptable. Was it the view of Ministers and other officials at the time that, as Mr. Higson says:

> "The whole system was deeply flawed. The policy was bent to facilitate the export of machine tools"?

An explanation must be given about what the current Foreign Office thinks about the views of its own desk officer.

Alan Clark has played ducks and drakes with my parliamentary colleagues on the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. Much of his evidence was simply not true and not what he knew to be the truth. That view is shared by my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hoyle), a member of the Select Committee and the present chairman of the parliamentary Labour party. I have his authority to say that we are both extremely curious about the Government's view of Mr. Clark's evidence to the Select Committee.

Will the Select Committee do anything about being flouted? Indeed, has it the power to do anything about it? It at least owes it to the House to invite Mr. Clark back and tell him that he owes it an explanation and to ask him how he accounts for what he told it.

The sad conclusion that I have drawn is that the Select Committee system—I know that this is the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who is present—is totally inadequate in such situations.

Alan Clark, like Leon Brittan, was relaxed about cocking a snook at the Select Committee. A properly constituted court of law, however, even for the buccaneering Alan Clark, was a different kettle of fish and he seems to have thought it prudent not to commit perjury.

Reluctantly, I concede to my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition that he is right to say that Parliament cannot do the necessary job and that we need a council of tribunals under the 1921 Act. I say "reluctantly" because the setting up of an inquiry is too often a parliamentary cop out for a job that we ourselves should be doing. However, when one looks at what happened over Westland and what Alan Clark has done to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, one must ask whether Select Committee powers should be extended and whether Parliament should look at how we operate in those crunch cases.

Ministers are being so coy about what they knew for a basically simple reason. If all that arms-making equipment was going to Iraq, did it not give Saddam the wrong signals? Why did they not approach their excellent customer on the basis of dignity before threatening war over Kuwait?

One of the reasons why 37 of us voted on the Adjournment against the war when the House was recalled was, as I put it at the time, because the Nelson eye had

[Mr. Dalyell]

been turned on arms sales to Iraq. I shall believe to my dying day that a settlement could have been arrived at over Kuwait and the Gulf war could have been avoided had there been a proper approach to Saddam.

Mr. Bernie Grant *indicated assent.*

Mr Dalyell: I register the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham assents to that.

The tragedy was that on 9 and 10 August the former Prime Minister was at Aspen, Colorado, and was able to contact President Bush and say something along the lines —there was evidence of this on the front page of the *Daily Express* of 10 August—"George, don't be a wimp. George, be a man!" The dithering Americans—or the uncertain Americans, because I do not wish to be critical of them as they were not sure what to do—reacted along lines on which they could not go back and we were plunged into what became the Gulf war.

Coming to the final part of the motion, I had many criticisms of the former Prime Minister about Zircon, the miners' strike, Westland, and aspects of the Falklands, but I never once raised the question of Mark Thatcher and Oman, partly because I did not know and partly because I found it distasteful to bring a person's family into the argument.

However, on Wednesday night, an important "Dispatches" programme by Box Productions was shown which must have been watched by more than 2 million people. The issues that it raised go to the heart of Government. The matter cannot be left hanging but must be cleared up. I cannot believe that the programme was broadcast without a tooth-comb of libel lawyers having gone through it.

It is not simply a question of getting at the former Prime Minister. The Iraqis might have been forgiven for being surprised at the west's reaction when they knew that Mark Thatcher was up to the neck in selling them arms-making equipment. There is a good deal of circumstantial evidence that they jumped to the conclusion that, if Mark Thatcher was involved, the general policy had the imprimatur of Prime Ministerial approval.

I should like to ask, therefore, some specific questions.

First, are the Government aware that an executive of the defence company, United Scientific, introduced Mark Thatcher to the arms dealer Sarkis Soghanalian in the autumn of 1983 as part of its efforts to win a contract to sell night vision devices, ultimately to be used by Iraq?

Secondly, will the Government confirm or deny that Prince Banda, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United States, personally presented a letter to former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher from King Fahd of Saudi Arabia in 1985 and that that letter made it implicitly clear that commissions would be paid as part of the Al-Yamamah deal between Saudi Arabia and Britain, involving the sale of Tornado jets and other defence equipment to Saudi Arabia?

Thirdly, will the Government explain the purpose of that letter from King Fahd to Prime Minister Thatcher? Will they explain why Mrs. Thatcher dealt with the Saudi ambassador to the United States and not the Saudi ambassador to Britain while negotiating the Al-Yamamah deal?

Fourthly, will the Government confirm or deny that Mark Thatcher received approximately £10 million soon after the signing of the memorandum of understanding for the Al-Yamamah deal in September 1985 and that the agreement on the deal specified that he would receive a further approximately £10 million subsequently?

Fifthly, will the Government confirm or deny that Mark Thatcher and a Saudi Arabian middle man involved in the deal, whose name was Wafic Said, paid income tax on money which they earned from the Al-Yamamah deal?

Sixthly, are the Government aware that, for some time in 1989, Mark Thatcher lived in a house at 34 Eaton terrace while that house was owned by Formugul, a Panamanian company linked with Saudi Arabian business man, Wafic Said, who played a role in the Al-Yamamah deal?

Finally, can the Government confirm or deny that Mr. Christopher Prentice, a Foreign Office official working in the British embassy in Washington in the mid-1980s, was aware that Mark Thatcher was involved in the Al-Yamamah deal?

Those are serious and carefully-thought-out questions. Anyone who watched the programme cannot possibly suppose that the matter can simply be left in the air.

It must be remembered that, at the time, many people in the Foreign Office and in Britain saw Saddam Hussein as, in a sense, the successor of the Shah and as the gendarme of this country's and the west's interests. I quite agree that it is against that Khomeini background that my questions should be addressed, but addressed they must be. Before anyone jumps to the conclusion that I am an apologist for Saddam Hussein, may I say that, at the time, it was thought that Saddam Hussein was better than President Assad of Syria. When we consider what the Al-Sabah family has done to the Palestinians in Kuwait, we see that we should not rush to make moral judgments.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I had not realised that my hon. Friend had finished the Mark Thatcher saga. I think that he may have missed one question. If someone finishes up making £10 million in commissions, might it not be reasonable to ask whether he was trained for the job and served an apprenticeship for it? The thing that puzzles me, as I am sure it does my hon. Friend, is that Mark Thatcher was an erstwhile rally driver. He got lost in the desert, then found himself in another part of the desert making loads of money out of arms dealing as a result of his mother being the Prime Minister. That looks odd——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Gentleman's intervention is going on far too long. I think that he has made his point.

Mr. Skinner: It seems odd——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dalyell: I am an extremely cautious man and I think that I had better stick to my careful questions. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover has made his point, and I shall leave it at that.

But there must be answers to my questions, and to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover. It simply will not do to pass by on the other side of the road. Hundreds of thousands of people in this country have seen the film. If Box Productions has it wrong, heaven help it in the courts. But if no legal action is taken, what are our fellow people to think?

I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover will excuse me if I do not pursue his line of argument but merely say that I do not think that those issues can simply be left to Lord Justice Scott. There is a suggestion of the problem being kicked into touch. I thought that it was profoundly unsatisfactory when, on this Wednesday, during Foreign Office questions, the Foreign Secretary did not answer direct questions about the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) which, had he the will to do so, he could easily have answered. They were questions of relatively simple fact.

One issue was most succinctly put by the chairman of the Bar Council, Anthony Scrivener, QC, who, writing in *The Independent*, said:

> "There remains one simple unexplained fact in the Iraq arms case. Whoever read the confidential documents would have known that it was improper to proceed with the prosecution.
>
> Why was the prosecution then not dropped instead of it being pursued, presumably in the hope that the judge would not allow the documents to be disclosed at the trial?"

Many of our fellow countrymen are extremely puzzled and want an urgent explanation as to how three men from Matrix Churchill were faced with the serious threat of imprisonment.

The motion calls for the lifting of sanctions against Iraq and for discussions in the United Nations on that issue. I rest my case on two submissions, one of which is from Mohammed Arif, the secretary of the British Afro-Asian Solidarity Organisation. He said:

> "Nearly two years have passed since the Gulf war, yet the region remains as turbulent as ever and the toll of human suffering continues to mount.
>
> In particular, Iraq continues to be subject to an almost unprecedented regime of sanction and blockade. Whatever the rights and wrongs of previous actions by any side to the dispute, it is our view that sanctions can no longer be justified on political, moral or legal grounds. There is no mandate for the removal of the Iraqi regime by outside forces and, moreover, no evidence has been produced to suggest that the regime's internal position has been weakened, and furthermore, the United Nations appears to be of a view that there have been efforts by Iraq to comply with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.
>
> The real victims of the continuing sanctions against Iraq are the most vulnerable members of that society—the old, the sick and wounded, the poor and, above all, children. According to various sources, up to 250,000 Iraqi children may have died. Civilian dwellings, schools, hospitals, sewage works and water, electricity and telecommunications facilities all suffered from war time bombings. Sanctions are preventing the restoration of these facilities, contributing in turn to the spread of hunger and disease. The environment in general has been severely damaged. The lack of medicine, drugs, anaesthetics, water purification materials and so on are leading to countless unnecessary deaths. In September this year, the renowned Norwegian child psychiatrist Professor Magnei Raundalen reported that he had found in Iraq 'a traumatised child population beyond any that he had ever seen.'"

Much of what I have said has not merely come with hindsight. I had a Commons debate on the "ecological consequences of the gulf war" before it ever happened.

The British Afro-Asian Solidarity Organisation continued:

> "Those suffering from the sanctions are not the strong but the vulnerable members of society who have no say in political matters, including those of war and peace. We call for the immediate lifting of sanctions against Iraq, with priority to helping ensure the supply of food, medicine and other humanitarian requirements. We also call for the right of Iraqi children who cannot be adequately treated at home to be enabled to receive hospital and recuperative treatment in countries where the relevant specialised resources and facilities are available.
>
> It is now clear that there were times when the members of the government were not averse to supplying Iraq with the instruments of war and death. Now is the time to help enable the Iraqi people to receive some of the tools of life and peace."

That is the view of members of our society who take such matters extremely seriously.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Is my hon. Friend aware that I went on a trip to Iraq, before the war started, with the British Afro-Asian Solidarity Organisation and with Mr. Mohammed Arif? While we were there, we met members of the revolutionary command council and various organisations in Baghdad. All those organisations were keen for a negotiated settlement. Is not it strange that, two years after the war, the people of Iraq are still suffering? There seems to be little impact on the Government of Iraq, although that was supposed to be the point of the policy of the western forces. Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating the British Afro-Asian Solidarity Organisation on its steadfast work in the area?

Mr. Dalyell: Certainly I congratulate that organisation. My hon. Friend talked to me about his visit before and after he went, and I think that it was an extremely important visit.

I have friends in the Shia community. I will not name them, for self-evident reasons, but I will talk privately to the Minister about them. Those friends say that, although they have cause not to love Saddam Hussein, they realise that the imposition of sanctions entrenches rather than weakens the hold of the hard-liners of the Baathist party and of Saddam Hussein on the Government of Iraq. If the object is to remove Saddam Hussein, consideration should be given to the lifting of sanctions.

I now turn to the recommendations of Christian Aid as presented by David Hampson, who is responsible for Gulf matters and for the Kurdish situation. Christian Aid says:

> "The picture is complicated, but Christian Aid would recommend the international community should:
>
> Separate issues of humanitarian aid from the military, economic and political issues unresolved at the end of hostilities.
>
> Separate international claims for war compensation from humanitarian relief.
>
> Direct humanitarian relief to Iraq on the same basis of need employed in other countries.
>
> Urgently review all sanctions which disproportionately and dangerously harm vulnerable sections of Iraqi society.
>
> Invest urgently, and under emergency budget lines, to meet the immediate needs of the agricultural, infrastructural and administrative sectors of the *de-facto* autonomous areas of Iraqi Kurdistan. The alternative is annual winter disaster amongst the Kurdish, Christian and Turcoman population."

I hope that thought will be given to the lifting of sanctions.

The motion refers to a United Nations conference on the supply of arms across frontiers. I will truncate a lot of what might be said by referring to the speech on Monday by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) in which he urged action on arms sales.

The United Kingdom remains hopelessly dependent on defence production. In round terms, the figures are that defence supports 50 per cent. of the aerospace industry, 40 per cent. of shipbuilding and 30 per cent. of electronics. The Office of Public Service and Science suggests that a

[Mr. Dalyell]

move from military contracts to civil projects will be much harder for thousands of small contractors than was believed.

Let us not forget that behind all the argument revealed in the Matrix Churchill case is trade in the tools of death and chaos.

In the Westminster and Whitehall scales, it is possible for jobs saved at home to balance wars fuelled abroad. That is the black art of justification, which can be persuasive, but is also profoundly sad.

I am aware of the letter to *The Times* by Simon Brown, the director general of the Machine Tool Technologies Association. He says:

> "Certainly the government should urgently co-ordinate its respective departments in one unified voice instead of having investigated three individuals, causing the loss of almost 1,000 jobs at the Matrix Churchill site.
>
> It is incumbent on the government to address the whole subject of export licence procedures forthwith and clarify the situation as soon as possible especially as far as dual-use technology is concerned.
>
> The Department of Trade and Industry and other government departments must ensure that such events are not repeated. Justice prevailed, but at an extremely high and unnecessary cost to all concerned."

The arms problem cannot be resolved in one country. The sad fact is that the five members of the Security Council of the United Nations are the five largest suppliers of arms in the world. Some of us are active in Labour Action for Peace and in other organisations that have addressed themselves to the problem. Surely the time has come. Good will come out of all the argument on Iraqgate, as it is generically termed, if, at long last, the attention of the House of Commons is fixed on the terrible problem of what to do about armaments. Shakespeare had the words for it when he wrote, "Now thrive the armourers". I fear that that is still the case. Unless we tackle the problem, many other unresolved problems will come to haunt us.

10.26 am

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Morning sittings of the House are an abomination and interfere unnecessarily with one's lifestyle. I hope that the Leader of the House does not consider that more are necessary. My comment should not be taken as a criticism of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who customarily engages the interest and the respect of the House—although that does not mean that Conservative Members share all his conclusions.

On Monday, we heard much about the Matrix Churchill case. The hon. Gentleman knows that there is a judicial review during which all the questions can be asked. My understanding is that the judge can call for any documentation if he considers it to be in the public interest to do so. I believe that we should leave it at that.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow adopted a very reasonable tone. He had researched his questions well, unlike so many of his colleagues on Monday. I am not saying that some of his colleagues were encouraged to tell lies on the subject on Monday, but I believe that it was possible that they were telling half truths. I hope, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you find that comment half acceptable.

The speech by the hon. Member for Linlithgow was something of a tour de force—I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) will excuse my attempt at French. On Monday, we heard about the arming of Argentina by a Labour Government in the 1970s. I know that the hon. Member for Linlithgow has a particular interest in Argentina and in what I prefer to call the Falkland islands. On more than one occasion I have heard him mention a ship called, I believe, the Belgrano. It would be interesting to carry out research to find out whether the Belgrano was armed with weaponry that had been supplied by a British Labour Government. However, I have not carried out that research. Although I disagree with the hon. Gentleman's conclusions, I enjoyed his speech. With regard to Libya, I remind him that if someone lets us down once, he will let us down again. I suspect that that applies to the present leader of Libya.

Mr. Dalyell: I concede that. I do not know whether the Belgrano carried British equipment, but the escort certainly did.

Mr. Knapman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making his position clear.

I am not sure whether I am allowed to refer to the motion standing in my name on the Order Paper today. Fortunately, some of the motions on the Order Paper have certain similarities and I hope that you will not feel that I am trespassing, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I prefer to dwell on what I believe to be a constant friend in the middle east—a country with which we have an historical friendship. In the world today, where we seem to have great visions and grand designs and a constant need for new alliances, I hope that we will remember to concentrate on the friends with whom we have had ties over many decades—the English-speaking world, the Commonwealth, the United States of American and Jordan.

At the present time, Jordan faces many problems. It is an Arab country without oil, and an Arab country without oil is like Britain without its civil service. There are just 4 million people in Jordan and of those perhaps 1 million are refugees from what I call the west bank. Can we imagine what would happen in this country if 25 per cent. of the population had arrived as refugees and had to be assimilated? Can we imagine the problems that that would cause in our schools, hospitals and infrastructure?

The ill-judged war by Saddam Hussein, to which the hon. Member for Linlithgow referred, affected Jordan far more seriously than any other country. In addition to the refugees, at the outbreak of war the markets traditionally enjoyed by Jordan in Kuwait, the Gulf states and Iraq amounted to 70 per cent of its available external trade. Seventy per cent. of its markets were lost virtually overnight.

That was not all the bad news two years ago. Jordan has had a traditionally high standard of education. It has treated its educational system as a means of providing "the software" for economic recovery in the middle east. It has trained huge numbers of engineers, scientists and teachers. Many of them were working in the countries most closely involved in the war. As a result of the war, there were 300,000 returnees. The social consequences of that were quite devastating and the effect on remittance via pay packets back home was also very serious.

For so many years, Jordan and Israel have been negotiating over water supplies. It is ironic and perhaps a very good lesson for us that United Nations resolutions and international negotiations are not all about airy-fairy things. In the end, the general agreement on tariffs and trade plan did not depend on bread; it depended on oilseed rape, something even more mundane than bread. It is quite likely that the middle eastern negotiations will depend not, I am happy to say, on oilseed rape but on water.

In addition to those problems, during and after the war that tiny country of 4 million people had 1 million refugees from Iraq in transit across its territory, mainly going to Aqaba. That surely puts our problems with Bosnia into perspective. I suggest that, at the present time, Jordan does not have a lot going for it in a material sense.

I wish now to refer to a report in *The Times* on 24 November because there is criticism of Jordan at the present time. That report stated:

"Jordan's prince of peace unfurls the banner of reason."

The report refers to Crown Prince Hassan who last night made the annual Winston Churchill address to the English Speaking Union, I believe, although I have not yet seen a copy of his speech. The report stated:

"Some MPs tried but failed to blackball the invitation."

There are no details about such a blackball, and it was obviously unsuccessful, but if the report is true, I for one would be ashamed. The Crown Prince has made it quite plain that his main great problem is that his rational approach to the 44-year Arab-Israeli conflict may fail to win over the Islamic extremists and Palestinian radicals who pose the main threat to Jordan's stability. Those are problems that we should bear in mind before we criticise. The problems that I have described would have ground the spirit of lesser countries, perhaps not so much into the mud as into the dust. As hon. Members will know, disputes in the middle east are as intractable as the problems in Northern Ireland and they date from a great deal earlier.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State tell me why, with all those problems, that tiny nation is such a key player in the middle east? Why are its views so keenly sought by its larger and more powerful neighbours? Could it be that the key to Jordan's success is that it is a stable regime in an area of turbulence? One could say that it is an oasis of sanity in an area of shifting tendencies.

A key factor in that stability is the personality of His Majesty King Hussein. Britain and Jordan share a remarkable coincidence: this year, both our monarch and the King of Jordan have celebrated the 40th anniversaries of their reigns. In the latter's case, he gained the throne when he was very young; he has survived many assassination attempts; and he has a daily and constant need to deploy tact and diplomacy as his rivals are larger, better armed and have more money. That has been the lot of the King of Jordan for four decades. In those circumstances, the House would agree that an occasional annus horribilis was bound to occur. However, largely as a result of his dedication and consistency, there is sometimes an annus mirabilis.

Some people blame Jordan for its part in the Iraq war two years ago. They do that partly because they do not understand the association between Jordan and Iraq. As the King has said, we must remember that the quarrel was not with the Iraqi people but with Saddam Hussein. We should remember that the Hashemite dynasty in Jordan at one time ruled both Jordan and Iraq. We must also remember that in Jordan 92 per cent. of the population are Sunni Muslim. Who could say how we would have reacted in those circumstances? No wonder Jordan was so frantic to negotiate a peace.

Those frantic efforts to negotiate peace, which were so well reported at the time, were quickly forgotten because they were unsuccessful. They were unsuccessful because it was a case of the logical pursuing the illogical. History so often proves that one cannot reason with a dictator and we should certainly not criticise the Jordanian authorities for their failure in that respect.

For those reasons, I hope that we will be sympathetic to Jordan and its people. Sympathy alone is helpful—but not very helpful. Sympathy with some practical help would be more important. Perhaps I can suggest four different ways in which sympathy, together with some practical assistance, may help. First, as I said, Jordan will play a role in peace talks out of all relation to its size. Does my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister agree that Jordan is a positive force for democracy and plurality? I hope that that is the case.

I understand that Jordan is one of the first countries to set an agenda in the middle eastern talks. Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that an agenda has been set—which is unusual in Arab-Israeli talks—under the heading "Terms of Endearment"? Let us hope that that is an appropriate heading. The draft agenda reportedly commits Israel and Jordan to seek just, lasting and comprehensive peace between the Arab states, the Palestinians and Israel based on the terms of reference contained in the invitations to the Madrid conference. Will Jordan and Israel take steps to arrive at a state of peace that is based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338? Will Israel and Jordan refrain from actions that may adversely affect each other's security and which could pre-judge the final outcome of negotiations?

Another part of the agenda is that Jordan and Israel should combat threats to security that result from all sorts of terrorism. They should renounce the use of force and the use of conventional or non-conventional weapons of mass destruction against each other. There is much more on the agenda. If we can help Jordan, a stable and committed small country, that may encourage other countries in due course also to reach agreement with Israel. If Jordan is a friend, we should tell it so now.

My second point relates to refugees. I have already said that there are about 1 million refugees from the west bank and 300,000 returnees, as well as 1 million refugees in transit across Jordan as a result of the recent middle eastern war. That is a huge drain on the economy. If Jordan had not seen fit to cope well with all the difficulties, they would have created the most horrendous problem for the United Nations. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister will agree that we should do nothing to prejudice the efforts of Jordan and Israel.

I turn to my third point. Can my right hon. and learned Friend comment on press reports about the proposed canal which Israel and Jordan are reported to be discussing? Israel and Jordan propose to construct a $2 billion canal to run along the common border from the Gulf of Eilat, or the Gulf of Aqaba, to the Dead sea. The canal would generate hydro-electric power for both countries and be hugely beneficial to them. Have Israel and Jordan sought financial assistance for the proposed canal? Can my right hon. and learned Friend acquaint the House with the present position of the talks?

[Mr. Knapman]

My fourth point concerns rescheduling of debt, which is a common problem throughout the world these days. As a result of the problems, largely with refugees, that I have described, Jordan now has a debt of some $7 billion. That is a large amount of money for 4 million people. I understand that Great Britain has helped with the rescheduling of some of that debt. Can my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House the latest position of the talks on rescheduling the debt? If the talks are not successful and we are suddenly obliged through the United Nations to contribute in some way in solving the refugee problem in the middle east, we shall find that that is a much more expensive way to deal with the problem.

As I said, we live in an age of changing alliances and new structures. Some people think that those alliances and structures are federal; some think that they are not. The thread of the speech of the hon. Member for Linlithgow was that we must not forget our friends. Despite the fact that our friends have often been educated in this country and despite our historical ties, they tend to be somewhat overlooked. Perhaps we take them for granted—and we should not.

I know from my research of the position in Jordan that my right hon. and learned Friend is highly respected in middle eastern countries as a politician and almost invariably as a diplomat. I hope that he will use his undoubted talents to further our interests throughout the middle east, especially in a traditional ally such as Jordan.

10.47 am

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for giving the House the opportunity to debate this matter. The House has debated foreign affairs on far too few occasions, and I certainly welcome this opportunity for debate. My hon. Friend has been steadfast in his efforts to seek justice for the middle east. The meticulous work that he has done certainly needs congratulations.

I am glad that we have a new Opposition spokesman on our Front Bench. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) will do something that the Labour Front-Bench team has not done recently—take an independent view of foreign affairs, especially on middle east matters. I believe that in Parliament, and certainly outside, the Labour party tends to follow on the coat-tails of the Government without having an independent view. I know that my hon. Friend will do what my hon. Friends have not done previously and ensure that he meets representatives from Governments such as those of Libya and Iraq. There is nothing better than meeting those people face to face to understand what is happening in the middle east and in foreign affairs generally.

As we know, there was a terrible tragedy at Lockerbie in December 1988. More than 200 people died on Pan Am flight 103, which was bound for New York. It was a terrible crime. Everyone with whom I have been involved is keen to get to the bottom of the tragedy and the truth of it. People whom I have met in Libya—I have been to Libya five or six times—have also said that they want the truth about Lockerbie to come out. They want the guilty parties to be punished. At the outset, we should say that we do not support terrorism. We want the issues of Lockerbie to be sorted out and the perpetrators brought to justice. That is what the families want. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow mentioned Dr. Jim Swire and his work. We all pay tribute to Dr. Jim Swire and to the Lockerbie families because their tragedy has been great. The way in which those families, particularly the British families, have conducted themselves is a tremendous credit to them in the face of the difficulties that they have suffered. In April 1986, there was another tragedy when the Americans bombed Tripoli and Benghazi and more than 100 people died. The planes that bombed Tripoli and Benghazi took off from British air bases. Therefore, the British have some responsibility for what was a terrible crime, perpetrated against the people of Libya. The reason for that bombing was that the Libyans were responsible for the La Belle discotheque bombing in Germany. Since then, most independent observers have shown that Libya was not responsible for that. To this day, neither the British Government nor the American Government have apologised to the Libyan people for that bombing or for the deaths that occurred as a result of it. To help relations, the Minister could say that, on behalf of the British Government, he is prepared to apologise to the Libyan people for that bombing.

Bearing in mind the bad blood that has existed between Libya, Britain and the United States, it is incumbent on us to examine what has happend . The British and American Governments have been demonstrating double standards in respect of Libya. For example, if we look at the United Nations resolutions, we find a very strange thing. We find that Britain, the United States and France voted for the resolution to impose sanctions on Libya. As I understand it—the Minister will correct me if I am wrong—a party that is involved in a dispute that goes before the United Nations Security Council does not take part in the vote. Britain, France and the United States voted on the resolution to impose sanctions on Libya. Of course, if they had not voted, they would not have had the required majority to pass the sanctions resolution.

We are told that the British and American Governments are concerned about human rights. I put to the Minister the human rights of the two suspects involved. Warrants were issued and the men were arrested by the Libyan Government and kept under house arrest. That is a problem. When our parliamentary delegation and others visied Libya in September, we met the men's lawyers. We were told that the men are being paid their salaries and that they are under tremendous pressure. The Libyan courts are unable to resolve the issue because no evidence is forthcoming and there have been no proper discussions or negotiations with the Libyan Government. One lawyer said that if that carries on for much longer, the men will have to be released from house arrest because their human rights are being transgressed.

One of the points that the lawyer, Mr. Legwill, made to us was that the Libyan authorities could not extradite the men because, according to Libyan law, there is no extradition treaty with Britain or the United States of America. He told me that if Colonel Gaddafi tried to get the men out of Libya, he would immediately apply to a judge in Libya and stop them being removed because Colonel Gaddafi does not have that power. That is an important point. The British and the Americans are claiming that they are acting legally, but they are trying to make Colonel Gaddafi break his own laws in Libya to meet their requirements. I want the Minister to exlain that. If everything is operating on a proper legal basis, why does he expect a country that does not have an extradition treaty to extradite its citizens to this country and break its own laws?

Mr. Dalyell: That point greatly concerned the Minister's former colleague, Ivor Stanbrook, the previous Member for Orpington and a serious lawyer. We should respect Arab law in the same way as we hope that Arabs will respect our law.

Mr. Grant: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. He is absolutely correct. Double standards are being applied by the Americans and British in this matter.

The British and the Americans have done other things. They have ignored the Montreal convention relating to terrorism on aeroplanes and so on. It categorically states that if citizens of one country are suspected of committing such a crime, they should be tried in their own country. To get around the Montreal convention, it was necessary for the British, the Americans and the French to move the resolution in the Security Council which overrode international law. Before the resolution was passed, international law stated that the Montreal convention would apply in such cases.

The Libyans took out the equivalent of an injunction to try to have the matter resolved. Each judge seemed to have a different perspective on the matter. They did not allow the injunction, but they have still to make a full determination. We look forward to what the International Court of Justice has to say.

By no means could we say that the British and Americans have been acting legally—certainly not according to what was international law in such matters. The sanctions imposed on Libya have been very severe.

The House will remember that the French Government were directly responsible for the blowing up and the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior. In doing so, they killed a New Zealand citizen. New Zealand asked France to extradite the responsible citizens. It was clearly state terrorism by the French Government, because the persons who were responsible were members of the French secret service. The French refused to extradite their citizens, stating point blank that French law did not allow them to do so. That was the end of the matter. France is now to sign a motion demanding that another country extradite its citizens to Britain, the United States and other nations, which is an example of its double standards.

The United States has carried out acts of state terrorism for a long time, especially in that region itself. It invaded Grenada, breaking international law; it mined the Nicaraguan harbours, and took no notice when the International Court of Justice ruled that that had been an illegal action. It recently kidnapped General Noriega in Panama, on the pretext that he was involved in the drug trade.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): He was.

Mr. Grant: He may well have been, but many people are involved in drug trafficking. The Americans thought that that was sufficient reason to enter a sovereign country, kidnap the head of that country and bring him to justice.

Why has the United States not sent a task force to arrest the Colombian drug barons who could not be kept in Colombian prisons because the army was too weak and the Medellin cartel too strong? Having adopted a policing role, as it seems to have done, the United States should now kidnap all those who are directly responsible for the arrival of the crack, cocaine and heroin trade in that country and in Britain. We must view what is happening to Libya in the context of the actions of the Americans and the French—and the British Government have coat-tailed the Americans in this regard.

Sanctions have had a dramatic effect on Libya. In September, I led a delegation of parliamentarians, trade unionists and church and community leaders on a fact-finding mission. We were especially concerned about health matters, and our report—entitled "Report of a fact finding delegation to investigate the effects of the sanctions imposed on Libya by United Nations Security Council Resolution 748"—paid particular attention to those matters. Earlier in this Session of Parliament, the Minister made a number of statements about sanctions to European Standing Committee B; he said, among other things, that sanctions were intended to hurt. It seems that he is quite happy for innocent Libyans to be maimed and killed as a result of them and feels that that is what the Libyan Government should expect.

We were told that the United States' deployment of sanctions against Libya was intended to make the Libyan Government hand over the two accused men, either to Britain or to the United States itself, and was certainly not intended to affect the lives of innocent people. Has the Minister changed his view, or does he still feel that the deaths of innocent people are nothing to do with him?

Our delegation met a number of people in Tripoli, including Dr. Al Zaidi of the Tripoli burns unit. He told us that dozens of people had died, partly because the special antibiotics that were used to treat burns could not be imported by road or by sea; they had to be flown in. Children, housewives and other burns cases were dying because the drugs were not available. Moreover, the air ambulance that brought patients to the unit could not operate: it had no spare parts, because sanctions had been levied against all air transport. If an accident occurred in Benghazi, which is hundreds of miles from Tripoli, the best way to deal with it would be to fly the victims to Tripoli for treatment, but, because the air ambulance was out of service, people were having to be transported hundreds of miles by road, and a number of them would die during the journey.

The doctor told us that, earlier in the year, there had been an explosion in a Tripoli factory. A number of people had died because they could not be flown out of the country for treatment. Up to 60 per cent. of the unit's staff were expatriates, and 90 per cent. of them had left since April because of the uncertainty surrounding sanctions. President Bush had threatened not only sanctions but, following sanctions, military action, and that had forced a number of medical staff to leave. They could not be replaced.

The sanctions had also prevented consultants from flying into Libya from Switzerland, Britain and other countries to mark medical students' examination papers. As a result, the number of medical staff was becoming smaller and smaller. More than 150 people had died on the way to Tunisia or Egypt, because they had been forced to travel by road. Those are all serious problems, on which the Minister should comment.

The Minister told the European Standing Committee that Libya had not applied for special dispensation for the air ambulance. Obtaining such exemptions, however,

[Mr. Grant]

takes a minimum of 12 hours, and can take 48 hours—a special United Nations committee, headed by Hungary, has to call all parties together and ask them whether they will give permission for an exemption on medical grounds. When a British expatriate who worked in the Libyan oil fields needed medical attention urgently, the British Government tried to get an air ambulance into Libya; we understand that it took a minimum of 12 hours—possibly longer—for permission to be obtained. Fortunately, the person concerned recovered during that period, but that person could easily have died in the process.

Britain is a signatory to United Nations resolution 748, and is a permanent member of the Security Council. If it took Britain 12 hours to obtain permission for one of its own citizens to leave Libya, one can imagine how long it would take for Libyans to obtain permission to leave Libya. I suggested to the Minister during the European Standing Committee debate that if Libya wanted to fly its citizens out of the country, air clearance should be granted, wherever they landed—in Switzerland, Holland, Germany, or wherever—and that in Egypt there should be a United Nations team of doctors to examine patients to establish whether they are genuinely ill. They could then be taken to hospital and treated humanely. To set up a United Nations bureaucracy to scrutinise any application for exemption is an atrocious abuse of the United Nations Security Council resolution.

Mr. Dalyell: I drew the *Hansard* record of the debate in European Standing Committee B to the attention of a number of expatriate workers and their families. They are ferociously angry with some of the attitudes adopted by the British Government. While working with their Libyan colleagues, they are earning money for this country, but they feel that they are greatly impeded in all sorts of ways by the strong attitude of the British Foreign Office.

Mr. Grant: I thank my hon. Friend. We, too, spoke to British expatriates. About 5,000 of them are working in Libya. They are very concerned about their position. Many of them have left Libya because they fear that, should they fall seriously ill, they would be unable to leave the country. Many of them earn large sums of money, much of which is sent back to Britain and helps our economy.

Libya acts as a magnet for workers from the whole of north Africa and even further afield. The economies of Morocco, Egypt and a number of other countries are supported by the work done in Libya by expatriate workers from those countries. More than 1 million people in the region go to work in Libya and send money back home. Libya runs a free health service for the Libyan people and for people who enter Libya from surrounding countries. Their free medical treatment is being impeded by sanctions.

The result of sanctions, in particular the sanctions against air flights, is that many Libyan projects have had to close. The Libyans have frozen all new developments. That has created a problem for Britain. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow knows that Brown and Root is the main consultant for the great man-made river project, which employs tens of thousands of workers, including 5,000 from Britain and other countries. Because certain parts cannot reach Libya quickly as a result of sanctions, real difficulties have been created. A number of sub-contracts that should have been awarded to British companies are now going to Korean companies and companies in other countries. Therefore, sanctions are hurting the British economy.

Mr. Dalyell: Last night, I was on the same platform as the Minister for Energy and Sir Richard Morris, the ex-chairman of Brown and Root, who is extremely concerned that those who work for Brown and Root are being put at a disadvantage because Libya is having to place contracts with South Korea and others on account of the political situation. That has very serious implications for employment in this country. That is not just my opinion, it is the opinion of Gordon Law, the managing director of Babcock and Wilcox. The injury done to British industry cannot be underestimated.

Mr. Grant: Once again I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. I am glad that he has given me this opportunity to make these points. I know that he could have made them in his own speech, but he has now provided us with additional information. I was unaware of the fact that he had had that conversation, but the effect of sanctions on our economy is such that the Foreign Office must answer these points.

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): To widen slightly what the hon. Gentleman has said about the sanctions against Libya, does he not agree that history has demonstrated that wherever sanctions are applied, they invariably fail to resolve the problem in that territory and that, as a general rule, Governments should avoid sanctions and employ other policies to bring about co-operation with other Governments, thereby involving them in a more humane environment?

Mr. Grant: I thank the hon. Gentleman for making that point. He is absolutely correct. I made the same point during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow with regard to Iraq. Sanctions do not resolve problems, as those who impose them claim. It is about time that the British and American Governments changed their policy. It is not working. It is hurting the innocent people. We ought, in 1992, to be going down an alternative road.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): The hon. Gentleman makes a general case against sanctions. Does he also oppose the sanctions that the United Nations has imposed on Serbia?

Mr. Grant: If we are to talk about Serbia, we shall be going down a different road. I believe that the United Nations should go down a different road in relation to Serbia. If the United Nations believes that ethnic cleansing should not take place, but that we should not allow refugees to come into this and other countries and that they should stay in their own areas, it is incumbent on the United Nations to go into the former Yugoslavia, to create safe havens for those people and to do so by means of military force. I am not a pacifist. I do not oppose the use of military force. Sanctions are not working there. Arms are being smuggled across the Bulgarian and other borders, so——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not continue down that path. A passing reference is one thing, but to make a long speech on that subject is not in order.

Mr. Grant: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was only responding to the Minister's question.

Mr. Duncan: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not like to add to his list of exceptions when discussing how sanctions work, but does he agree that sanctions against South Africa have been totally ineffective and that they, too, should be abolished?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must not tempt another hon. Member down the wrong path.

Mr. Grant: I agree with you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we should not go down that path.

Mr. John Marshall: To return to the middle east, via Serbia and South Africa, the hon. Gentleman said that he did not believe in sanctions. Will he therefore make a categorical condemnation of the Arab boycott and ask the Government to stop their sanctions against Israel and agree to sell them arms and oil?

Mr. Grant: I am saying that sactions against Iraq and Libya should be lifted and that, generally, sanctions do not work. I am not prepared to widen my statement because I am not as au fait with the points that the hon. Gentleman makes as he probably is.

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Gentleman should be.

Mr. Grant: Perhaps I should be, but one cannot do everything.

The Government allowed the sale of machine tools for arms to Iraq yet stopped the sale of trucks to Libya because, according to the Minister, they could be used for military purposes. It is amazing that the export of trucks was stopped because they could be used for military purposes, yet machine tools, which could clearly be used to make arms, were allowed to be exported. Perhaps the Minister will comment on the Government's apparent diverse policy.

Where do we go from here? There is a new President in America—thank God, some might say—so perhaps we will get a new policy. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow said that Mr. Clinton has stated that he will examine matters ruled out by President Bush and the British Government on the involvement of Iran and Syria. Let us hope that those matters are given fresh and impartial consideration.

We know that the Government are involved in behind-the-scenes negotiations with the Libyans. I believe that the negotiations should be open and that hon. Members should debate what is going on to try to resolve the matter. If the British and American Governments have nothing to be afraid of, they should welcome the Arab League's proposed international inquiry, as it will break the deadlock. The Libyans and a number of other countries favour a third country trial, which is reasonable. The Maltese, for example, have offered to try the two Libyans who have been accused of planting the Lockerbie bomb. As the American and British Governments have stated that the crime started when the suitcase was put on the plane in Malta, I see no reason why both refuse to allow the Maltese to try the Libyans. Libyan lawyers have told me that their system is based on that used in France and the majority of countries on the continent. They are happy to come to an arrangement whereby the men are tried in a country with a similar legal system.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The hon. Gentleman has already spoken of the extradition difficulties standing in the way of the Libyan authorities, to which I shall refer in my speech. Is he saying that these two men would voluntarily surrender themselves to the courts of Malta or that the Libyan Government should extradite them?

Mr. Grant: That is a fair point. Lawyers for the men have stated that they would be quite prepared to allow the men to be tried in a third country. They are not prepared to allow Britain and America to dictate where their clients should be tried. That offer, which was made by Mr. Legwill, the principal lawyer concerned, should be pursued further. If discussions were held, we might see a breakthrough. Mr. Legwill made it clear that arrangements could be made for his clients to be tried outside Libya, not in Britain or the United States but in a third country.

With the new world situation and the new President of the United States, we should make progress. I know that the Security Council is due to discuss the matter in December, and I hope that the British Government will at least accept a suspension of sanctions to allow discussions on how to resolve the matter.

The north African region—Algeria, Tunisia and so on —is very volatile at the moment. One of the only stable countries is Libya. On its way to Libya, our delegation passed through Tunisia. Every half a mile our bus was stopped and searched by armed soldiers, despite arrangements having been made to allow us to pass. Libya was different: people were moving freely, there were no major military exercises and there was no hostility. I urge hon. Members to join an all-party delegation that I have been asked to put together by the General People's Congress in Libya in order to visit Libya next spring and hold discussions with the assembly, the congress, the Foreign Minister and the leader of Libya. If they do so, as a number of my hon. Friends and I did, they will find that Libyans are reasonable and cultured people. Libya was very peaceful. I certainly did not see any guns, apart from those worn by a few police officers, which were well obscured. We were treated very well, despite the pressure that Libya is under from the British Government. If the Government do not want to resolve the matter, parliamentarians in this country and in Libya should be able to speak because—who knows?—we might be able to achieve a solution that the Government have not been able to find so far.

11.28 am

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words on the motion. I believe that the House will be aware of my continuing interest in the oil industry, inasmuch as I purchase oil from the middle east and supply it to surrounding countries that are not oil producers.

I hope that the House will accept my apologies for not being able to remain until the end of the debate, but I have a speaking engagement in my constituency. I hope that the Minister, in particular, will accept my apologies.

[Mr. Alan Duncan]

I intend to take a slightly broader sweep of the region than the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). I do not possess his remarkable forensic qualities. There are moments when his extraordinarily close focus on such issues distorts his view. There are times when he sees the pigment but not the full picture.

I am happy to refer to the main arguments of the hon. Member for Linlithgow about Libya. I feel strongly about the subject, as one of my close friends in the oil business was on Pan Am flight 103, and I have vivid memories of that day. Some of the first transactions that I conducted in the oil business were in Libya. The hon. Gentleman referred to the fact that Korean companies have a major share of the construction business in Libya. They used to be paid in crude oil, which I purchased, sold in the market and converted to dollars to pay them. That is an example of how trade between two countries can extend far beyond the regions that are apparently involved.

I accept much of what the hon. Member for Linlithgow said about apportioning blame, and that one should not focus only on Libya as being responsible for the Lockerbie crime but should include Iran and Syria.

I confess that I am saddened and perplexed by the way in which Libya has behaved. I should love to find a solution to the problem of our diplomatic relations with that country. I should like nothing more than for our two cultures to be harmonious again, trading openly and with the two peoples speaking warmly of one another. However, we must be realistic and understand that that country has a particularly maverick Administration. Any Foreign Office Minister or official who seeks some sort of accord faces the utmost difficulty in conducting a rational conversation to try to reach some sort of solution. Furthermore——

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Duncan: I shall give way in a moment. When the hon. Gentleman rises to his feet, will he admit that Libya undoubtedly supplied Semtex explosives to the IRA, and has attempted to undermine our Government?

Mr. Dalyell: Bad things have been done since the early 1980s. Conservative Members would be welcome to stay to listen to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor)—I hope that the House will be able to hear his speech. He will speak for himself, but his mission to Libya was extremely important and it was a tragedy that that initiative was not taken up by the Foreign Office.

Mr. Duncan: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, and I hope that I shall be able to stay to listen to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), who is familiar with Libya.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Linlithgow for his views on the matter. He referred to the Matrix Churchill problems and the sale of weapons to Iraq. The fact that there was a queue for breakfast at the Rashid hotel does not necessarily prove that it was full of arms salesmen. In my experience, there is always a queue for breakfast there. It would be as well to play for time and to appreciate that a judicial inquiry will consider the matter in detail.

Our constituents often question the defence of the invasion of Kuwait. Some people accuse the Government of being interested in repelling that invasion because of oil—they say that if there had been no oil they would not have done so. I do not accept that. Unlike Yugoslavia, where Islamic people face severe torture, the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq was a clear case of aggressive invasion, although it was admittedly in a sensitive part of the world in which we have interests.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow, applying his remarkable forensic skills, made certain allegations about Mark Thatcher's behaviour and said that the former Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, was in Aspen, Colorado when the invasion took place. He studied the matter in such detail that he almost seemed to imply that the Thatcher family was responsible for the invasion of Kuwait. Great danger lies in apportioning blame in that way. Saddam Hussein was to blame for the invasion of Kuwait. It is somewhat specious to suggest that Lady Thatcher was to blame because she was in Aspen—albeit she was there to stiffen the resolve of the then President of the United States.

Of course we have legitimate interests in the middle east. The flow of oil is important to world security. If one is kicked in the shins, one may react mildly, but if one is kicked in a more sensitive part of the anatomy, one is likely to react more acutely.

The market for oil supplies is fairly stable. Oil is flowing freely, at a reasonable price. Since the last oil shock in 1978-79, sources of oil have been discovered in many parts of the world, diluting the concentration of oil supplies in the middle east. None the less, the middle east and the Gulf remain critical to the stable supply of crude oil. If the Straits of Hormuz were shut, the price of oil would suddenly and dramatically increase and it would cut the flow of the major share of the world's consumed and exported oil.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) referred to embargoes. I agree with him that if there is a lesson to be learnt from the past 20 years, it is that embargoes—especially of oil—do not work unless they are supported by a military blockade. It is simply a fact of trading life that such embargoes are always circumvented. Even though ships are large objects, and cargoes of oil are supplied in hundreds of thousands of tonnes, there are ways and means to circumvent embargoes. They are an ineffective diplomatic device and cannot be applied effectively without military and intelligence support to monitor and enforce them.

That begs the question whether the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries is dead. In many respects it is dormant. It can no longer control the price of oil as it did in the early 1970s, but if it were to disband one might find that the lack of its psychological influence, which affects and underpins the market, would lead to a dramatic further collapse in the price of oil.

The second question that I must study briefly is the nature of likely future Governments in the Gulf region. May I be allowed to include Pakistan in the Arab world, as it is an Islamic country? It has a fragile democracy. I hope that it will survive, but it is in a perilous state. I was saddened to read a leader in *The Times* earlier this week denigrating Benazir Bhutto and saying that her attempt to rally popular opinion was almost an illegitimate activity. Rallying popular opinion strikes me as perfectly legitimate. It is remarkable that her leadership of the opposition is witnessing such a speedy and dramatic comeback.

The only democracy in the middle east is Israel. I know that some would enjoy denigrating the country, but we should not forget that, as a democracy, it enjoys certain validity. I defy any hon. Member to cite an example of two democracies that have gone to war. Some examples are close to meeting that definition, but I cannot think of one.

We must appreciate that, in the middle east, there is scope for various sytems of government. The Gulf states illustrate the fragile position of monarchs under threat. In such tribal communities there is always the threat of domestic upheaval. Despotic and fundamentalist regimes nearby are a threat to those neighbours who enjoy traditional quasi-feudal systems of government.

We must appreciate that it would be desperately wrong for us to try to impose democracies on those countries and to say that their regimes are somehow less legitimate because they are not yet practising democracies. The path to democracy in many of those countries should not and cannot be accelerated. We should be doing them a grave disservice if we tried to impose our western ideals on their forms of government. In various parts of the world different countries are differently suited to different forms of government. As one wise old bird from the Foreign Office said to me only last night—he was probably looking back to India—"One has to appreciate that there needs to be variety in government. Indeed, there was a point when processions of elephants were an essential part of the governmental process."

The key to our good relations is trade. Our diplomatic influence will wane further if we believe that simply clubbishness and an Oxford accent will suffice when dealing with the political elites of the middle east. Our commercial relationships are inextricably linked to our political relationships and influence in that region.

I was heartened to learn from the autumn statement that the budget of the Export Credits Guarantee Deparment will be increased by £750 million. I hope that that budget will cover the Gulf states with which our trade is of great advantage, to them and to us. Last night a dinner was hosted by the Bahrain Society—I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) was unable to attend because he had the Adjournment debate—and that remarkable man, the Minister for Development, Mr. Yousef Shirawi, pointed out the enormous extent of the development that his country still wishes to undertake. That development offers us a remarkable trading opportunity, and I hope that Foreign Office Ministers and Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry will concentrate their efforts on it.

The pattern of influence in the middle east has changed dramatically with the collapse of the Soviet Union. For the past 10 years Syria has had a pivotal role in determining the balance of influence in that region, but it no longer has the backing of the Soviet Union, which it enjoyed for so long. The balance of trade and influence has changed and that offers us a remarkable opportunity to exercise our influence through diplomacy and trade.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) that the sooner we have greater trade within that region, with the withdrawal of the Arab boycott on Israel, the more fruitful it will be for the relationships of all those countries in that troubled part of the globe.

11.44 am

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): I shall make a brief contribution to the debate, which gives me the opportunity to raise the case of one of my constituents, Paul Ride, who is in prison in Baghdad. His case is greatly influenced by the general relationship between our Government and that of Iraq.

I appreciated greatly the opening speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who made a powerful and reasoned case for his motion. It was also interesting to learn from the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) about the situation in Jordan, where one person in four is a refugee. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that that example should be viewed in the context of Europe and, in particular, of Bosnia. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could draw that to the attention of some of his hon. Friends who seem so intent on pushing the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill through Parliament with the excuse that too many refugees are coming to this country. Jordan puts that claim into perspective.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow said, it is clear that arms sales to Iraq have gone on for years. During the Iran-Iraq war people in this country were fed the idea of Iran as the aggressor—the villain of the piece in everything that was going on in the middle east. Iraq was presented as the buffer that would prevent Iran rolling across the middle east and imposing a fundamentalist regime.

During the war arms were sold to Iraq and it used chemical weapons. Before and after the war, the Kurdish minority were persecuted and internal repression was practised in Iraq. Those facts were drawn to the attention of the House by some of my hon. Friends, but they were largely ignored. The regime in Iraq was repressive then, and it is still.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow also pointed out, the regime in Kuwait is hardly democratic; nor is the way in which Palestinians have been treated there since the Gulf war. Since that war, a regime of sanctions and blockades has operated against Iraq, and that is the background to my constituent's case.

Paul Ride was working as a catering manager in Kuwait and, in late June, he disappeared near the border with Iraq when he went to visit a friend who worked nearby. The exact circumstances are still not 100 per cent. clear, but we know that he was arrested by an Iraqi patrol. It was several weeks before his wife knew anything, because he simply disappeared. However, it then turned out that he was in prison in Baghdad and, when news of his appearance first came through, he was about to be put on trial. At that trial he was sentenced to seven years in prison on a charge of illegally entering the country.

Another Briton, Michael Wainwright, is also in prison in Baghdad and my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) is dealing with his case. An American was also arrested by the Iraqis on the border, but he was soon released. Obviously that begs the question why the Americans were able to get one of their citizens released so quickly, while our citizens are in gaol and are likely to stay there for several years.

The reason that Paul Ride and Michael Wainwright have been held is that their imprisonment is a form of retaliation against sanctions—it is a bargaining counter. Their release depends on our relationship with Iraq. We do

[Mr. Neil Gerrard]

not have an Iraqi embassy in London any more, but there is an Iraqi interest section at the Jordanian embassy and Iraqi diplomats are posted to other European countries. They have been approached by MEPs and others working on behalf of Paul Ride and Michael Wainwright.

Iraqi diplomats say, "How can you expect us to take the humanitarian steps you seek, and release those people who are in prison, when your sanctions mean that our children cannot obtain the medicines they need?" My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow vividly pointed out the situation. "How can we take such humanitarian steps when there would be repercussions for us in our country?", they ask.

We have heard how the real victims of the sanctions on Iraq are the most vulnerable, the old, the sick and the children. Up to a quarter of a million children may have died through lack of drugs and medicines. I have with me a letter from the head of the Iraqi interest section at the Jordanian embassy pointing out that the harsh economic sanctions have caused an acute shortage of medicines and medical appliances. It adds that the Iraqi Red Crescent Society is asking humanitarian organisations to supply urgently required items such as rubella vaccine, of which 200,000 doses are required, hepatitis B vaccine for adults and children, yellow fever vaccine, anti-gas gangrene serum and anti-snake serum. It is a long list.

I point out in my early-day motion 942, which has attracted a significant number of signatures in recent days, the contrast between the attitude of Governments in refusing to supply medicines and what was happening before the Gulf war. Whatever the circumstances of the arms sales—who knew about them, what they were and who signed this or that letter—everybody knows that arms and machine tools to make arms were sold. Contrast that state of affairs with what is happening now and the inability of people to obtain medicines.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not wish to mislead the House. He will appreciate that the sanctions regime does not prohibit the import of medicines into Iraq.

Mr. Gerrard: While the sanctions regime may not prohibit medicines being imported by Iraq, the embargo and freezing of assets in foreign currencies makes it virtually impossible for Iraq to obtain the supplies it needs.

The Government should reconsider their position over sanctions. I have raised the issue today from the point of view of an individual and the effect it is having on a constituent of mine. The general feeling is that nothing will happen to achieve his release until there is a change of position. Having raised it at the constituency level, I am anxious to make it clear that I share the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow in the wider context of the need to lift the sanctions.

11.53 am

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I apologise to the Minister for the fact that I shall not be able to stay till the end of the debate. I explained in a letter to Madam Speaker that I had other engagements in my constituency.

I welcome the statement in the motion about the positive attitude of the United Kingdom towards its traditional friends in the middle east. In particular, I welcome the fact that Prime Minister Rabin is due to visit this country next month. I am sure that he will receive a warm welcome, for, during the few months that he has been Prime Minister, he has shown greater flexibility of thought than many Arab states have shown since the foundation of the state of Israel.

Israeli Prime Ministers have visited this country on many occasions. It is noted in Israel that only one serving British Prime Minister has visited that country. I refer to Lady Thatcher, who went there in 1986. I remember that visit with great pleasure because I was there at the time. The warmth of the reception that she received should underline to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister the wisdom perhaps of his paying a visit to Israel.

The people of Israel would also like a visit from a member of our royal family. Her Majesty the Queen has visited a number of Israel's neighbours. It would help relations in that part of the world if she or a member of her family visited Israel.

Everyone welcomes the fact that individuals such as Terry Waite are at long last free. They were incarcerated for far too long. The manoeuvres that started the release of hostages in the middle east began with the decision of Israel to release a number of prisoners held in that country. It hoped that the result would be that Israeli hostages who have been held in the middle east for many years and whose relatives have not heard from them might be released.

For example, I have met Mr. and Mrs. Baumel, whose son was captured by the Syrians in 1982 and taken to Damascus. He has been held under circumstances of which we are not aware, and we do not even know if he is still alive. His parents should be told what has happened to their son.

I also recently met Mr. and Mrs. Fink, from Manchester, who now live in Israel and whose son some was similarly captured. They have not had a word from his captors about his whereabouts. In both cases, the captors have acted against all international understanding and conventions governing the way in which prisoners should be treated.

I have recently heard from friends of Mr. Arad, who has been held for many years. His daughter has not had the privilege of getting to know her father. We should be told whether Mr. Arad, an Israeli navigator, is alive. He should be released, having been kept longer than any prisoner was detained during the second world war.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I am sure that my hon. Friend wishes to give the House a balanced picture. He will be aware that no country in the middle east holds as many prisoners without proper trial as does Israel. A major step that Israel could take to help the peace process would be to release more than 1,000 Palestinians being held without proper legal trial.

Mr. Marshall: My hon. Friend expects my speeches on the middle east to be as balanced as his. There exists in Israel a rule of law which is the envy of many other states in the area. The justices there have an independence which is denied to many judges in other countries in the middle east and in other parts of the world.

We must accept certain realities about the middle east, one of which concerns the future of Jerusalem. While certain parts of the middle east are negotiable in the peace process, people should not blind themselves to the fact that the future of Jerusalem is an issue about which no Israeli Government would negotiate. Those who favour religious tolerance and freedom must believe that Jerusalem should remain a united, not a divided, city. There is more religious freedom in Jerusalem today than there was when it was a divided city.

For Israelis in general, and for the Jewish community, the western wall is the holiest part of the world. When it was under Jordanian control, nobody was able to go from Israel to worship there. The first time that an Israeli could go there was in 1967. No Israeli Government could be expected to agree to Jerusalem again becoming a divided city. Some 70 per cent. of the population are Jewish. When it was partially under Jordanian control, the Jordanians did not honour their religious beliefs and they have therefore lost any right to have a say over Jerusalem's future.

I should like—I suspect that one or two former British ambassadors wish that it had happened—the British embassy to be transferred from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Those who have lived in Tel Aviv have often said that they would be happy if the next embassy went to Jerusalem.

There are many problems in the middle east, and there are many refugees in Jordan. In the late 1940s, there was a huge transfer of populations. Refugees from Arab countries went to Israel, and Palestinians left Israel to become refugees elsewhere. Let us consider the attitudes of their respective Governments. The Israeli Government set out to house their people and provide them with jobs and opportunities. Many of the Arab Governments did nothing of the sort but merely allowed the refugees to fester and multiply and did not provide them with decent housing conditions.

If the Arab states had wanted to solve the problem, they could have done so. Had they devoted two months' oil revenues to sorting out the problems of many of their refugees, the difficulties would have disappeared decades ago. We must accept the fact that certain Governments in the middle east are indifferent to the refugees' fate. Indeed, one suspects that, the worse that fate, the happier they are.

12.1 pm

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): I was struck by how remarkably wide my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) had managed to draw the motion. It allows us to range over a period of history that goes back to the Balfour declaration and up to the recent "Dispatches" programme. You will forgive me, Madam Deputy Speaker, if I cover much the same ground.

When I look at the history of our involvement in the Arab world, I am struck by how overwhelmingly destructive and divisive it has been. We have played a game of deceit in which we have said one thing while practising another. In an embarrassing moment immediately after the Russian revolution, Lenin and Trotsky decided on a breathtaking innovation. They published all the secret documents and treaties in the Russian Foreign Ministry, which proved embarrassing for Britain when it transpired that we had promised the land of Palestine to both the Jews and the Arabs at exactly the same time, while keeping both documents confidential and not telling either party what was proposed.

Such duplicity and behind-the-scenes dealings produce military conflicts that rumble on not just for decades but for the best part of a century. I have come to the conclusion that all our interests would be better served if we based our foreign policy on some form of morality, rather than on the nonsense of looking for expediency and contracts, and working out what is in our immediate short-term interest. It is in our interest that there should be a stable world: the only way to achieve stability is if there is justice, if peoples have the right to self-determination and if one set of peoples does not enslave another.

Like many people, I am happy that some progress has been made in resolving the issue between the Palestinian people and the state of Israel. I am not overwhelmed with joy, however, at the slow pace of those negotiations. Even the new Israeli Government are being unrealistic about the future arrangements that they expect the Palestinian people to accept.

The Palestinians have been in that area for tens of thousands of years and have a long-standing, recognised culture. They are the most cosmopolitan and international of all the Arab peoples. Perhaps because most of the rest of the world has marched through their territory at some time, they have been open to more outside influence than anyone else in the Arab world. I know of no other Arab peoples more committed to the concept of democracy. Three generations have lived in camps for displaced persons with refugee status, eking out an existence on the margins of other peoples' nations and societies. That has given them more confidence in the commitment that the state that they eventually create will be a democracy and will not replicate some of the unpleasant military or feudal dictatorships in the regime.

Israel should now show the imagination to offer the Palestinians not just a deal that they would be prepared to accept but one that lays the foundation for peaceful co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians. That must mean a Palestinian state on the west bank and Gaza. It will not be good enough to expect people who have suffered so much for so long to put up with municipal status, giving them about the same amount of power over their affairs as the people of Islington or Tottenham have under the present regime here.

No one wants to have an expansion of arms in the area. I should not be surprised to find that a deal could be struck between the Palestinians and Israelis that would ensure that the Palestinian state would be demilitarised. There could be economic co-operation and development, meaning that, within five or 10 years, everyone in the area would have an interest in preserving the peace because their economies would be growing and they would be trading with each other.

All the power rests with Israel. Israel has 200 nuclear weapons; the most powerful, modern and efficient military machine in the area; and a virtual blank cheque from the new United States President-elect, Bill Clinton, who is completely committed to the Israeli cause and has been in American politics for many years. From that position of strength, Israel must take the concessions. It cannot expect those who do not have a military machine, nuclear weapons, their own state or a right to vote under Israeli occupation to make concessions. They have nothing to concede. If Israel is now prepared to show imagination, a peace can be secured that will respect the traditions of the two peoples and lay the foundations for peace in the future. It means that Israel must make concessions and I hope that the British Government will make that point privately and publicly to the Israeli Government.

[Mr. Ken Livingstone]

If our involvement in the issue of Israel and Palestine has been slightly two-faced over the decades, our recent involvement with Iraq and Iran make it look a model of straightforwardness and honesty. Like most people in Britain, I have been amazed as revelation after revelation has emerged about the scale of our involvement in the Gulf wars in the past 12 years. I remember hearing numerous Ministers say that the Government did not support the continuation of the war between Iraq and Iran but that they were in favour of a complete arms embargo being imposed on Iran and Iraq so that the war could be brought to a conclusion.

It is now apparent that, from day one, Britain and America were doing everything in their power covertly to supply information and provide arms to sustain Iraq's attack on Iran, simply because they considered that Saddam Hussein was a lesser evil than the Ayatollah Khomeini.

The Iranian revolution was a genuine revolution from below. It was a wave of anger by the Iranian people, who had seen their nation subjected to outside western influences, decade after decade. They saw their Government, in the form of the Shah, as a western puppet and had seen that puppet supported by western Governments for convenience because he was anti-Communist. They had seen western Governments loth to raise any issues of human rights abuses. They had seen the oil companies exercising their influence. There was none of the pride of a nation state. Would we have tolerated that subject position? Of course not. Eventually, it created a revolution from below—as genuine a revolution as that in Russia in 1917, that in China in 1949 or that in Cuba in 1959. We should have recognised that.

Like virtually everyone here, I would have found it difficult to support the Ayatollah's political programme, but that was a matter for the Iranian people. However, because western interests felt threatened, we helped to arm and build up Iraq. There was, remarkably, a degree of anticipation at the end of the cold war. The Soviet Union was providing conventional weapons to Iraq and we in the west were covertly providing the rest, which was much more dangerous.

That war continued for eight years and resulted in the slaughter of millions of people, to achieve nothing. It left an Iraqi military machinery that was so powerful that America took the first opportunity to smash it; America perceived it as a threat to western interests, which it clearly was, as Saddam Hussein was a wild cannon.

Would not it have been better if we have kept out of the conflict during that eight years and not encouraged one side and prolonged the slaughter with our support? Did we think that simply because Saddam Hussein was temporarily on our side against the Ayatollah, he was someone whose military strength we should build up? Would it not have been more honest to work with the refugee groups—the Kurds who fled from Saddam Hussein's tyranny and the Shia Arabs in the south—who wanted a better Iraq?

It seems that our morality in terms of foreign policy goes no further than the immortal words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt who, when he was President in the 1930s, discussed the obnoxious regime of Somoza in Nicaragua with his Secretary of State. The Secretary of State said, "This man is a son of a bitch" and President Roosevelt replied, "He is our son of a bitch." Sadly, that seems to be the underlying basis on which we in this country approach foreign policy issues.

The same is true of Government of both colours. Like many Labour Members, I listened with acute embarrassment when, in the debate on Iraq, the Government listed the degree of covert arms sales that Labour Governments had been prepared to go along with. Such a policy has to end. If we pump arms into the volatile regions of the world, we shall create wars that ultimately damage us greatly and cost much more than the short-term profits of one or two arms companies.

I shall now deal with precisely how the arms entered Iraq, which seems a particularly pernicious issue. It should not be an immediate party political issue. I believe the Prime Minister's assurance that he knew nothing of it. I have watched the right hon. Gentleman for 25 years and I can honestly say that I have never seen him lie—in Lambeth council or here. It may be embarrassing to him that the document was in his office but he did not read it, but people under pressure occasionally make such mistakes. I do not think that there is any great shock or horror about the Prime Minister's role in the affair.

The shocks will come in relation to the role of the present Prime Minister's predecessor and her family. I hope that all parties will be prepared to deal with the issue honestly and openly. What has been going on is a scandal of immense proportions. We should all have an interest in ensuring that no party in government allows such a scandal again.

I knew virtually nothing about the involvement of Mark Thatcher in the arms trade. When I see Mark Thatcher's name in the newspaper, I usually turn over and move on to something else. He was not someone I had an interest in and he never struck me as particularly bright or as someone with very much to say. I was not terribly interested in motor racing. I have crossed the Sahara desert twice without getting lost and I find it difficult to see how anyone could get lost there. There is only one road crossing the desert, so one simply has to go along it one way or the other.

I was surprised when, one day sitting in my bath, I was reading *The Guardian* and I came across a little article by Richard Norton-Taylor, who has an excellent track record for finding out embarrassing things that the Government prefer us not to know. The article spoke of a book that had published in America by a former Israeli military intelligence officer, Ari Ben-Menashe. The book could not be published in Britain because of our restrictive libel laws. It contained damaging revelations about Mark Thatcher and arms sales to Iraq.

By a stroke of immense good fortune, I was due to go to the United States the following week. I got straight off the plane and went into a bookshop to buy a copy of "Prophets of War". I read it from cover to cover, and Mark Thatcher merely played a bit part—he had a walk-on role. The book was much more to do with what George Bush did or did not know about the hostage arrangements in Iraq in the 1980 election and other matters.

When I returned to the House, I submitted an early-day motion, which I resubmitted in a slightly different form after the Scott inquiry was announced by the Prime Minister. To my surprise, it attracted 53 signatures. I usually find it difficult to obtain double figures for signatures on my early-day motions. However, people who are not known as my closest confidantes and who are not from my wing of the Labour party signed it.

The early-day motion contained the charges of Ari Ben-Menashe. I accept that we have to be cautious when dealing with the relevations of rogue intelligence officers who have turned against their former employer. However, it is important to remember that Mark Thatcher and the Iraqi arms deals played only a minor part in the book and were not essential to what the author was trying to establish.

The author makes various charges. The book stated that Mark Thatcher owned a Texas-based company that was used to move equipment directly from Britain to Iraq. It should be relatively easy for Lord Justice Scott to determine whether that is true or false. The allegation was that Mark Thatcher introduced the supergun designer, Gerald Bull—who was subsequently murdered—to the South African military intelligence general, Pieter Van der Westhuizen, who then introduced Gerald Bull to the Iraqi deputy chief of procurement, who arranged a payment for Gerald Bull's services via Cardoen Industries financial network.

The book also alleges that Mark Thatcher was an associate of Dr. Carlos Cardoen, who is now getting a little more publicity for his activities. Mr. Ari Ben-Menashe was invited by one of my colleagues and came to the House of Commons this week. He was questioned by several hon. Members. According to Ari Ben-Menashe, Dr. Cardoen's main job in life was the procurement of arms for Iraq in the west. When Ari Ben-Menashe—who was then still working for United States intelligence and trying to discourage Gerald Bull from going ahead with the supergun—arrived at Dr. Cardoen's office, he found Mark Thatcher there. What was Mark Thatcher doing with Iraq's main procurer of weapons in the west? The book alleges that Dr. Cardoen was introduced to Mr. Bull by Mark Thatcher, who was the link person.

If those allegations are true, they are breathtaking. Conservative Members are having to listen to unpleasant things about their former colleagues. But if we reverse the circumstances, we can ask what Conservative Members would be saying if my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) had been Prime Minister for the past 10 years and it had just been discovered that his three daughters had all become multi-millionaires in the arms trade and had been wandering around selling armaments to a country with which we were ultimately at war. I suspect that we would have heard something from Conservative Members.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): The hon. Gentleman is making an extraordinary allegation—he is suggesting guilt by smear. He makes allegations about Mark Thatcher, who is not a colleague of any hon. Member. The hon. Gentleman must make absolutely clear whether he is making allegations against the former Prime Minister of this country or not. If he is not doing so, to try to imply that there is some association between the former Prime Minister and Mark Thatcher, other than that they are mother and son, is disgraceful.

Mr. Livingstone: I am afraid that I am now coming to specific details. The hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) made it clear that he was not a former associate of Mark Thatcher. I suspect that many Conservative Members will say much the same thing over coming months as Lord Justice Scott continues his inquiry.

Mr. Dalyell: I asked a number of specific and careful questions about Mark Thatcher. Some 2 million or more people watched the "Dispatches" programme, produced by Box Productions. As I stressed, the company must have gone to its libel lawyers. Those viewers heard of serious allegations by a member of the Reagan Administration, Mr. Howard Teicher suggesting that political families were involved in matters of considerable difficulty. The hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) should see what hundreds of thousands of people have seen on television. He might then agree that it is at least up to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to respond to those allegations.

Mr. Livingstone: I thank my hon. Friend. I made it clear in the early-day motion that I was repeating the allegations. At that stage, I was not certain of the extent to which the allegations might be gross exaggerations. When Mr. Ari Ben-Menashe came to the House this week, I pointed out that his book was published several months ago. Mark Thatcher is a resident of Texas. I asked Ari Ben-Menashe whether he had received any libel writs about the charges in the book. The answer was that he had not. Mark Thatcher is not short of a bob or two, so he could afford a lawyer. I should have thought that charges of such gravity would bring forth a writ if they were inaccurate. That is another mark that suggests that the allegations are probably true.

Mr. Dalyell: In relation to the meeting at the Carlton Tower, Howard Teicher is reported to have expressed great concern that a member of a political family should exploit a perceived connection to make money. Our hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins), a very responsible parliamentary colleague who is a member of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, said that in the light of all that and in the light of what was said to the Select Committee, there must be a full disclosure. If those are not matters for the Floor of the House, I do not know what is.

Mr. Livingstone: I thank my hon. Friend again. He raises an important point. We in Britain know that in many instances Mark Thatcher was an embarrassment to his mother and to the Conservative party. That is why he was in effect bundled off into exile in Texas after the scandal involving Cementation. He was lucky to get away without going inside. He was bundled off so that he would no longer be an embarrassment.

Hon. Members know that Mark Thatcher is no mastermind who will one day inherit the Tory party leadership. However, there are many nations in which the sons and daughters of prime ministers and presidents inherit political office as a result of their control of political parties. Dynastic politics are powerful in many nations. We may have had no illusion about the real influence of Mark Thatcher, but many people in other countries who saw the son of a long-serving and powerful Prime Minister sitting at meetings discussing the purchase of British armaments for sale to Iraq would have thought that the Government must have some awareness of what was going on.

Mr. Dalyell: Does my hon. Friend recollect the previous occasion on which he and I put forward a

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controversial view? We were rubbished on the Floor of the House by the then junior Home Office Minister, who is now the Secretary of State for Education, on the matter of Colin Wallace. Colin Wallace was then, rightly, awarded thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money in compensation. Everything that we said turned out to be true and everything that was said by Ministers turned out to be a load of drivel.

Mr. Livingstone: I am delighted to be reminded of that case. I recall my hon. Friend and myself going through three years of general abuse. We were told that we were obsessive and monomaniacal, that we had wild staring eyes and that we tabled too many questions. Did anyone get up and apologise when it was all shown to be true? There was a deathly silence on the Conservative Benches.

One of the joys of the House of Commons is that one raises an issue and then suddenly one starts to get anonymous letters. I now receive anonymous letters from all round the world about people who bumped into Mark Thatcher or who saw him with somebody else. One must treat those letters circumspectly. I am now collaborating with a journalist, Mark Hollingsworth, who is writing a book about Mark Thatcher's arms dealings and I shall pass all the information to him. I am sure that Conservative Members look forward to the book's publication.

I received further information about an arms deal—this brings us back to our involvement with the Arab world—which was not with Iraq. I received information from a journalist which I then put forward in the form of three early-day motions. The first stated:

> "That this House notes that the Foreign Secretary received a letter dated 3rd June 1992 from Mr. Abdul S. Minty, director of the World Campaign against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa, alleging that Mr. Mark Thatcher was involved in promoting the sale of South African G6 Howitzers to Saudi Arabia; further notes that Britain is a member of the United Nations 421 Arms Embargo Committee of the Security Council and was present when these allegations were discussed by the Committee; and requests that the Foreign Secretary report to the House on the action taken by Britain's representatives when this matter was reported and on the nature of his reply to Mr. Minty."

The second early-day motion stated:

> "That this House notes the reports to the United Nations 421 Committee that Mr. Mark Thatcher offered to act as the 'middle man' in an attempt by Armscor, the South African government owned weapons dealer, to break the United Nations arms embargo and sell £328 million worth of G6 howitzers to Saudi Arabia".

I do not know what the commission rates are, but the commission on £328 million must be more than a few bob.

The early-day motion continued:

> "the deal was dropped after pressure from the United States Government"—

who had been alerted to it. The early-day motion then

> "calls on the British Government to deposit in the Library of the House the reports on these events compiled by MI5 and MI6."

The third early-day motion stated:

> "That this House notes that Lyttleton Engineering were participants at the four day Defence and Security Exhibition which opened in Bahrain on 11th May 1992, that Lyttleton Engineering is a former subsidiary of Armscor (and now part of the state-owned Denel Group) and known to produce G5 and G6 Howitzer guns; further notes that Mark Thatcher accompanied his mother to the opening of the 'Britain in the Gulf' trade fair in Dubai two weeks earlier and that Mark Thatcher's unofficial spokesman, Sir Tim Bell,"—

who is known to some Conservative Members—

> "has refused to confirm or deny whether or not he attended the defence exhibition; and calls on Mr. Mark Thatcher to give a full account of his movements and activities in this area."

Mr. Knapman: The hon. Gentleman referred to an "unofficial spokesman." Will he describe the duties of an "unofficial spokesman"?

Mr. Livingstone: It is quite simple. When journalists telephone Mark Thatcher to ask whether he has been flogging arms to country A, B, C or D, he refers them to Sir Tim Bell. Sir Tim Bell then reminds the journalists about the libel laws and says that he cannot confirm or deny anything. That is the exact nature of the role. I do not know whether he is paid for his services, but I recall that Sir Tim Bell has very strong links with the Conservative party and the former Prime Minister.

To my surprise, I was told that my early-day motions were not acceptable because they were repetitious and were caught by Speaker Weatherill's ruling. Therefore, I resubmitted my motions as questions and I received answers to them yesterday. Those answers are interesting. The first states:

> "A letter from Mr. Minty dated 3 June 1992 was received in the office of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on that day. The reply, from an official, dated 25 June, stated:
>
> 'The United Kingdom adheres to UN Security Council resolutions 558 and 591 concerning, inter alia, the import of South African-produced arms. We take seriously allegations of British involvement in any contravention of these resolutions.'
>
> In the case the hon. Member raises, we have no knowledge as to whether South African-produced arms were purchased by customers in third countries. But we shall investigate any alleged British involvement if it is established that such arms were imported in breach of the above resolutions."

The second reply states:

> "There has been no substantive discussion within the committee"—

that is, the UN committee on the arms embargo—

> "to date, although the chairman has undertaken to seek information on the report from the relevant parties. But if the committee were to establish that arms have been imported in breach of United Nations Security Council resolution 558, we would of course be prepared to investigate any allegations of British involvement."

In response to my question about pressure from America to scrap the deal, the response was that the British Government

> "are not aware of any such representations."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1992; Vol. 214, c. 767-68.]

I tabled a written question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking if he would

> "list all communications between his Department and Mr. Mark Thatcher concerning the Defence and Security Exhibition in Bahrain on 11 May."

I received an evasive answer to that question. The reply was:

> "It is not the practice for Government Departments to list communications with members of the public."

I am not surprised about that.

It strikes me that those answers are remarkably similar, as my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow said, to the denials—if one can call them that—that we received on the Colin Wallace affair. There was never a categoric "no". We were told, "Well, if there's information we'll look into it. If you know anything, pass it to the police." When I do not receive an absolute denial, I am encouraged to continue probing.

Those rather open-ended replies, which do not dismiss the charges, suggest that the British Government are not writing out the allegations from Mr. Abdul Minty, which are now being investigated by the United Nations Security Council.

Mr. Dalyell: Are we not further entitled to probe because there is every suggestion that the Cabinet guidelines issued in relation to behaviour in respect of such matters have been flouted? The "Dispatches" programme broadcast in print the Cabinet guidelines in relation to the undertakings that should be given by families because families are mentioned specifically in those guidelines. It is fair to ask whether the Cabinet guidelines were flouted. The Government will have to answer that at some time.

Mr. Livingstone: I am particularly struck by that point. Let us be honest about this. If the Foreign Secretary had been able to make me look a complete wally and if he could simply dismiss the charges out of hand, would he not have taken that opportunity? Would he not have said that it was nonsense? Would he not have struck me down and made me a laughing stock before the House? Instead, there have been guarded replies which leave it open to him, if he has to do so, to admit eventually that the allegations are true.

However, I must emphasise that we are still talking about allegations that Mark Thatcher was trading arms to Iraq and that he was trying to sell South African arms to Saudi Arabia. However, if there is any shred of truth in the charges, are we to believe that MI5 and MI6 did not warn the Prime Minister of the day about the activities in which her son was involved? Surely the director of MI5 or MI6 must have thought that it was important, if any information of that kind came to light, to warn the Prime Minister immediately that her son was engaged in activities that were illegal in British law and contravened United Nations resolutions. Of course, the director of MI5 or MI6 would have done that.

If the allegations are true, we will want to know what the intelligence and security services told the Prime Minister of the day. Was the Prime Minister of the day warned about what was happening and what action did she take? Lord Justice Scott will have to examine that matter. I hope that the Government will give a commitment that the full files of MI5 and MI6 on Mark Thatcher—I am prepared to bet money with any Government Members that those files exist—are made available to Lord Justice Scott. I hope that they will also be made available to hon. Members on the Labour Front Bench so that we can see whether there has been any abuse. We want no cover-up.

There is no reason whatever why the Government should defend Mark Thatcher and his arms deals. That is not a reflection on the Prime Minister. However, if the Government have been defending arms deals, we want it out in the open so that the defence of such deals will not happen again under a Tory Government, a Labour Government or any other Government.

I shall examine the position of Dr. Carlos Cardoen a little more. He is a major and powerful figure in Chile. According to Mr. Ari Ben-Menashe, Dr. Cardoen is a business associate of Mark Thatcher. A British journalist who went to investigate Dr. Cardoen has been murdered. That is a particularly unpleasant twist to the story.

I draw the attention of the House to early-day motion 827 which attracted considerable support. It stated:

> "That this House, recalling the mysterious death in an hotel room in Santiago, Chile, in March 1990, subsequently held to be murder, of the British defence journalist Jonathan Moyle, conscious of the belief of Mr. Moyle's family that their son was murdered because of his investigations into the supply to Iraq of the Helios weapons guidance system and the Stonefish mine by Chilean arms dealers Cardoen Industries, and noting the links between Cardoen and Matrix Churchill and the Iraqi regime, calls upon Mr. Justice Scott to include in his inquiry an investigation into the circumstances of the murder of this young British journalist."

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Is my hon. Friend aware that the Chilean authorities investigating the murder have reported that the British Government have been unhelpful in that investigation? The British Government should come clean about that matter. Have the British Government been unhelpful to the Chilean authorities which are investigating the murder?

Mr. Livingstone: I am able to confirm what my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) said. I shall come to that matter in a moment.

A pattern has emerged. Mark Thatcher has been linked to Dr. Carlos Cardoen. It is alleged that Mark Thatcher's Texas-based company sent arms to Iraq. Then the British journalist who was sent to investigate was murdered. After the pattern emerged, I tabled another early-day motion, which stated:

> "That this House notes the belief of Mr. Moyle's family that he was murdered because of his investigation into the arms deals of Carlos Cardoen, the Chilean associate of Mr. Mark Thatcher, and calls on both men to publish full details of their business links."

Once again, I was told by the Table Office that the early-day motion was repetitious, according to the previous Speaker's ruling on repetitious motions.

Yesterday, we saw Dr. Cardoen speak out in public for the first time. In the months and years that have passed, I have never seen a picture of that gentleman work its way into the press, let alone heard of his conducting an interview and being questioned by British journalists. However, in yesterday's *The Independent* an account of that interview was reported. That report is truly shocking. It brings a much more sinister twist to the matter and raises frightening issues.

Dr. Cardoen revealed that he briefed the British and United States Governments during most of the 1980s on Baghdad's efforts to acquire weapons. Dr. Cardoen is no longer some shady arms dealer; he claims to have briefed our Government and the United States Government during the 1980s. The report states:

> "Dr. Carlos Cardoen, who produced and procured weapons for Iraq from 1981"—

he admits the charge that he was the main arms procurer for Iraq in the west—

> "told the *Independent* that the British and American embassies in Santiago, as well as US Department of Defense officials, were given 'ample explanation' of Iraq's procurement network"—

Why should they not be given that explanation? We were supporting Iraq in its war. It should come as no surprise to the public—

> "and that officials visited his arms plants on several occasions and 'verified the entire manufacturing process of the arms in question.'"

We are now told by Iraq's main arms procurer that British and American embassy officials visited his plants

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which made the arms for Iraq and inspected the process. We shall expect an explanation from the Minister when he replies to the debate.

Mr. Dalyell: Does not that underline the serious concern that many of us have about the ethics of officials? For many years, I never doubted the ethics of the British civil service. But the whole Ponting trial and now the information that officials were apparently party to actions which are improper in the eyes of the House of Commons raise deeply disturbing issues.

Mr. Livingstone: I certainly hope that Lord Justice Scott will interview the officials and bring them before his committee to question them on the exact details of whom they told and where the information went after they visited Dr. Cardoen's arms factories.

There is also the Matrix Churchill affair. In his first interview, certainly with western media, Dr. Cardoen revealed that Matrix Churchill was allowed to export machine tools to him, even though the Foreign Office was fully aware of his relationship with Saddam Hussein. We shall want that matter to be investigated in full by Lord Justice Scott.

Dr. Cardoen said in his interview:

> "On behalf of the Iraqi government, we acquired Matrix-manufactured machine tools and then re-exported them to Baghdad. All this was done in keeping with all legal documentation demanded by British law."

One must ask whether, as the officials saw the trial of the Matrix Churchill Three progress—I suppose one could call them that—any of them thought to alert the people who were conducting that prosecution that, throughout that time, Dr. Cardoen had passed to the British Government all that they needed to know, as he took Matrix Churchill's weaponry and machine tools and passed them on to Iraq.

How could officials be silent, knowing that all the documentation had been passed to the Government, having been briefed by Dr. Cardoen and having been allowed to see his arms factories, where the Matrix Churchill machinery was repackaged and shipped on?

The Foreign Office has a wonderful response. It says "We shall await the outcome of the Scott inquiry." That has become one of the most frequently used phrases in British politics today. I half expect the Chancellor of the Exchequer to say that the Budget will have to await the outcome of the Scott inquiry. Soon, government will stop until Lord Justice Scott manages to conclude the inquiry. How can it be that the Government cannot answer our simple questions? The Government are using Lord Justice Scott to hide behind.

Mr. Dalyell: Will my hon. Friend once again reflect that not only he and I, and a few other difficult—in the eyes of some people—Members of Parliament are asking these questions? The chairman of the Bar Council has said:

> "Whoever read the confidential documents would have known that it was improper to proceed with the prosecution."

Why was the prosecution then not dropped instead of it being pursued, presumably in the hope that the judge would not allow the documents to be disclosed at the trial? That was said by Anthony Scrivener QC, the chairman of the Bar Council, not the hon. Member for Brent, East or the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

Mr. Livingstone: We are in the company of not only the chairman of the Bar Council but two junior Ministers.

What is now revealed in today's newspapers, and in *The Guardian* in particular, is that two junior Ministers in the Department of Trade and Industry refused to sign the documents which their senior colleagues were then prepared to sign. If two junior Ministers knew that it was wrong to sign those documents, how come the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was able to overide them and sign them? There are honourable Conservative Members who realise that the Government were behind the arms sales to Iraq and were not prepared to send innocent men to gaol, but their views as junior Ministers were overridden, and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry signed in their place.

Mr. Dalyell: The Attorney-General has misled the lot of us in claiming that they had to do it. His argument has been destroyed by Anthony Bradley, professor emeritus of public and constitutional law at the university of Edinburgh and the editor of *Public Law*.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I am not sure whether I heard the hon. Gentleman correctly, but I thought that he said that the Attorney-General misled someone or other. I hope that he did not, but, if he did, would he mind rephrasing that?

Mr. Dalyell: The Attorney-General has led Parliament, the press and people into great confusion on the issue of public interest immunity and has been badly advised in this matter.

Mr. Livingstone: There is going to be a lot of confusion before this matter is out of the way, I assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In his interview, Dr. Cardoen refers to the murder of Jonathan Moyle, which brings me back to the point that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton. He believes that the point that was raised by my hon. Friend is correct. We read

> "the Chilean authorities"—

not our Government—

> "announced last week that they were re-opening of the investigation into Jonathan Moyle's death. The judge co-ordinating the original inquiry, which was unable to identify Mr. Moyle's murderers, complained that his investigation was obstructed principally by the unwillingness of the British authorities to co-operate."

We are talking about embassy officials refusing to co-operate with a Chilean judge investigating the murder of a British journalist who was investigating arms deals involving the former Prime Minister's son. That is a scandal, if true, for which people should go to prison.

Who authorised British officials to refuse to co-operate with the Chilean judge investigating the murder of a British journalist? Was the decision taken at ministerial level? Was it taken on the advice of the security or intelligent services? That is what we wish to know. Then we see the disinformation nonsense again. We read

> "Mr. Moyle died in a Santiago hotel room in March 1990, apparently after being injected in the heel. British officials alleged that he died while masturbating."

That is exactly what we would expect—disinformation, an attempt to smear someone who has been murdered, not by a Russian spy, not by Carlos Cardoen's henchmen, but by British officials. Who authorised the British officials —the responsible Minister is here; I am sure that he will tell us—to brief the press that that journalist died while masturbating, when it now appears that he was injected with a lethal substance in his heel?

What did British officials have to cover up? Was it eight years of illegal sanctions busting and arms deals to Iraq that involved the former Prime Minister's son? Is that worth killing for? That is what it is beginning to look like—it is beginning to look like British officials have helped to cover up the murder of a British journalist who was getting embarrassingly close to breaking open a story about the arms dealings of the son of the former British Prime Minister. That is why the matter becomes more sinister with every day that passes.

Arms dealers—unnamed—have insisted that Jonathan Moyle was killed by the Iraqis while investigating an arms deal by Dr. Cardoen and the Iraqis. That may have centred on negotiations that Dr. Cardoen and with Marconi Underwater Systems Ltd.—another British firm—based in Hampshire, for the transfer of sophisticated mine technology. I hope that the British firm will be interviewed by Lord Justice Scott. I hope that we shall be told exactly what it was negotiating to sell the Iraqi regime via Dr. Cardoen's military and financial network.

Dr. Cardoen

> "denies any role in Mr. Moyle's death."

I put that on the record because it has been said that it would be unfair to quote part of Dr. Cardoen's interview without also quoting his denials.

> "GEC-Marconi said that contacts with both Cardoen and Iraq were known in advance to the Ministry of Defence."

Isn't that interesting! Why were we not told? Why was the Ministry of Defence alerted to what was going on? Did it tell Ministers? Was the Secretary of State for Defence involved? Should not the fact that, at the height of a war, we were helping to build up one of the most unstable of dictators and to construct a vast military machine in Iraq have been reported to Cabinet? Would not members of the whole Cabinet have liked to discuss whether that was a wise policy? I do not even ask whether it was a moral one. Has there been any discussion since then about how convenient Jonathan Moyle's death has been to the British Government, and to anyone else who may be involved in the matter?

Dr. Cardoen says:

> "it was wrong to cast him as the 'mastermind of an arms procurement network' . . . considering the relatively small amount of business we did with that country in the face of the huge arms sales carried out by the United States and the United Kingdom."

I do not want to defend Dr. Cardoen. He has many interesting side interests: for instance, he possesses a major collection of Nazi war daggers. I suspect that he is not "one of us", as the former Prime Minister would have said—I doubt that he is a socialist, that is—but what he has said is of no assistance whatever to the Government.

Dr. Cardoen was educated in the United States of America and was advised to go into weapons production by General Pinochet—also not "one of us". In the early 1980s, he made his money by producing

> "aviation cluster bombs which kill over an area equivalent to 10 football pitches. For the duration of the war"—

the war between Iraq and Iran, that is—

> "he was making $80 million a year selling the bombs to Iraq."

I should have expected the Prime Minister of the day to advise her son that this was not a business associate with whom he should be involved. Can we imagine what would have happened if one of the children of my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the former Leader of the Opposition, had been involved with an arms dealer? We would have heard about it; I suspect, indeed, that the Tory press would have run the story for days, until my right hon. Friend had been driven out of public life. However, there was not a peep out of the press. I should also have expected MI6 to alert the Prime Minister to what was going on.

In 1987, Dr. Cardoen built a factory outside Baghdad. This was not some small-time supplier, but the Iraqi Government's main arms supplier other than Governments. The factory was built

> "for the production of artillery ammunition and cluster bombs. He brought Matrix Churchill machine tools for this plant."

I would have expected MI5 to pick up on that, and brief someone in the British Government.

With the end of the Gulf war came a crisis. How could Dr. Cardoen continue to make ends meet? He diversified.

> "He went into partnership with South Africa for the production of ammunition and he was also negotiating for the transfer of modified US-made Bell helicopters to Iraq. It was rumours of this deal that drew Jonathan Moyle to Santiago."

That brings me back to the point at which I came in: the involvement of Mark Thatcher in an attempt to break United Nations sanctions and enable South African arms to be sold to Saudi Arabia.

I have no evidence; circumstantial evidence, however, can be so extensive and so cross-referenced as to build up a case that is overwhelmingly damning. I believe that *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, former Israeli intelligence agent Ari Ben-Menashe and many others who have investigated the matter have built up a case so overwhelming on the basis of such evidence that any jury would convict on what was put before it. It is now the Government's duty to prove their innocence. It is their duty to prove that they did not know what was going on and to convince the House that the former Prime Minister was not briefed about her son's activities. If they cannot do so, they have forfeited any moral claim to continue in office.

12.54 pm

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): The House will be relieved to hear that I do not need 53 minutes to put over some thoughts on the middle east. The hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) fired off a sheaf of allegations. His speech resembled a train with many carriages: I did not see very many passengers sitting in them, though the hon. Gentleman had his hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) stoking up the engine from time to time.

Since the hon. Gentleman has been a Member of Parliament, he has enjoyed spattering these Benches with allegations. I feel rather like a tramp who is asked to look through every single street litter bin in Pimlico just in case there is one unsmoked cigar to pick out and smoke. I shall not bother. Most of the points raised by the hon. Gentleman are matters for the law courts. I am interested in the fact that he made a speech that has the protection of the House of Commons. I wonder whether he will make a similar speech outside the House this afternoon.

If the hon. Gentleman and I sat in the Tea Room for an hour discussing politics, we would disagree on 99 points out of 100. I want to refer to the one issue on which I think we do agree; I believe it to be at the heart of our debate.

[Mr. Cyril D. Townsend]

I think we both agree that the core issue in the troubled middle east concerns the rights and the freedom of the Palestinian people.

Before I address that issue, I intend to say something about our troubled relationships with Libya, the main subject of the first motion on the Order Paper. It is curious that three of us independently approach the middle east from different angles. Those of my colleagues who are anxious to have lunch can read the synopsis of my remarks in the third motion on the Order Paper and rejoin us, having had their lunch.

We have diplomatic relations with all the 21 Arab countries in the middle east except Libya and Iraq. We had problems with Syria; but when British troops were serving alongside Syrian soldiers it was agreed that it would be wise to allow British and Syrian diplomats to meet one another. Thus, we restored relations with Syria.

It is not in the interests of this country to have no relations with Libya. Before Colonel Gaddafi arrived on the scene, we had rather good relations with Libya, from which both sides benefited. There is a great deal of trade to be had with Libya, to the mutual benefit of both countries. As the hon. Member for Linlithgow knows, no doubt, in my capacity as chairman of the Conservative middle east council, I was invited to meet a senior member of the Libyan Government recently to talk about the possibility of restoring relations with Libya.

I shall be blunt with the House. There are many members of the Metropolitan police living in my constituency. If I talk to my constituents about restoring relations with Libya, the first thing they mention is the murder of WPC Yvonne Fletcher. Secondly, they refer to the shipment of arms to the IRA. It is a grim thought that, however successful the authorities may be in the north and the south of Ireland in finding arms caches, there are enough arms available to the IRA to last well into the next century, and perhaps to the year 2020.

Therefore, people regard Colonel Gaddafi, if not the Libyan people, with a jaundiced eye. The Lockerbie explosion was a disgrace. My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State described it as the worst civilian massacre in Europe since the end of the second world war, or words to that effect. I believe that that is true. Two hundred and seventy innocent people died in the explosion. I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) and could not help thinking that Colonel Gaddafi might be well advised to extradite the two individuals in question and then we would see whether legal action followed in Libya.

The hon. Gentleman made a genuine point about the Montreal convention. My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister is well qualified to talk about that later.

What emerges is that we need an international court to try criminal cases. I know that it has been suggested that Libya would be happy to hold the trial in Malta, and I believe that Germany has been mentioned recently, but there is no precedent for it. I hope that the Government will raise in the Security Council—it has been raised previously—the possibility of setting up an international criminal court to try those responsible for terrorist crimes and crimes against humanity.

I want to move on to the middle east peace process. Let me begin by paying tribute to President Bush and Secretary of State Baker, who have painstakingly got the talks under way. It was a considerable achievement, but I cannot honestly regard the United States of America as a neutral between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Are the Palestinians in receipt of more than $3 billion, paid in advance every year? Of course not.

The fact of the matter is that the United States has used Israel as a client state, and in the cold war Israel was seen as an aircraft carrier permanently moored in a strategic part of the world. That was an absurd idea, but I met many people in the United States who saw Israel in those terms. Israel has now become a liability to the United States. I cannot believe, although I pay tribute to the United States, that it is in a good position to push the talks to a peaceful conclusion unless the European Community puts its weight behind the wheel to an extent that I have not yet seen.

The European Community is more involved in the middle east than is the United States. We share a border with the middle east. We have unique responsibilities for the creation of the problem in the first place, and I agree with the hon. Member for Brent, East that we promised Palestine to two different people, which was one of the biggest blunders of British diplomacy this century.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister will tell us that when Community leaders meet at Edinburgh—goodness knows, the problems hovering around the Edinburgh summit must be like the ravens hovering around Edinburgh castle—there will be a strong statement supporting what we said in Venice and in Lisbon, and backing the Palestinian people and the need to get a peaceful long-term settlement to this vexed problem.

I now turn to a related matter—the position of Israel in the Lebanon. My right hon. and learned Friend and I had a quick go at this at a late hour last night. It is monstrous that one middle eastern country is occupying 10 per cent. of an independent and sovereign Arab state. Worse, it has set up a surrogate army—the south Lebanese army—to hold down the people living in the area. It is a hornets' nest. I draw the House's attention to a splendid quote by the late Lord Caradon, who wrote some time ago:

> "To imagine that security comes from repression, grabbing and holding territory, from creeping colonisation in Arab lands or from a concrete encirclement in Jerusalem, from domination by forts and outposts, is a most dangerous deception."

He went on:

> "every schoolboy knows that forts in enemy territory are not a guarantee of security, they are a guarantee of insecurity, an invitation to resistance and harassment and attack."

I suggest to the House that that is exactly what has happened in southern Lebanon in recent months.

A United Nations spokesman was quoted the other day as saying:

> "The Israelis send their soldiers to occupy someone else's country and get bombed"—

it was after the recent incident involving Hezbollah.

> "They then say they are being attacked by terrorists and blame us for not protecting them."

Mr. Sumberg: My hon. Friend said of the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) that there were 99 issues on which he would disagree with him and one on which he would agree with him. I imagine that my hon. Friend and I are in much the same position.

Will my hon. Friend consider the state of the Lebanon? It is not a country or a state, but a piece of land, parceled up by warlords, including the Syrian army. To pretend that Lebanon is a united nation, with all the structures of a modern state, is unrealistic. Israel is in Lebanon to protect its borders and its people from terrorist attacks, which have taken place year in and year out. To ignore that factor is to ignore the problems facing the Israeli Government.

Mr. Townsend: I am in danger of following the hon. Member for Brent, East in making a rather longer speech than I had intended to make. I am particularly interested in the Lebanon. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) does not suggest that because one country is in a shambles—which I hope that it is emerging from—another country should be allowed to seal off 10 per cent. of it, and send a surrogate army in to repress the local people. That is an impossible international concept. Following the TAIF agreement and international support, the new Government in Lebanon are seeking to establish law and order in that troubled and divided country. We should wish them well. Law and order will not be established as long as the Israelis are allowed to maraud in other people's territory.

When I raised the subject of Lebanon some years ago, one of the Minister's predecessors spoke strongly on the subject, saying:

> "In common with our European Community partners and others, we remain committed to UNIFIL as a force of stability in southern Lebanon. We deplore the recent increase in fighting and all attacks on UNIFIL. Shooting at UNIFIL is completely unjustified. We condemn punitive expulsions —despite UNIFIL protests—of old men, women and children from their houses in Israel's self-declared security zone. The continued Israeli military presence in the Lebanon is provocative, destabilising and against Israel's own long-term interests."—[*Official Report*, 23 March 1992; Vol. 149, c. *133-34*.]

I challenge my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State to be sufficiently robust to match that when he winds up.

The plight of the marsh Arabs in southern Iraq has troubled me for some time. I welcome the setting up of a no-fly zone there. One of the reasons behind that decision of the United Nations Security Council was to deal with the plight of the Shiia people in the bottom of Iraq. There are two good books on the Arab world which I recommend to my hon. Friends for their holiday reading —Lawrence of Arabia's "Seven Pillars of Wisdom"; and Wilfred Thesiger's, "The Marsh Arabs". Thesiger writes charmingly of the community that he lived with in the marshes and points out that Iraq's civilisation was founded on the edge of the marshes.

To bring us up to date, my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) recently visited the marsh Arabs. To give the flavour, she told the House that just inside Iraq she found:

> "There are great black, smoking areas, stretching into the water where one or more missiles landed, perhaps an hour earlier. The black zones are 300 metres long: if the missiles had landed in the town they would have demolished 20,000 homes . . . Food stocks have been removed . . . The farms have been burnt, including the small rice farms in the marshes"

She was also told by the villagers that Iraqi troops were stationed 30 km outside the marshes. Those soldiers returned daily by assault boats, which carry some 35 armed men, to burn, shoot and kill defenceless people and destroy their towns and villages. Whole areas are being emptied of their inhabitants.

We have stopped Saddam Hussein using his aircraft to attack the marsh Arabs, but, of course, he has the military might to move into those villages by assault boat and to use his artillery to destroy them. Although it is true that marsh Arabs are fleeing daily into Iran, where there are already more than 3 million refugees, those who remain behind are captured, tortured and killed. Just maintaining a no-fly zone is insufficient.

I believe that the Government line—it is not my job to speak for them—is that they are greatly concerned about this, but, bearing in mind the trouble they had with the Arab world in setting up that no-fly zone, they do not believe that a further step is possible. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister will make it absolutely clear that we will not sit idly by and that we will raise this matter in the Security Council.

I cannot recall a time since I entered the House—I came here in 1974—when we have all known from official reports produced in this country and abroad that 50,000 people are being exterminated like a plague of locusts. That is happening, and unless action is taken, frankly, by the turn of the year, those people who Wilfred Thesiger so ably described in his book will no longer be on the face of the earth. Surely there is something that we, a permanent member of the Security Council, can do about that.

Before I conclude, I should like to refer briefly to the Atlantic coast of the Arab world. In common with many of my hon. Friends, I enjoyed meeting the head of the Polisario, who was in London a few days ago. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, faces an appalling dilemma that requires the wisdom of Solomon. We have promised a referendum on the western Sahara. The Polisario believes that those who are entitled to vote should be those on the Spanish census in 1974. The Moroccans believe that there are good grounds for adding names to the list—they have produced a lot of names that they want to be added. A journalist said that that was rather like asking the Irish in Boston to be allowed to have a vote in the Irish general election.

It is not for Britain to take sides, but it is for Britain to give all the help that it can, to strain the sinews, to help the United Nations Secretary-General over this particular hurdle. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will find time to comment on that.

Mr. Knapman: I take it that my hon. Friend is making the point that a referendum is a good thing where constitutional issues are involved. If that is the case, may I take the opportunity of reminding him of that in forthcoming weeks?

Mr. Townsend: My hon. Friend has shared an office with me for many years and I think that he knows my views on that rather well. They are not entirely to his liking.

The moment has come for me to conclude, and I shall do so by reverting to my opening remarks. The peace process has made limited progress in the past year. Inevitably the wilder men in the Palestinian camp say that it is a waste of time and that they must go back to violence. The moderates in the Palestinian camp, including the PLO, are saying, "We must remain stuck into the talks, painful though that may be. Hopefully, Rabin and the new Labour Government in Israel will in time make concessions."

[Mr. Townsend]

If progress is not made in the talks, and if they finally collapse, the death and destruction that might follow among Palestinians and Israelis is beyond our imagination. I do not see how another war between Jews and Arabs could be avoided in the middle east if the talks finally run into the sand.

1.15 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on making a good speech. I agreed with much of it; indeed, I agreed with more of it than the 1 per cent. to which he referred in his opening remarks. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on choosing this subject for debate.

The House has not had an opportunity for a long time to discuss the Arab world in general and relations with Libya and Iraq in particular. Hon. Members have not had a chance to air their views on that important issue, despite its importance to many people in that part of the world and here.

I will not follow the route taken by the hon. Member for Bexleyheath, or by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) in his excellent speech. I shall not dwell on the monstrous Iraqgate scandal. In due course, that whole issue will have to be explained, and not just as a result of Lord Justice Scott's inquiry. It would be wrong for the Government to hide behind such a report. If they tried to do that, the issue would not go away, because innocent people nearly went to prison because of a Government cover-up.

Let us not forget that British and allied troops risked their lives because, out of greed, the Government promoted arms sales to the unstable Iraqi regime. British troops risked their lives by facing those very arms. The issue will not go away even after the Scott report is published. I suspect that it will have a prominent place at the next general election; perhaps it should have been raised more prominently at the last election. If the Government do not answer the Iraqgate questions now, they will have to do so at the next election.

I echo the comments of my neighbour and hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) in calling for the early release of his constituent, Paul Ride, who is in prison in Iraq. I endorse everything that he said and hope that Mr. Ride will be back with his family at the earliest opportunity.

Several hon. Members have referred to the need to improve relations with Libya. I agree that such an improvement would be beneficial for all concerned. The Lockerbie bombing was montrous and disgusting, but it has not been proved conclusively, at any rate to my satisfaction, that the Libyans were solely responsible. While the blame has been heaped on Libya, Syria and Iran have been forgotten. At other times, when those countries were the bêtes noirs of this country's foreign policy, the blame was heaped onto them. That is not a satisfactory way of getting to the truth.

Not long after that event, an Iranian civilian aircraft was shot down by American forces; I throw that fact out to the House because it could just as easily have been the case that Iran was seeking revenge by attacking American aircraft. It is therefore wrong to put all the blame on Libya in that respect. I have visited Libya and seen the result of the American bombing when America attempted to kill General Gaddafi in his home and succeeded in killing his baby stepdaughter. That, too, was a disgraceful act.

The whole sorry affair should belong to the past and we should seek to improve relations with Libya. There is great scope to improve relations with Libya. There is great scope in Libya for work for British people and for improving non-military trade. As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow said, we seem to place a disproportionate emphasis on defence sales and military trade, and that needs to be reshaped.

I welcome the election of Governor Clinton to the presidency of the United States for various economic reasons and because of the phrase used by his predecessor at the previous elections when he said that he hoped for a kinder, gentler world. That signally failed to appear and I hope that President-elect Clinton will help us to move towards that kinder, gentler world.

I hope for the eventual downfall—sooner rather than later—of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. He is a militarist human rights abuser and a warmonger of the worst order. As my hon. Friends the Members for Brent, East and for Linlithgow said, Saddam Hussein's military machine was built up and sustained by western Governments, including those of the United States and of Britain.

It is likely that, at the beginning of President-elect Clinton's term of office, he will be tested on Iraq. Iraq will probably provoke him and he will feel it necessary to show a demonstration of strength against Saddam Hussein. All that I ask is that it be a strength of character, not of might. The key point is that he should think of the children when he reacts to that provocation. I urge him to do nothing that will make the plight of children in Iraq worse than it already is. He can insist that Iraq complies with United Nations resolutions and dismantles all its weapons of mass destruction, and he can insist that Saddam Hussein be persona non grata throughout the civilised world. But he must not insist on the full enforcement of present United Nations economic sanctions. Those sanctions are much too harsh and damaging to the children of Iraq. That message is at the heart of my speech.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Does not the hon. Gentleman think that the Security Council should have one weapon at its disposal while it searches for chemical and nuclear weapons in Iraq?

Mr. Cohen: Indeed, I think that there is a case for maintaining some sanctions—I favour the progressive easing of sanctions. We should take a carrot-and-stick approach. At present, the world is adopting only the stick approach to Saddam Hussein. The Foreign Office should know that that is not the ideal approach and it is better to use the temptation of a carrot. There should be no sanctions that damage the interests of those children or affect the flow of necessary medical supplies and foodstuffs to Iraq.

The rest of the world, the United Nations and our Government should back those who oppose the Iraqi regime. They met at a conference last month at Salahuddin; the delegation included representatives from the Kurdish people in Iraq. There was a coalition of four forces opposed to Hussein. They proposed that Iraq should be a federalist state. I support that suggestion, which would also take into account the interests of the marsh Arabs—the Shi'ites of whom the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) spoke.

The proposal is not supported by some of Iraq's neighbouring countries which contain Kurdish people, for example, Syria and Turkey. However, I believe that it is a sensible solution which would give the Kurdish people autonomy in their own affairs. Western Governments such as our own and that of the United States have been silent on the matter. They should openly support the proposal of a federalist state in Iraq, back the Iraqi opposition forces and give whatever support they can to the Kurds.

That policy is not supported by Iraq's neighbours such as Turkey. In recent months, we have seen the disgraceful annexation of part of northern Iraq by Turkish forces. Their incursion amounts to annexation. They have said that they will have to stay there until 31 December, but, if we consider Cyprus, where they occupy the north, we see that they could well stay in northern Iraq for much longer. That would be an outrage; after all, the war was fought because of the invasion of one country by another—the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. However, Turkey is invading part of northern Iraq. The Government have kept relatively silent on that matter.

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): The hon. Gentleman referred to Cyprus. Is it not correct that, in 1960, under a treaty guaranteed by Britain, Greece, Turkey and the two communities in Cyprus, Turkey was given the power to intervene to guarantee the constitution of Cyprus when independence was given?

Mr. Cohen: We are talking about the Arab world, and I do not want to start discussing Cyprus. The Turkish invasion of Cyprus is totally unjustifiable. After all, the Berlin wall has come down and Germany is now united, whereas Cyprus continues to be arbitrarily divided and there is an occupying force there. No international law can justify that. The Government should speak openly about the Turkish annexation of northern Iraq and say that that is unacceptable. I hope that the Minister will say that later.

The key issue is the children in Iraq. I bring to the attention of the House an article entitled "Sanctions bite deep" in the *Middle East International* of 15 May 1992. The article was written six months ago, yet this is the first opportunity we have had to raise the matter in the House. We must thank my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow, not the Government, for this opportunity.

The article points out that before the imposition of sanctions in August 1990, the World Health Organisation categorised Iraq as a developed country in terms of its health services. Some 96 per cent. of its urban population and 78 per cent. of its rural population had access to free public health care before sanctions were imposed. Of the 3·5 million Iraqi children under the age of five, 900,000 are at risk of severe malnutrion. The death rate has doubled since before the war because of diseases resulting from malnutrition. The long-term effects of stunting and retardation have yet to appear.

Between August 1990 and January 1992, 31,330 children below the age of five and 67,636 above the age of five have died of malnutrition and disease. In the first three months of 1992, 12,000 infants and 19,950 older children died. Infant mortality has trebled since the war and since sanctions were imposed, and the death rate for older children has doubled. The article refers to the fact that Iraqi's foreign assets have been blocked. It says that Iraq cannot import vaccines. At least half of Iraq's 18 million people are forced to consume contaminated water, which leads to disease. Last year, there were 9,000 cases of cholera and typhoid cases increased dramatically.

There is undernourishment because Iraq cannot import foodstuffs at the pre-war level as a result of the sanctions. Hospitals are unable to treat patients and are now operating at 30 per cent. of capacity. Some 60 per cent. of specialised equipment is out of order because of a lack of spare parts. The hospitals have to reuse disposable syringes, and surgical gloves are in such short supply that they have to be reused repeatedly. We know what happens if disposable syringes are reused—there is a danger of spreading AIDS. There is a block on chemicals for water purification and on the manufacture of anaesthetics. Some important medical items date back to the third quarter of 1989. Old items are being used when new items should be introduced.

The article points out that the Security Council chose to disregard the recommendation of its own adviser, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, that Iraq should be permitted to import $500 million-worth of medical supplies. That can be described only as a vindictive act against the children. Iraq's total oil exports have had to be limited to $1·6 billion a year. One third of that was to go towards paying for reparations. That meant that the remaining sum was $840 million short of the $1·73 billion that the Prince fixed as necessary to pay for urgent purchases of medical supplies and food. Those are vindictive acts not against Saddam Hussein, but against his population and especially against the children.

The Government should be pressing for the sanctions on foodstuffs and urgent medical supplies to be lifted. When President-elect Clinton demonstrates his strength, I hope that he will not insist that those sanctions should continue.

1.34 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this debate. However, I want first to apologise to the House for having missed the opening speeches of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and of my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman), I am sure that they made compelling and telling points about Anglo-Arab relations. That is an important subject and I am extremely glad that the House is debating it today.

It is also a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), who made an impassioned speech. He was right to highlight the plight of the population in Iraq which is desperate and worsening. I have a great deal of sympathy with the humanitarian spirit in which the hon. Gentleman spoke. The plight of the children and the minorities in Iraq is very sad and is something which the world community should address seriously.

It must be said that the remedy for their plight and for the suffering of the Iraqi people lies in the hands of their President, Saddam Hussein. If he decided to allow the export of oil from Iraq under the United Nations agreements, he would be able to better the lot of his people. If he conformed entirely with the requirements of the Security Council, the sanctions would be lifted very quickly and that would allow the population to return to the prosperous lifestyle that they enjoyed before the wars

[Mr. Matthew Carrington]

of aggrandisement which, although not started against Iran by Saddam Hussein, were certainly aided and abetted by his policies.

I do not want to address my comments specifically to Iraq today. The nub of Anglo-Arab relations is the need to ensure that our relations with a wide variety of states in the Arab world are at the best possible level. The middle east is a very sad part of the world at the moment. It is fraught with many conflicts, some of which have broken out in war and some of which have the potential to break out in war. The roots of those conflicts are not the responsibility of the Arabs themselves. The conflicts date back to the partition of the Arab world after the first world war and the somewhat artificial boundaries that were created then.

The conflicts date back to the strains caused by the rapid growth in wealth of the Arab world with the increases in oil prices that began in 1973. That undoubtedly caused great strains between previously friendly neighbours. However, the principal problem in the Arab world—this is the key to much of the conflict in the middle east—is the plight of the Palestinians and the dispute between the Arabs and the Israelis.

One of the great tragedies of that dispute is that it was not created by the Israelis, the Arabs or the Palestinians; it was created from the problems after the first world war and the desperate plight of the Jewish nation after the second world war. That led to impossible pressures on land and resources in the middle east which we have not yet resolved. It is incumbent on the west to help the parties to find a solution to that problem.

With the election of Governor Clinton as President-elect, many of us are worried about a possible change in American policy between Israel, the Palestinians, the Arab world in general and, in particular, Syria. Opinion in Israel on the right way forward to find peace is divided; most obviously, on the question whether peace can be bought in exchange for concessions on land, whether there are other solutions or whether it is possible to create a state of Israel that encompasses the Palestinians and Arabs.

That is a problem which perhaps Israel cannot solve itself. There was hope that the negotiations that started in Madrid would result in a solution. However, there is an enormous variation in how the Palestinian and Israeli negotiating teams reach decisions about what is possible. There is certainly no universal agreement on the Arab side on what they want to come out of the negotiations, any more than there is on the Israeli side.

The only possibility of finding a satisfactory solution and getting a lasting agreement is if the President of the United States can hold together the pressure that has previously been put on both sides in the negotiations to enable the hotheads in Israel and the Arab world to be kept under control. I am afraid that the change of President will lead to a hiatus in United States policy and perhaps a slackening of resolve, perhaps for a short time. Such a slackening of resolve would mean that the talks which started in Madrid would break down. A breakdown in talks would allow the hotheads on both sides to get an upper hand and we would return to a conflict in the middle east which caused so much grief in the past.

We need to examine ways in which our Government can help the Americans to understand, in the transition phase between the two Administrations, the issues that are at stake. To find a proper solution to the Palestinian problem is vital for world peace.

I encourage my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State to make every effort possible to persuade President-elect Clinton and his team of the vital importance of pursuing the policy which was previously pursued by President Bush.

1.43 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): The hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) said much with which I agree. I hope that I will have time in the next 19 minutes to talk about the peace talks which must be at the absolute centre of any discussion about the middle east and our relations with the Arab world. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on the breadth of the subject that he put down for debate today. The debate has given us an opportunity to discuss a range of issues connected with the Arab world.

I will summarise the points in my hon. Friend's motion. First, he wants to end the sanctions against Libya. Secondly, he wants to end the sanctions against Iraq. Thirdly, he wants a United Nations conference on arms sales. Fourthly, he wants a response to Wednesday's "Dispatches" programme on Channel 4. Fifthly, and most important, he has called for a reassessment of relations with the Arab world. He will not be surprised when I tell him that I agree with much of what he said, but not all of it.

I will try to respond as effectively as I can to most of the main points made in the debate. I refer briefly to the specific issues in connection with Libya and Iraq. In the case of Libya, my hon. Friend referred to the bombing of Tripoli. Labour Members deplored and condemned that bombing unreservedly. It is worth remembering what my right hon. Friend the former Leader of the Opposition asked the Prime Minister at the time of the bombing. The day after the bombing he said:

> "Will she accept that it has caused bloodshed and damage to innocents, will result in a loss of American and British influence, even over moderate Arab states and has meant a gain in support for Gaddafi, even from his sworn enemies? . . . Those are all terrible costs to pay. They are all reasons for us to condemn the United States actions and all reasons why the right hon. Lady, as a true and candid friend of the United States and as a true enemy of terrorism, should join us in that condemnation."—[*Official Report*, 15 April 1986; Vol. 95, c. 731.]

Our view is crystal clear. It is extremely important that Opposition Members reiterate that point today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow went on to talk about sanctions against Libya. I have great respect for the enormous amount of information and the contacts that he has on the subject, and even the linguistic skills of his parents. We debated the matter in great detail in European Standing Committee B as recently as three weeks ago. It would take up extremely valuable time if I were to repeat all the arguments in that debate.

We clearly supported United Nations resolution 748, which imposed the sanctions on Libya. We noted the review of the sanctions by the United Nations sanctions committee this year. We know that, under the 120-day rule, they will be considered again by mid-December at the latest. We very much hope that there will be a positive response from the Libyans by that time.

I echo several points that my hon. Friends have made. It was never the intention that the sanctions should not respect significant humanitarian needs. They are specifically spelt out in the United Nations resolution and also in the European Community regulation. I hope that the Minister will deal with those points.

I now refer to the problem of Iraq. The House will forgive me if I do not immediately talk about arms sales to Iraq, but I must talk briefly about sanctions. Again, a number of moving speeches have been made. I must remind the House that we support the continuation of sanctions against Iraq. The reasons for the continuation of the sanctions were spelt out in the Security Council's statement this week. I will not read out all the reasons, but among them were the refusal of Iraq

> "to co-operate in selling oil to help fund humanitarian programmes in Iraq.
>
> 'Grave human rights abuses' against the Kurdish population in the north and Shiite Muslims in the south.
>
> A refusal to recognise the new border drawn between Iraq and Kuwait by United Nations surveyors.
>
> Refusal to renounce its territorial claim to Kuwait.
>
> Harassment and threats against United Nations weapons inspectors sent to Iraq".

I commend that collection of powerful reasons to the House.

I should not leave the issue of relations with Iraq without referring to my hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) and for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon). The House will know about their sterling efforts in representing their constituents Paul Ride and Michael Wainwright. Whatever efforts the Foreign Office is making to deal with the serious plight of those two men and their families, I hope that they will be redoubled.

I now refer to Iraq and arms sales. That matter was dealt with extensively in the House on Monday, but there have been developments since then. One of them was contained in today's report in *The Guardian*. As hon. Members will know, one of the most telling points of the debate was when the President of the Board of Trade dealt with signing public interest immunity certificates. He was challenged by my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the former Leader of the Opposition, about the signing of those certificates. I remind the House of a little question and answer session. My right hon. Friend asked:

> "When the right hon. Gentleman signed the certificate, did he know that the people to which the material related had been of assistance to the Government in collecting intelligence information which was of use to the Government?"

Mr. Dalyell: That matter was raised earlier.

Mr. Grocott: My hon. Friend is right. It was raised earlier by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). I quoted that passage because the response is quite telling. The President of the Board of Trade replied:

> "The right hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that the moment one is drawn into discussions on that subject a vast range of sub-questions arise which can be dealt with only by a proper and full inquiry."—[*Official Report*, 23 November 1992; Vol. 214, c. *650*.]

According to a significant report in *The Guardian* today, which quotes Whitehall and legal sources, at least one Minister from the Department of Trade and Industry —perhaps even two—refused to sign public interest immunity certificates. The Ministers concerned are cited as probably the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) and maybe the right hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury). What is the Minister's response to that? Did the Foreign office experience the same problem, with various Ministers passing certificates around and trying to get people to sign them?

The "Dispatches" programme on Channel 4, which is mentioned in the motion tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow, was watched by a large audience. A number of serious allegations were made in the programme, and were aired again by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow pointed out, any television programme involved in such allegations would have to be very careful; certainly, when I was making television programmes, lawyers would go through material with a fine-toothed comb before deciding that it was fit to be broadcast. The chances are that some of the best material ended up on the cutting-room floor; that is normally what happens when lawyers deal with material cautiously. Despite all that, however, the "Dispatches" documentary clearly stated that there had been infringements of Cabinet rules. That suggestion cannot be ignored; the Government must respond.

Other important issues are arms sales and the middle east peace talks. As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow said, the right body to deal with arms sales is the United Nations, whose five permanent members have a specific responsibility in that regard. In recent years they have produced about 86 per cent. of all weapons traded internationally—84 per cent. of tanks, 79 per cent. of armoured personnel carriers, 94 per cent. of supersonic combat aircraft, 99 per cent. of subsonic combat aircraft, 73 per cent. of field artillery and 87 per cent. of helicopters. There are good reasons why particular countries need particular weapons at particular times, and good reasons why other countries need to supply them, but the overall picture of arms supplies to the middle east is deeply worrying, especially since the end of the Gulf war.

I do not suggest that there are easy solutions to the problems. At least a start has been made with the common guidelines on arms exports which were agreed by the five permanent Security Council members in October 1991. Another useful development was the General Assembly's decision in December 1991 to establish a register of conventional arms transfers. The problem of arms sales, however, is one which we could begin to deal with at home. I feel that there should be much more openness about it. The Matrix Churchill case shows the need for greater public scrutiny of arms exports in order to enable Parliament to scrutinise the Government's activities.

Some hon. Members will be familiar with the pressure group Safer World. It believes that the minimum requirement should be the submission of a written report by the Government, with a description of the previous year's authorisation of deliveries of arms, together with a copy of the guidelines governing their control, and that the report should form the basis of an annual debate in Parliament, for the knowledge that Government decisions would be open to parliamentary scrutiny each year would have a salutary effect on any Government who were thinking of being flexible with the application of the rules governing the arms trade. The Government might have been much happier today had there been proper parliamentary scrutiny. There would have been no need for Lord Justice Scott's inquiry, or for worries about the issue of public interest immunity certificates.

[Mr. Grocott]

That brings me to what must surely be at the heart of any debate on Britain's relations with the Arab world—the desperate need for a settlement of the problems between Israel and the Palestinian people. Every other issue in the middle east is, in some sense, subordinate to and dependent upon that one. The problem has not changed over the years—to achieve security for the states in the region and recognition and the right to self-determination for the Palestinian people.

During the past 12 months there has been more reason for optimism than has been the case for many years. The end of the cold war led to a great deal of optimism. It meant that at least there was the possibility that the great powers of the world would not use the states in the middle east as their pawns in the way that the imperial powers of old used them to fight their surrogate wars. The end of the Gulf war meant that for the first time the United States, recognising its enormous power and influence in the middle east, showed a willingness to be a key player in trying to solve the problem between Israel and the Palestinians.

I never thought that I would congratulate a Republican Administration in the United States, but Secretary Baker ought to be admired for starting the talks. I must also mention the great optimism at the time of the Israeli general election. On 13 July of this year the new Prime Minister, Mr. Rabin, told the Knesset:

> "We must join the international movement towards peace . . . lest we be the last to remain, all alone, in the station. The new Government has accordingly made it a prime goal to promote the making of peace and take vigorous steps that will lead to the conclusion of the Arab-Israeli conflict. . . We believe wholeheartedly that peace is possible, that it is imperative and that it will ensue."

Those were golden words from anyone concerned about the problems of the middle east.

There are real concerns now about the delay in the peace process. When Secretary Baker set it up just over a year ago he said that he hoped that there would be an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians before the end of the first 12 months. That has not happened. Nobody disputes that an enormous amount of work has been done. There have been bilateral talks that will soon enter their eighth round. There has also been a range of multilateral talks, but the feeling persists that time is not on the side of the peace makers. For those who want to see peace in the middle east, time is of the essence to the negotiators. They need to be able to show to the people they represent that there are real benefits to be gained from the negotiating process.

The two key issues that need to be addressed were mentioned by the Foreign Secretary in his speech on Monday. He said:

> "We urge the Israelis to improve the position on human rights in the occupied territories . . . so that the people who are negotiating on behalf of the Palestinians can actually show to their constituents the practical benefits of the peace process. A complete freeze on settlement activity . . . would be such a step."

What steps are the Government taking to inject new life and impetus into the peace process and to persuade President-elect Clinton of the urgent need to act? We have had a Baker initiative, so let us now have a Clinton initiative. Of all the pressing problems facing him, it is difficult to imagine a more important international problem than the continuation of the peace process and an attempt to settle the problems of the middle east.

Britain has made many mistakes in the history of its dealings with the countries of the middle east, but there can be no doubt about our duty now—to do all within our power through the EC, the United Nations and our support for the Madrid initiative to see that Governments representing the most dangerous part of the world continue to talk to each other rather than fight. We should be generous with our time and money. The settlement of the seemingly endless conflict between Israel and her neighbouring states is a prize worth all the effort.

2 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): The maintenance of peace in the middle east has been one of the most important strategic objectives of British foreign policy certainly since the beginning of this century. I am certain that it will remain so for decades to come. The reasons are quite evident: the ensuring of a stable and secure supply of oil to the west, the strategic geographical importance of the middle east, the fact that the area is riven with historical, religious and ethnic tensions, the fact that the countries involved have a substantial accumulation of weaponry—sometimes weaponry of mass destruction—and the fact that emanating from the middle east are muscles and nerves that reach other parts of the world and are capable of causing convulsions there. For all those reasons, therefore, the middle east is of enormous importance to this country in particular and the western world in general.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for tabling the motion and enabling the House to address those matters. I am grateful, too, to my hon. Friends the Members for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) and for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) for having widened the nature and framework of the debate.

Clearly, I have to make my own assessment of priorities when I seek to reply to all the points that have been made. I candidly say, therefore, that I shall not follow the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) in the questions that he asked about Mark Thatcher. Against the background of such an important issue, it seemed to be a curious ordering of priorities to have spent nearly 50 minutes talking about Mark Thatcher.

I shall, however, deal with broader issues. I shall begin with a short comment on a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan), who spoke of democracy. He was right to remind us that western concepts of pluralism and democracy cannot be imported into the middle east without some adjustment. He was also right that we must be careful not to undermine the legitimacy of existing regimes, and that is clearly true of the shaplier Governments.

I do not draw from those observations the conclusion that we should simply reinforce the status quo, because enormous dangers would flow from that. People want greater participation in the process of government in their countries, and it seems to be in our interests—and it may be our duty—to reinforce that desire and to persuade friendly Governments in the middle east to respond to that pressure and to acknowledge when good change takes place. I willingly acknowledge the changes that have taken place in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and, most obviously, in the kingdom of Jordan. Those are all welcome, but we need to go on pressing our friends in the middle east to ensure that their Governments are more responsive to the desires of the people whom they govern and are more accountable.

Several hon. Members—most obviously, the hon. Member for Linlithgow—focused on Libya. I shall respond to him and mention some other aspects of that issue. The hon. Gentleman was right—I saw Dr. James Swire earlier this week, together with Pamela Dix. I told them that the warrants had been issued only for those people against whom there was prima facie evidence of guilt. It was for the prosecution authorities—the Lord Advocate, the police and the agencies which have been responsible for the inquiries—to determine against whom there was sufficient evidence to issue a warrant. The Government have not in any way endeavoured to shape the outcome of those inquiries. Those authorities determined the outcome and followed where the evidence led.

Looking to the future, we expect Libya fully to comply with the United Nations Security Council resolutions. In particular, we expect the Libyan Government to surrender the two named individuals for trial—to either the courts of Scotland or of the United States.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath reminded us of the Libyan Government's extremely poor record. They supplied arms and explosives to the IRA, as a result of which many people died; WPC Fletcher was shot by someone from within the Libyan embassy; and we believe that they were associated with the Lockerbie disaster and crime. All those incidents are on our minds, and I see no prospect of relations with Libya improving until it complies fully with the Security Council resolutions. I do not think that sanctions could or should be lifted until that happens.

Mr. Dalyell: The authorities have not followed entirely where the investigation led. The Scottish police have been unable to interview Marwan Khreesat, and Yvonne Ridley, the journalist of *Scotland on Sunday*, was told by Mr. Jibril that he would be willing to talk to western investigators. That has never been followed up, although I wrote to the Foreign Secretary about it.

Mr. Hogg: My noble Friend the Lord Advocate is content with the evidence that he has accumulated against those named individuals. Warrants have been issued against those for whom we think that there is prima facie evidence of guilt. I have no hesitation in saying that they followed the evidence where it led.

The hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) mentioned extradition. I disagree with his analysis. It may or may not be true that a Libyan law precludes the extradition of Libyan citizens, but the Libyans have suggested on various occasions that the two named individuals could be tried elsewhere, before an international court or the court of a third country. The hon. Gentleman echoed that when he referred to the Government of Malta and the courts there. From all the discussions of which I am aware, it does not seem that the Libyan Government have any difficulty in sending those two characters to a court of which they approve; therefore, it seems that the Libyan Government could have no difficulty in sending them to the courts of the United States or Scotland, which is what I hope and expect them to do.

The Montreal convention——

Mr. Bernie Grant *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: I shall proceed to the Montreal convention, which the hon. Member for Tottenham mentioned.

I do not accept that the British, United States or French Governments have acted in any way in breach of that convention. It is perhaps necessary to remind ourselves of the nature of the allegations against those two named individuals: it is that they, senior officials of the Libyan Government, committed these grave acts of murder. There must be a strong suspicion that what they did was authorised by higher officials in the Libyan Administration. I find it an offensive concept that a state, which may have authorised murder of this kind, should also be the state responsible for the trial of its, possibly, authorised agents. In my view, the Montreal convention does not apply to state crime and, in any event, the International Court of Justice made it plain that the decisions of the Security Council override the Montreal convention.

The hon. Member for Tottenham referred also to the Libyan health service and the difficulties that it faces. He made the same point in the European Standing Committee on Wednesday, so I shall deal with it swiftly, but I understand that he attaches considerable importance to it.

The first thing to understand is that the sanctions regime does not impose a prohibition on the importation of medicines or medical supplies. Moreover, as the hon. Gentleman knows well, the provisions of resolution 748 enable the Libyan Government to apply on humanitarian grounds for an exemption from the prohibition on air flights. The hon. Gentleman was fair enough to acknowledge that that Government have made no such application.

The hon. Gentleman said that the procedure is cumbersome. If the Libyan Government want to make an application, we are perfectly willing to look at the mechanism, but I suspect that the truth is that that Government do not want to recognise the existence of the sanctions regime. Therefore, however flexible the mechanism may be, they would not operate it.

It is true that doctors and medical staff have been leaving Libya, but that has as much to do with the fact that they have not been paid as with any other consideration that the hon. Gentleman suggested. The plain truth is that there are penalties associated with sanction regimes. If Libyans want to remove those penalties, they would do well to persuade their Government to comply with the Security Council resolution.

Mr. Bernie Grant: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has not answered my other point, that it is normal in the United Nations Security Council for parties to a dispute not to vote on a resolution involving the dispute. Why did Britain, France and the United States, which are parties to the dispute, vote on resolution 748?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman raised precisely that point in the European Standing Committee and I was able to say then, and I now repeat, that he has entirely misunderstood the practice and procedure within the United Nations.

The hon. Member for Tottenham also referred to the AWD truck contract. The UN resolution imposes a positive ban on the sale of military vehicles, but some of the vehicles in question are to be supplied to the Libyan army. All of them have the characteristics of a military

[Mr. Hogg]

vehicle, in the sense that they are sand-coloured and have long-range fuel tanks. Clearly, they could be used to carry men and munitions. I am not saying that those vehicles are, as a matter of law, certainly military ones, but they may be. Therefore, if there is an application to export them to Libya—as yet we have not received one—we will do two things: first, we must refer to the sanctions committee, or, to put it more accurately, we will refer to that committee, and secondly, we must consider whether the vehicles fall within the scope of the secondary legislation that we have put in place. To do otherwise would be not to comply with the regulations which, broadly speaking, have the support of most hon. Members.

Much time has been spent on the guidelines relating to the supply to Iraq of arms and arms-making material. I remind the House that the matter was fully covered in Monday's debate. Whatever else may be true, it is a fact that this country has by far the most stringent arms control regime of any country in the world—hence the guidelines issued in 1985 by the then Foreign Secretary which prohibited absolutely the supply of lethal equipment.

Difficulties have arisen in respect of the supply of dual-use machinery which is not the subject of an absolute bar. Here, the criteria were directed to preventing the flow of machine tools designed significantly to enhance Iraqi military capacity. As the House knows, Lord Justice Scott's inquiry will address the question whether the Government's policies then in place were properly carried out.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud that that issue should be left to that inquiry. I also echo what he said about an awful lot of humbug having been talked on the matter. No one supposed in the 1980s that British troops would be involved in a war with Iraq. Hindsight of that kind distorts vision and makes dishonest the position being taken by many hon. Members.

I agree with the hon. Member for Brent, East that, applying those standards, he had every reason to be embarrassed by the substantial supply of arms authorised by the then Labour Government to the Argentine, involving type 42 destroyers, missiles of various kinds, RAF Canberra and helicopters. Neither side on this matter is in a position to criticise the other.

Mr. Grocott: The Minister will appreciate that there are several crucial aspects of the matter. One was the deliberate attempt by Ministers to mislead Parliament on the basis of known comments by civil servants at the time. For example, one civil servant was quoted as having said:

> "There seems to be considerable merit in keeping as quiet as possible about this politically sensitive issue."

So a crucial issue is the difference between what was happening in private and what was being said in public.

Mr. Hogg: The Prime Minister set up the Scott inquiry to see whether there was any merit in points of that kind.

The more substantive matter is the question of lifting sanctions on Iraq. I see no early prospect of that. There has not yet been full compliance with the relevant elements in the resolutions—for example, there are still 800 or so Kuwait detainees held by Iraq. There has been a failure to make full disclosure of all the weapons of mass destruction and a failure to sign up to the verification regime.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath said, massive repression is going on in the marshes of south Iraq. The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) rightly alluded to the fact that an economic blockade is going on in the north of Iraq, and there has been complete failure to comply with the demarcation procedure along the Iraq-Kuwait frontier. The time has not come for sanctions to be lifted.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow has a point when he says that there is privation in Iraq, and the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard), to whose speech I shall come shortly, referred to difficulties with medicines. However, I am sure that both the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath will bear in mind that, although resolutions 706 and 712 set up a mechanism whereby the supply of oil could be used to fund the purchase of medicines and other humanitarian supplies to Iraq, Saddam Hussein declined to accept that mechanism.

Mr. Knapman: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, given that the border between Jordan and Iraq is largely a long line drawn in the sand, Jordan is doing its best to ensure that sanctions are not broken?

Mr. Hogg: I shall deal with the important points that my hon. Friend made about Jordan in a moment, but the answer to his question is that Jordan's compliance with the sanctions regime has improved enormously in recent months. I accept that the Jordanian Government are making serious attempts to prevent a substantial evasion of sanctions across that border.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow asked about Mr. Ride. The sentences imposed by the Iraqi courts are grotesque and wholly disproportionate to the nature of the alleged offence. In the absence of diplomatic relations, we are doing our best to maintain contact with Mr. Ride and Mr. Wainwright and I am extremely grateful to the Russian Government for what has been done by Russian diplomats in Baghdad to maintain contact. The Russians last saw Mr. Ride and Mr. Wainwright on 21 November and I am glad to say that both were physically well. As the hon. Member for Walthamstow knows, Mrs. Ride was able to visit her husband fairly recently.

We shall continue vigorously to press the case of Mr. Ride and Mr. Wainwright. Two diplomats are now in Amman awaiting visas to travel to Baghdad to see the conditions in which they are held. However, those diplomats are not in the business of negotiating. We shall not negotiate the release of those two people. There is no relationship between the sanctions and getting those people out of prison. The sanctions regime is justified, for all the reasons that I have given. The prison sentence is not justified, and one cannot and should not trade one for the other.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath is troubled by the issue of the marsh Arabs in south Iraq, and so am I. They are certainly being seriously oppressed, which was one of the reasons—perhaps the conclusive reason—why we instituted the no-fly zone. I accept that ground action is continuing against the marsh Arabs and, moreover, a blockade is in place. I know that it will disappoint my hon. Friend, but I must be candid to the House and say that I see no early prospect of Security Council authority for taking military action in south Iraq. My hon. Friend, who knows the arguments involved—the sensitivities of the adjourning Arab states—will understand the difficulties, even if he thinks that we are wrong to heed them.

The only assurance that I can give my hon. Friend now flows from the recent signing of the memorandum of understanding, which authorises the setting up of a relief programme in south Iraq and the deployment of the United Nations guards. Using such channels as we have, we shall press the Iraqi Government to comply with the undertakings contained in the memorandum of understanding.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stroud made an important and interesting speech and touched on an issue of considerable importance to us—the stability of the kingdom of Jordan and this country's ancient friendship with Jordan and its present monarch. He was entirely right to say that. It is true that our relationship was put under serious strain during the Gulf war, but ours is an old friendship and has survived that strain. We very much wish to see the king remain in place, his country remain stable and his relationships with adjoining states in the middle east reinforced and, where necessary, improved. We shall help in that process as much as we are able.

There are a number of reasons for attaching importance to the kingdom of Jordan—one of which is, of course, geographical. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud said, that country is leading the way in developing democratic forms in the middle east. We welcome the election under universal franchise that took place in November 1989 as an extremely helpful step forward. The role of the king, especially in the peace process negotiations, has been to provide a useful voice for moderation—one which we reinforce and should like to endorse.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stroud also made an important point about the refugees. The return to Jordan of about 300,000 refugees as a consequence of the Gulf war has placed that country under a burden of considerable economic pressure. My hon. Friend asked what we were doing about the rescheduling of debt. Negotiations with Jordan on a Paris club bilateral agreement on the rescheduling of intergovernmental debt are currently proceeding to what I hope will be a successful conclusion. As for commercial debt, negotiations with the London club are continuing. The main aid from the United Kingdom goes via the European Community's financial protocols, under which 126 mecu have been made available. We have a small bilateral programme. The issue of the canal is probably best carried forward in the multilateral discussions currently under way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) raised two important issues touching on the middle east. The first involves hostages, and there was a slight tension on the subject between my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath and my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South. I very much agree that all those held without due process of law should be released. That certainly applies to Ron Arad, the navigator. We have made strenuous efforts, first, to determine whether he is alive—we believe that he is, but we have no concrete evidence—and, secondly, to press those with influence to secure his release. It is also true that people such as Sheikh Obeid and those held in south Lebanon without due process of law should be released. We have made that case on a number of occasions to the Israeli Government, and I hope that it will be heeded. I recognise what a vexing subject Jerusalem is. We do not recognise Israeli sovereignty over any part of Jerusalem or recognise Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Israel, which is why no British ambassador will be posted there. Jerusalem, as a whole, is a special case and its status is yet to be determined. We believe that the city should not be divided. Jerusalem and its status must be addressed in the peace process. I suspect that the problem will not be resolved until the rest of the negotiations have been concluded and agreements are in place.

The subject of the peace process was touched on by a number of hon. Members, including the hon. Member for The Wrekin and my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath. I regard it as an enormously important issue——

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hogg: I am afraid that I shall not give way as I only have a few minutes left.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: I shall not give way.

I very much welcome the flexibility shown by Prime Minister Rabin.

A number of principles should govern our approach and, I hope, that of the parties. First, talks must proceed on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 and 338—the concept of land for peace. Secondly, the security of the state of Israel must be ensured. Thirdly, everybody must recognise that the Palestinians have a right to determine their own political future and have a right to land to make a reality of that self-determination. I believe that an agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians is a condition precedent to any development between Israel and the Arab states. I do not believe that Israel can secure separate, free-standing agreements with the Arab states unless there is satisfaction about the Palestinians.

The Israelis will have to make substantial concessions and it will not be easy for them——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is traditional in the House that, in Friday debates, Ministers answer questions rather than make general policy statements. Five hours ago, I began to ask a number of specific questions about Mr. Higson and what he had been reported as saying, about Libya and Iraq, and about the evidence given to me by the Shias. The Minister of State, who is a senior member of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, has made no attempt to refer to the questions. He dismissed the other questions——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair has no responsibility for the content of any hon. Member's speech, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

Mr. Knapman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it a new point of order?

Mr. Knapman: It is a related point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have ruled on the matter already.

Orders of the Day

EUROPEAN UNION (PUBLIC INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Second Reading what day?

Second Reading deferred till Friday 4 December.

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Resolved,

That—

(1) this House do meet on Thursday 17th December at half-past Nine o'clock;

(2) notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 17 (Time for taking questions), no Questions shall be taken, provided that at Eleven o'clock the Speaker may interrupt the proceedings in order to permit Questions to be asked which are in her opinion of an urgent character and relate either to matters of public importance or to the arrangement of business, statements to be made by Ministers, or personal explanations to be made by Members; and

(3) at Three o'clock the Speaker do adjourn the House without putting any Question, provided that this House shall not adjourn until the Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts agreed upon by both Houses.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

999 Service

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

2.31 pm

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I am pleased to have the opportunity to raise the important matter of the future of the 999 service. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the few hon. Members present will soon realise why the Minister who will reply to the debate is a Trade and Industry Minister rather than a colleague from the Department of Health or from the Home Office with responsibility for the ambulance, fire or police services.

I am glad to have been granted this debate and to feel that I have, in some senses, dragged the Minister to the Dispatch Box. I have yet to receive even an acknowledgment of the letter I wrote to the President of the Board of Trade on 28 October. I know that he has been busy, but it is rather long to wait for an acknowledgment.

Most people pass through life without having to dial 999 and I am glad to be one of them. After the caller has dialled 999, the call is answered almost instantaneously by a British Telecom operator who finds out which emergency service is needed, and confirms the number and location of the caller if that is not shown automatically on the computer.

The operator then passes the call to the relevant emergency service and stays on the line to reconnect or to assist if necessary. In the recent tragic difficulty with the London ambulance service computers, the problems occurred after the calls had passed through the BT system. There are now proposals to reorganise the front-line service provided by BT, which is why a Department of Trade and Industry Minister is here to answer the debate this afternoon.

Our 999 call-handling system is the envy of the world, as it is efficient and cost effective. The operators serve the public well and deserve our thanks. Despite that, and for no particularly good reason, the whole system is being considered for radical change. At present, those highly skilled and trained operators spend most of their time dealing with other more mundane telephone inquiries received on other numbers. However, when a 999 call comes through, it is answered immediately. If necessary, an operator will abandon a non-urgent inquiry.

That work pattern provides great flexibility. When there are peaks and troughs or very busy times in respect of the number of 999 calls, they can be handled without over-stretching the service. By working in that way, operators do not spend all their working days and nights dealing with the immensely stressful business of handling the personal tragedies behind every call.

Operators also build up a knowledge of the local area and establish contacts with local emergency services. They have a detailed knowledge of the kind of incidents and the stressful state that people are in when they dial 999.

The Office of Telecommunications—Oftel—has decided to review that system. I hope that the Minister will tell us today when the report commissioned by Oftel from Touche Ross will be published, as it is the next stage in the move to change the system. At the moment there are some 50 centres with approximately 6,000 staff and they handle all 999 calls in the way that I have described.

Proposals are being considered to create a dedicated call-handling agency with as few as 150 staff working at any one time based in just three centres around the country. It is proposed that those centres will be Bury St. Edmunds, Newport Gwent and Motherwell in Scotland.

The nearest centre to London would be Bury St. Edmunds, which is 70 miles away. If that centre was overflowing, calls would be diverted to Scotland or to Wales. I must correct an early-day motion which received a large number of signatures. In that, we stated that there were 70 centres and not 50. British Telecom is making such savage cuts in the number of centres that, when one thinks that one has the correct number in an early-day motion, that number has changed.

I am concerned about Oftel's involvement in the matter. In preparing the review, Oftel has failed sufficiently to consult, or listen to the voices of, those who work in the 999 service. Drawing a parallel, most fair-minded hon. Members would concede that if the London ambulance service had listened earlier to the experts in the service and the unions, the recent crisis could have been prevented. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) would agree about that, because he devoted a great deal of work to drawing attention to the problems of ambulance services. I hope that Oftel will learn from that and will listen to the warnings and constructive advice offered by the Union of Communication Workers.

It seems that the emergency services are generally quite happy with the current system. The satisfaction of the police, fire, ambulance, coastguard and mountain rescue services is shared by their respective unions and associations. That is a rare show of unanimity and it should be built on, not ignored.

The Fire Brigades Union has taken great interest in the matter and its representatives will be joining those of the Union of Communication Workers and other concerned people to lobby Parliament on 8 December. They have some positive advice to offer. Even at this late stage—although the Minister will probably say that this is an early stage—I hope that the Government will listen to us with an open mind.

Before seeking to alter radically the status quo, should not there first be concrete and demonstrable evidence that there is a real problem—that the service provided is of poor quality or poor value for money? As far as I know, no such evidence exists. If there is such evidence, why is it not being made public and why have we not seen it? This proposal looks like many of the proposals being introduced by the Government—almost change for change's sake. The cliché, "If it is not broken, why fix it?" is apt. To put it another way, if the calls are being connected, why break the calls?

There is a lack of tried and tested technology available to implement such changes. I am not a Luddite, nor are most Labour Members. I do not have the confidence, after recent events, to be happy to see the introduction of more computers to replace people to deal with emergencies. The prospect of people dialling 999 and being answered by an answering machine is real, as a slimmed-down service would face severe difficulties when having to react at a time of peak usage, which can easily be contained at present.

There are other risks. The security implications surrounding such a change are worth considering. Recently one of the centres in Liverpool was knocked out for about six hours by an arson attack. If that were to happen to one of only three centres, I am not convinced that the remaining two could cope. If we had two national emergencies, such as an air crash and a rail disaster, on one day at different ends of the country, I do not believe that only two centres could cope.

It is interesting that none of the proposals will apply to Northern Ireland, largely because of the security risks. If it is good enough for the Northern Ireland system not to be changed because people's lives would be put at risk, why are we contemplating its introduction in the mainland? Do we want to concentrate so vital a service into such a small number of locations and present so tangible a target to terrorists?

If the Government and Oftel are so worried about the relatively modest cost of supporting this excellent service falling so heavily on British Telecom, I am sure that there would be support throughout for proposals to make other network operators pay a bigger share of the costs involved. I hope that this constructive idea to tackle what is perhaps the real motive behind the changes will be accepted by the Minister. I must warn the Minister that this issue will receive full support from not only Labour Members. We have support from the Liberal Democrats—the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Simon Hughes) was not able to be here today. Many sleeping Conservative Members are also concerned about this—*[Interruption.]* They are asleep, so they cannot be here. Nevertheless, the issue affects the lives of people in the United Kingdom.

I warn the Minister that if he and the Government are prepared to push through changes that are designed mainly to save a little money somewhere, and if the changes put our services in jeopardy, his Government will not be easily forgiven. I hope that the Minister, as a result of this debate, will bring the debate properly into the public arena where it belongs, because we do not want the changes to be pushed through without people understanding and knowing what has happened.

I hope that the Minister will agree to take on board the positive points that I and my colleagues—I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) will say a few words—have made in addition to the points made by the Union of Communications Workers and other trade unions which represent those who work in the service. I believe that the Government have failed to consult sufficiently. We must begin the processes of consultation, because I am sure that if people understand what is proposed they will totally reject the idea.

2.44 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) for giving me the opportunity to say a few words in support of the case which she made so well. Like her, I am sponsored by the Union of Communication Workers. For that reason, but also because of my concern for the needs of everyone in Britain who depends on the emergency services, I am grateful for the opportunity to support my hon. Friend's argument.

I shall put four points to the Minister. First, we must recognise that the telephone connection part of the 999 service works well. Recently, one of my constituents desperately needed an ambulance. He phoned 999. He was answered instantly by the telephone operators. They handled his call with superb efficiency. It was when the call was passed to the ambulance service that the problems

[Mr. Chris Smith]

arose. In the end, he had to wait for three and a half minutes before he was connected to anyone at the ambulance service.

My constituent specified that he had no complaint whatever about the way in which the telephone service operated. His complaint was against the ambulance service. So we must recognise that the 999 service operated at present by British Telecom employees works superbly; there is no need whatever to change it.

Secondly, the review body established by Oftel which came up with the proposal to create a new call-handling agency had an interesting composition. I asked the Minister a parliamentary question about it some weeks ago and received an answer which spelt out who sat on the review body. The Cable Television Association, Telecom Securicor Cellular Radio Ltd. and Racal-Vodac Ltd. had seats on the review body, but no one who represented people working in the service played any part whatever.

To include no representative of any of the telephone employees who operate the 999 service in the review process seems the wrong way of going about sensibly examining how the service should change, if at all. It is the people who work day by day in the service who know the real problems and know where the service can be improved.

Thirdly, my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall mentioned the potential risk of disaster or even terrorist attack at one of only three points of handling calls. That could be a real problem. To boil down 50 points of contact to just three immediately puts those three points of contact in greater danger at the same time as it reduces the flexibility which is part and parcel of the system at present.

The fourth point, which the Minister should perhaps take into account to an even greater extent than any of the other arguments, is that at present the staff who work now on the 999 service are British Telecom employees with an enormous range of skills and experience and a fantastic amount of dedication. The proposal of the Oftel review body for a call-handling agency will tear all up that experience and dedication. It will remove it for virtually no benefit. If the proposal goes ahead, it will destroy what is working well and will consign an enormous amount of skill to the dustbin. I urge the Minister very seriously to reconsider this matter and to keep the 999 service as it is. It is serving the public well and efficiently, and is greatly valued by the public in return.

2.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Edward Leigh): I thank the hon. Members for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) and for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) for their interesting and thoughtful contributions.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss what I regard as a subject of considerable importance. I fully appreciate hon. Members' concerns about the future arrangements for the handling of emergency calls.

All of us have an interest in ensuring that the current excellent standard of the service is maintained. After all, we do not know when we will need to make use of it ourselves. But I hope that I can correct some of the misunderstandings that have arisen over the plans to introduce new procedures for the initial handling of calls. I shall confine myself to the initial handling of calls, rather than the wider issue of the emergency services in general, which is a subject for my colleagues in the Home Office.

The Office of Telecommunications leads on the review of arrangements for the implementation of a call-handling agency which will take incoming 999 calls and pass them on to the emergency authorities. I know that the Director General of Telecommunications will take a keen interest in the views expressed today.

The handling of 999 calls is essentially a two-stage process—first, the receipt and onward transmission of the call by a telecommunications operator and, secondly, its subsequent handling by an emergency authority. I want to emphasise that the present review is concerned only with the first stage of that process.

Hon. Members have suggested today that there is no need to implement changes to that part of the service, as it functions perfectly well as it is. I certainly agree that the current system, in which British Telecom acts as the contact point for all incoming calls, has indeed performed well, as the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury made clear.

Figures suggest that most calls are connected to the appropriate emergency authority within about 25 seconds. The BT operators cope admirably with the stresses and demands which both routine and 999 calls place upon them. However, it has become increasingly apparent to all parties concerned, including the emergency authorities themselves, that the continuation of that system is simply not appropriate now that the shape of the telecommunications industry is changing.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): That is a non-sequitur.

Mr. Leigh: As a consequence of the entry of competitors to BT, the United Kingdom telecommunications infrastructure will increasingly become a set of inter-connected networks, rather than a single network administered by BT. There will be a corresponding need for a central system of handling emergency calls which may arise on any one of the networks. That is a real problem, I advise the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing).

Since 1984, Mercury Communications has been permitted to run a telecommunications network in competition with BT. Last year, the Government announced that they would permit others to come forward to run additional networks. Already, more than 40 companies have applied to be able to do so. Meanwhile, cable television companies and the mobile telephony companies—Cellnet, Vodafone, Hutchison Microtel and Mercury Personal Communications—are either already providing, or will shortly begin providing, extensive telephony services. That new competition has been widely welcomed for the benefits that it has brought in terms of increased choice, innovative products and services, and lower prices, but clearly it also raises questions about the current system of emergency call handling.

Mr. Spearing: This is a matter of great public importance. Will the Minister tell us why the conditions for the competitors, irrespective of their merits, did not include some method whereby a 999 call on any instrument went to the existing 50 or 70 centres? Surely, unless those conditions exist, the Government are not doing their duty.

Mr. Leigh: Apparently, it is not technically possible to do that in all cases. Mercury, for instance, has its own emergency centre. It copes very well, but it was felt that, given the increase in competition and the likelihood of smaller operators entering the market, it would be advisable to retain the efficiency of a central call-handling agency.

Ms. Hoey: Where can competition come in when people desperately need emergency services?

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Lady has not understood what I have been saying. Competition is a fact: BT no longer has a monopoly of telecommunications services in this country, and there is no longer a single central telephone network. Now that competition is there, with all the benefits that it brings to consumers, it is essential that we ensure efficiency by creating a central call-handling agency. That is what the Director General of Telecommunications has decided to do.

It was an early awareness of the problem—as long ago as 1989—that prompted the then Director General of Telecommunications, Sir Bryan Carsberg, to set up a review group to examine the 999 emergency service. His aim was to ensure that standards in the 999 service would be maintained as the telecommunications industry's structure changed. The group's membership included all the organisations with an interest in emergency calls, including representatives from the Office of Telecommunications, the telecommunications network operators, relevant Government Departments and the emergency authorities themselves. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury raised that point.

The group reaches the conclusion that a call-handling agency should be established. That conclusion enjoyed the support of all the organisations represented on the group. The proposed new agency would take account of the emergence of new telecommunications operators, and would avoid unacceptable variations in the standard of performance. It would also save wasteful duplication of effort, and allow the emergency authorities to receive calls from a single source.

It was considered important, however, that a change such as the one envisaged should not take place without the fullest consultation of other parties with an interest. A consultative paper was therefore produced, and was circulated widely. The findings of the feasibility study were approved by nearly all the respondents to the consultation. The consensus reached was that, by routing all calls through a single source, the agency would provide a highly effective service.

Once that clear and overwhelming conclusion had been made, it fell to the director general to consider how the proposals could be implemented in practice and, in particular, how the benefits I have outlined could be achieved. He therefore commissioned consultants Touche Ross to carry out a validation study and prepare an implementation plan. This further detailed research will take into account the number and staffing of the proposed agency offices, and will consider how the service will be funded and managed. It will also look at the best ways in which to use the latest available technology. I understand from the director general that Touche Ross will soon be in a position to report to him—in late January, it is hoped.

I replied on behalf of the President of the Board of Trade to the letter from the hon. Member for Vauxhall, and the reply was sent to her yesterday; I apologise for the fact that she has not yet received it. I must tell her that until the findings have been reported, neither the director general nor I can anticipate them. I emphasise, however, that the director general has set Touche Ross strict criteria, which it must meet in any proposals. Any new scheme must at least equal, and preferably improve on, the standard currently reached by the service—which, as I said earlier, is acknowledged to be very high.

Some of the speculation about the future of the service—both outside the House and here today—has been erroneous, and I hope that I shall have time to answer some of the points that have been made. We have heard horror stories that thousands of emergency callers will be placed in call-queuing systems—or worse still, be put through to an answer machine. Let me make it clear that such a possibility is simply not being contemplated. It would hardly be consistent with the director general's stated intentions.

It has been said that the system will be swamped by the volume of calls, and that was implied today. That is not true. I can assure the House that the system will have the capacity to deal with the number of emergency calls that are made. Although the call-handling agency will have fewer operators to call upon than BT currently has nationwide, the key point is that it will be dedicated purely to answering emergency calls.

It is argued that that will not address the problem of a major emergency, in which BT currently calls upon extra staff to support the 999 staff. The new system is likely to provide better support in such a case, because each call-handling agency office will be able to call on the other offices, thus avoiding the current problem where a local BT exchange can be swamped by calls during a purely local emergency.

The final decision on the number and the location of the call-handling agency offices has not yet been decided, but the arrangements will be required to ensure that there is adequate coverage for all regions of the country. Let me assure the House, then, that the call-handling agency will not be implemented in a haphazard or precipitate fashion. Oftel's consideration of the issue since 1989 has been careful and measured.

This prudent approach will continue, once the consultant's report has been received. When the Touche Ross report is available it will be published, and there will be a further period of discussion and comment. It is not intended that the call-handling agency will be brought into action until 1995 at the earliest. There will, therefore, be plenty of time in the run-up to the change to ensure that the system functions effectively and that current standards of service will be protected and, where possible, improved upon.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 16 November 1992

HOME DEPARTMENT

Miscarriages of Justice

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total amount paid in compensation to victims of miscarriages of justice for each of the last three years.

Mr. Jack: The amounts paid in the last three financial years are as follows:

	£
1989-90	285,000
1990-91	839,000
1991-92	1,719,000

Female Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many sentenced female prisoners in England and Wales were given bail or weekend leave to visit dependent children during 1992; and what is the method of financing such visits.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The statistical information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The financial arrangements governing the grant of temporary release to those prisoners eligible under prison rule 6 are set out in circular instructions 36/89 and 43/92, copies of which are in the Library. There is no provision for assisting financially sentenced prisoners released by the courts on bail.

Prison Survey

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish the recent prison survey of inmates in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The National Prison Survey 1991 was published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on 10 November 1992. A Home Office research report summarising the main findings was published simultaneously. Copies of these have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Joyriding

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures are being taken to combat joyriding in Wales.

Mr. Jack: The powers of the courts in both England and Wales to deal with the most serious cases of unauthorised taking have been increased by the Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act 1992.

The most effective way to prevent joyriding via the unauthorised taking of cars is to improve their security. This is the objective of Car Crime Prevention Year and of the many activities associated with it.

A significant development in Wales has been the establishment by all four Welsh police forces of a vehicle watch scheme which operates throughout the Principality.

My right hon. and learned Friend also announced on 16 July our intention to increase the maximum penalty for causing death by dangerous driving to 10 years, when parliamentary time allows.

Juvenile Crime, Wales

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures are being taken to tackle and reduce crimes committed by juveniles in Wales.

Mr. Jack: The Government have encouraged the police and other agencies in the development of effective crime prevention programmes aimed at tackling youth crime and has funded a number of initiatives. The Welsh Office have approved support of over £500,000 under the urban programme in the current financial year for crime prevention and associated initiatives in Wales. Bids for new projects to start in 1993-94 are presently under consideration. In addition, the Welsh Office has funded the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders over the last three financial years to work with local authorities in south east Wales to develop strategies to combat juvenile crime. As part of its programme of action on youth crime for 1993, Crime Concern is planning a series of regional seminars, including one in Wales, on best practice in diverting young people from crime.

The Government are also considering what means might be needed to reduce offending by the very small group of persistent juvenile offenders.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indemnify local authorities against the costs incurred in prosecuting those offending the Sunday trading laws.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. Local authorities receive a substantial contribution to their costs generally through the revenue support grant system. We have no plans to increase this contribution specifically for their enforcement duties under the Shops Act 1950.

Confessions

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to amend the rules relating to the acceptability of uncorroborated confessions.

Mr. Jack: The use of uncorroborated confession evidence is within the remit of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice. We shall consider whether any changes may be needed in the light of the commission's findings.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce a system whereby prisoners held on remand in Wales and England should either have their case brought before the courts within 110 days, or that they be released on bail, in all cases other than those in which there could be either a real danger to the safety of the public, or of the subversion of the course of justice.

Mr. Jack: Custody time limits have applied to the whole of England and Wales since October 1991.

They are:

Magistrates court[1]	—56 days from first appearance to summary trial; —or 70 days to committal to Crown Court.
Crown courts[1]	—112 days from committal to arraignment.

[1] Responsibility for the courts lies with the Lord Chancellor's Department.

If these limits are exceeded the defendant will normally be released on bail. However, courts are empowered to extend the time limits upon application where they are satisfied that there is a good and sufficient cause and the Crown has acted with all due expedition.

Prisoners (Conjugal Visits)

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration his Department is giving to introducing conjugal visits for prisoners; and what assessment he has made on the effect of such visits on the deterrent effect of imprisonment.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The feasibility and desirability of introducing private family visits will be considered in the light of the imminent review of the operation of the home leave scheme planned by the prison service.

Wolds Prison

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many full-time equivalent prison custody officers are employed at Her Majesty's prison Wolds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is subject to commercial confidentiality and a matter for Group 4 Remand Services Ltd.

Police Accommodation

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many houses and flats in the ownership of the Metropolitan police in each of the London boroughs are currently vacant; and how many have been vacant for more than three months, more than six months and more than one year.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 9 November 1992]*: The information requested is set out in the following table:

	Vacant less than 3 months		*Vacant more than 3 months*		*Vacant more than 6 months*		*Vacant more than 12 months*	
	Houses	*Flats*	*Houses*	*Flats*	*Houses*	*Flats*	*Houses*	*Flats*
Barnet	—	1	3	1	1	—	1	—
Bexley	—	—	1	—	—	3	—	—
Brent	1	—	1	—	2	—	2	—
Bromley	—	1	—	—	—	4	—	2
Camden	—	1	—	2	—	1	—	—
Croydon	1	2	1	1	—	3	—	1
Ealing	—	1	—	2	—	—	—	—
Enfield	1	2	4	—	1	—	—	—
Greenwich	—	1	—	2	—	3	—	4
Hammersmith and Fulham	—	2	—	1	—	1	—	1
Haringey	—	3	1	3	—	1	1	2
Harrow	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Havering	3	—	4	—	6	1	2	—
Hillingdon	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Islington	—	5	1	3	—	—	—	—
Kensington and Chelsea	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kingston	—	1	—	1	1	—	—	2
Lambeth	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	2
Lewisham	—	—	1	4	—	1	—	3
Merton	—	—	—	9	—	3	1	7
Redbridge	1	—	5	—	3	3	—	—
Richmond	1	3	—	1	—	—	—	1
Sutton	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Waltham Forest	—	—	1	1	—	1	—	—
Wandsworth	—	3	—	1	1	2	1	2
Westminster	—	2	—	3	—	2	—	1
Outer London Districts	5	—	1	—	4	—	1	—
Total	16	30	25	35	21	29	9	28
On market	8	3	14	13	13	12	8	17
For allocation	8	27	11	22	8	17	2	11

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of residential properties in the ownership of the Metropolitan police in each of the London boroughs, showing separately the number of houses and flats.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 9 November 1992]*: The information requested is set out in the following table:

London Borough	*Houses*	*Flats*
Barking	10	20
Barnet	118	33
Bexley	17	6
Brent	52	—
Bromley	71	39
Camden	4	47
Croydon	93	16
Ealing	20	113
Enfield	67	17
Greenwich	33	66
Hammersmith and Fulham	5	51
Haringey	20	90
Harrow	53	18
Havering	130	—
Hillingdon	63	8
Hounslow	10	23
Islington	18	93
Kensington and Chelsea	—	105
Kingston	30	35
Lambeth	8	32
Lewisham	30	24
Merton	12	68
Newham	1	11
Redbridge	73	—
Sutton	39	45
Sutton	35	16
Waltham Forest	45	64
Wandsworth	5	53
Westminster	—	141
Outer London districts and Windsor	215	1
Total	1,277	1,235

Yugoslavia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he has made to supply clear and concise information about correct procedures for nationals of former states of Yugoslavia wishing to apply for visas.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

The Home Secretary's announcement of the imposition of the visa regime was widely reported on the vernacular services of the BBC and in the medial of Yugoslavia and neighbouring countries. Our posts in the area have issued releases to the media indicating that inquirers may contact any British mission for information on how to apply for a visa for the United Kingdom.

Consultants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the consultants currently working in his Department, the title of the project, its start and proposed finish date and, where available, its cost.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Information on consultants currently working in the Home Office is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The cost of individual consultancy contracts is a matter of commercial confidentiality which it would not be proper to disclose.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Queen's Counsel

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many QCs are currently women or from the ethnic minorities; and what percentage this is of the total number of QCs.

Mr. John M. Taylor: On 1 October 1992, there were 760 Queen's Counsel in private practice, of whom 41—5·4 per cent.—were women.

The ethnic origin of applicants for the office of Queen's Counsel was not recorded prior to the autumn of 1991, and the formal records in respect of ethnic origin are therefore incomplete.

It is, however, believed that on 1 October 1992 there were seven Queen's Counsel of non-white background—1 per cent.—of whom one was a woman.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how long on average *(a)* fiancé(e)s and *(b)* spouses now being heard by the adjudicator on appeal against refusal of entry clearance have had to wait; and how long he expects those applying now have to wait.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is estimated that at present an appeal against refusal of entry clearance to an adjudicator by *(a)* fiancé(e)s and *(b)* spouses is on average heard within 16 months of its receipt by the immigration appellate authorities. This period includes the time taken by the parties to prepare for the hearing, which is typically nine months. Hearings can sometimes be brought forward if the appellant so requests and an earlier date becomes available. Steps are being taken to shorten the time taken, wherever possible, for a case to come before an adjudicator.

Child Witnesses

Dr. Godman: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department in how many cases involving child witnesses heard in *(a)* the Crown courts and *(b)* the Central Criminal Court, London, evidence has been offered by way of a live closed-circuit television link in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The provision for the giving in evidence of a video-recording of an interview with a child witness in certain specified proceedings is contained in section 54 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. As this provision came into force only on 1 October 1992, no cases have yet been brought in which evidence has been given in this way.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department in how many cases involving child witnesses heard in *(a)* Crown courts and *(b)* the Central Criminal Court, London, video-taped evidence has been offered in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The answer to *(a)* is that in all Crown court centres, excluding the Central Criminal Court, the number of cases involving child witnesses in which the live television link was used by children to give evidence was: in 1990, 124 cases; in 1991, 152 cases; and in 1992, to date, 89 cases. The answer to *(b)* is that in the Central Criminal Court, the number of cases in which the live Television link was used was: in 1990, four cases; in 1991, three cases; and in 1992, to date, two cases.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department in how many cases in the past three years, involving child witnesses, heard in *(a)* the Crown courts and *(b)* the Central Criminal Court, London, screens have been used in order to shield a child from the accused person whilst the former is giving evidence against the latter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information sought by the hon. Member has not been collected, and could be obtained only at disproportionate expense.

Vulnerable Witnesses

Dr. Godman: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department in how many Crown courts live closed-circuit television links and associated equipment have been installed for the use for the purpose of taking evidence from those deemed to be vulnerable witnesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Installation of live television link equipment has taken place in 41 Crown court centres to date, for the purpose of children giving evidence under the provisions of section 32 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all of the reports his Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the last three years; for each of the last three years, how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: The available information has been placed in the Library.

Drugs

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what quantities of drugs have been seized by the Royal Ulster Constabulary in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mates: The requested information as follows:

	Cannabis	*Cocaine*	*Heroin*	*LSD*	*Amphetamines*
1987	6 kilos	98 gms	196 gms	500 doses	630 gms
1988	12·75 kilos	2·51 gms	3·65 gms	917 doses	466·26 gms
1989	21·71 kilos	52·4 gms	25·35 gms 1,052 MST tablets	485 doses 17·80 gms	658·60 gms
1990	37·6 kilos	—	2,757 MST tablets	573 doses	95·2 gms
1991	37·5 kilos 1·5 kilos herbal	88 gms	250 doses Dipipanone 1 gm Morphine	½ kilo Psilocin 800 doses 2,711 MDMA 114 gms	625 gms 25 tablets
1992[1]	14·75 kilos	77 gms	9 gms 51 MST tablets	9,018 doses 3,325 tablets MDMA	4,668 gms

[1] Up to 31 October.

MST = Morphine Sulphate.

MDMA = Ecstasy.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many officers are employed by the RUC anti-drugs team; and what increase in the number is planned.

Mr. Mates: I am informed by the Chief Constable that the Royal Ulster Constabulary drugs squad has an establishment of 28 officers and is at full strength. There are presently no plans to increase the number of officers deployed to the squad but the resources allocated to it are reviewed regularly.

Nine of the officers presently deployed to the drugs squad are serving six-month secondments from their sub-divisions. This is part of an ongoing programme—which has involved the secondment of almost 100 officers to the drugs squad in the past five years—intended to enhance the level of drugs awareness and improve investigation techniques at sub-divisional level.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many successful convictions there have been in Northern Ireland for drug-related offences in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mates: The information is as follows:

	Number
1987	143
1988	131
1989	133
1990	113
1991	157
[1]1992	188
Total	865

[1] To 31 October.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many of those convicted for drugs-related offences in Northern Ireland in the last five years have also been convicted for membership of the Provisional Irish Republican Army, the Irish National Liberation Army or the Irish People's Liberation Organisation, and other paramilitary organisations.

Mr. Mates: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Irish Language

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much Government expenditure has been directed at the promotion of the Irish language in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* Government funding for projects which involve the promotion of Irish is provided from a variety of sources. The last complete financial year for which information on expenditure is available is 1991-92. In that year, Government expenditure totalled some £1,216,000. This figure does not include funding for the teaching of Irish in mainstream English-medium education or for an Irish-medium unit in an English-medium primary school.

The central community relations unit (CCRU) within the Department of Finance and Personnel provided funding of £523,000, including support for the Ultach Trust and for research into the origins of Irish placenames. This included a once only payment of £250,000 to the endowment fund maintained by the trust.

The Department of the Environment, through the Belfast action teams, expended some £46,410 on a wide variety of activities and schemes designed to promote the Irish language in the Greater Belfast area.

The sum of £146,535 was paid under the Training and Employment Agency's action for community employment scheme to assist employment within six organisations promoting the Irish language.

The Department of Education for Northern Ireland contributed £405,000 to the costs of an Irish-medium primary school.

The Northern Ireland Office incurred staffing and ancillary costs of £61,500 in providing educational and translation facilities for prisoners using the Irish language.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland awarded a total grant of £33,600 for Irish language arts.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Research

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to allocate extra funding to the dual support system for funding higher education research in science and technology.

Mr. Waldegrave: As I announced on 12 November, spending next year on basic and strategic research in science, engineering and the social sciences will total £1,170 million, an increase in real terms over 1992-93 provision. It is for the research councils to determine what proportion of the funding allocated to them is spent in the higher education institutions.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to review the dual support scheme for research funding mechanisms with reference to the maintenance of diversity and scope for enterprise in the research of the science base.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our policy on the dual support system was set out in the 1991 White Paper "Higher Education: A Framework for Expansion"—copies are in the House Library. It announced new arrangements for dual support funding which came into effect on 1 August this year, and which were intended to clarify the respective funding responsibilities of the research councils and higher education institutions for research council funded projects within the dual support system.

We shall be considering the wider issues of how funding mechanisms contribute to the maintenance of diversity and scope for enterprise in the science base as part of our wider consultations on the science and technology White Paper which I plan to publish next year.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to insulate domestic research programmes of the research councils from uncontrollable fluctuations in the pound sterling value of international subscriptions through his Department meeting such variations outside an agreed budget level which is subject to occasional review.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have no plans to do so at present. The question of the best way of handling international subscriptions has, however, featured in a number of the submissions put to me in connection with the forthcoming White Paper on science and technology. I shall be considering carefully this and other proposals for change that have been made.

Public Service Reform

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to discuss public service reform with other countries.

Mr. Waldegrave: Throughout Europe governments are faced daily by the competing requirements of spending taxpayers' money wisely and delivering the best possible public services. Here in Britain the Prime Minister launched the citizens charter initiative in July 1991 with the aim of improving the quality of our public services and I know that other countries are working to improve theirs.

As one of the activities arranged during our presidency of the European Community, my Department is co-operating in the organisation of a conference—"Service and the Citizen"—which will take place at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre in London on 3 and 4 December 1992. It is being organised, in consultation with the citizens charter unit in my Department, by Touchstone Exhibitions and Conferences Ltd. I will arrange for a copy of the conference programme to be placed in the Library of the House.

This will be the first time, to my knowledge, that a conference on public service reform—with such a comprehensive programme—has been organised anywhere in Europe. Already there has been an enthusiastic response from individuals and organisations who wish to participate. We also have an impressive line-up of speakers. I am looking forward to welcoming the participants to London in December for what I am sure will be an exciting and worthwhile event.

Appointments

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many appointments to public bodies are currently held by women and members of ethnic minorities; and what plans the Government have to increase this number by 1996.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am pleased to be able to report that, as a result of the initiative announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the launch of Opportunity 2000 last year, the percentage of appointments to public bodies held by women has risen from 23 per cent. in 1991 to 26 per cent. at 1 September 1992. Detailed statistics about the number of such appointments held by members of the ethnic minorities are still being collected. Full details will be published in due course in the 1992 edition of "Public Bodies".

All departments have now drawn up their departmental plans for further progress in this area and I am arranging for a summary of these to be placed in the Library of the House. The objectives and goals set are comprehensive and demanding, and while they vary from department to department to reflect the different circumstances existing in each department, they represent a clear and unequivocal commitment to increasing still further the representation of women and members of the ethnic minorities, on merit, on public bodies over the year to 1996 and beyond.

TRANSPORT

Bypasses

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultation his Department undertakes in relation to the environmental effects of proposed bypasses.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department carries out very extensive consultation at the earliest possible state of scheme preparation. Consultations are undertaken with the Department of the Environment, the relevant local authorities, and the environmental organisations with statutory responsibilities, including English Nature, the Countryside Commission, English Heritage, and the National Rivers Authority. Other Government Departments—eg Agriculture, Defence—organisations such as British Rail and British Waterways, and the National Trust may also be consulted where appropriate.

Following this consultation, the Department consults the public and other organisations that have an interest.

British Rail (Freight)

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the terms of reference for consultants to investigate and report on structural options for the transfer of British Rail's freight businesses to the private sector.

Mr. Freeman: While the full terms of reference contain commercially sensitive material, the consultants' remit is to advice the Government and the British Railways Board on structural options for the transfer to the private sector of British Rail's freight and rail express systems services. The consultants have been asked to assess the requirements for a viable and competitive post-privatisation rail freight industry with low barriers to entry, identifying the structural options for transfer to the private sector and assessing each of the options against the following criteria:

- (i) the extent to which they provide a viable future in the private sector for existing traffics and opportunities for growth;
- (ii) the opportunities provided for competition and successful entry, and the impact on competition in related markets (eg competition between ports);
- (iii) privatisation receipts and restructuring costs;
- (iv) impact on the pace of privatisation;
- (v) the incentives provided for current management and staff to bring about improvements in performance, and the opportunities provided for them to take a stake in their businesses;
- (vi) the attractiveness to potential purchasers and/or investors;
- (vii) impact on the commercial performance of the rest of the railway.

The Government will issue a full statement of the preferred options for the privatisation of the freight businesses in due course.

Bus Priority Schemes

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bus priority schemes are currently in operation.

Mr. Freeman: Information is not available on the number of bus priority schemes adopted by local authorities, many of which have been in operation for some years. As a result of a fresh initiative to promote bus use last year, 26 new schemes were approved for funding in 1992-93.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what priority he will give to financing bus priority measures within the government grants allocated to local authorities; and if he will set out the criteria used to appraise applications for bus priority measures for grant aid.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend will be taking decisions shortly on the allocation of grants and credit approvals for local transport capital expenditure in 1993-94. Individual bus priority schemes are judged on their merits having regard to the evaluation carried out by local authorities in accordance with the Department's publication "Keeping Buses Moving", the contribution of the schemes to authorities' transport strategies, and the availability of resources.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the bids received from local authorities for bus priority measures for 1993-94.

Mr. Freeman: We have received bids for 119 bus priority measures from 69 local authorities. We are evaluating these bids at present and will announce allocations shortly.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of all research into bus priority measures currently carried out or commissioned by his Department.

Mr. Freeman: Assessments are currently being carried out by the Transport Research Laboratory on behalf of my Department into the benefits of bus priority measures in Aberdeen, Brighton, Manchester, Sheffield and south-west London.

Rape Seed Oil

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many gallons of rape seed oil have been imported from Italy to run public transport buses; how many buses are currently run on rape seed oil; where the buses operate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: For a trial period of three months, Reading Buses will run three of its fleet of 200 vehicles on rape methyl ester (RME), which is manufactured from rape seed oil and methanol. For this purpose 5,000 gallons of RME have been made available at no cost by an Italian producer who had obtained EC funding to make fuel available for limited trials. The vehicles will operate in Reading.

I was pleased to inaugurate the trial at the beginning of this month. The Department of Transport, in conjunction with our Transport Research Laboratory, will be monitoring the pollutant emissions performance.

Bus Deregulation

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the extent to which bus deregulation prevents cheap return fares or travel cards being used for evening or weekend services as a result of tenders awarded to different operators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No detailed assessment has been made of the effect of deregulation on return tickets and travel cards. Ticketing arrangements are a matter for operators and for local authorities. Successful multi-operator ticketing arrangements are in place in the metropolitan areas and in several counties.

A590

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to upgrade the A590 between Lindale and Barrow-in-Furness to a dual carriageway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 12 November 1992]:* A bypass of Lindale is included in the A590 Ulverston to Dalton dual carriageway proposal on which a public consultation has been completed.

While the A590 Dalton bypass scheme now under construction is to wide single carriageway standard, the provision of a climbing lane will satisfy projected traffic needs. There are no plans to dual this section.

Morecambe Bay Barrage

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent consideration he has given to establishing a feasibility study into the construction of a barrage across Morecambe bay as a means of improving the road links between Furness and the M6; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 12 November 1992]:* None. However, Department of Energy Ministers announced a preliminary study in January 1992 to examine the technical, economic and environmental feasibility of a combined energy barrage and road crossing across the River Duddon near Askham in Furness.

Consultations

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the terms of reference for the national annual consultative meetings held jointly with the local authority associations; and if he will make a statement as to progress made on the issues raised at the 1992 meeting.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* There are no specific terms of reference, but the meeting is held each year following the series of regional annual consultative committee meetings. The national annual consultative meeting is seen as a valuable forum for discussion between the Government and the local authority associations (LAAs) on road and traffic matters of mutual interest. The LAAs are free to raise any relevant issues at the meeting.

The following points remain to be dealt with following the meeting in July:

1. *Bridge assessment and strengthening*

The local authority associations (LAAs) requested a meeting at official level. Some matters have been resolved by correspondence. If necessary a meeting to deal with any remaining points will be arranged after the announcement of the TSG settlement in December.

2. *Legislation to curb pavement parking*

I wrote to the LAAs, as promised, on 12 August setting out the current position.

3. *Balance of funding between trunk roads and motorways, local roads and public transport*

4. *Increase in local capital allocation not directly tied to specific schemes ("headroom")*

5. *Capitalisation of highway maintenance*

I wrote to the LAAs on 25 September setting out the current position on these three topics. The balance of spending between trunk roads and motorways, local roads and public transport is constantly under review. Allocations of "headroom" for 1993-94 will be announced as part of the Transport Supplementary Grant settlement in December. The views of the LAAs will be taken into account. Further work on the capitalisation of highway maintenance is being undertaken in conjunction with the LAAs by a sub-committee of the Standing Committee on Highway Maintenance.

6. *Schemes supported by developers*

The matter is still under consideration.

7. *EC Green paper on Transport and the Environment*

Officials had a useful discussion with the LAAs in the light of this green paper.

8. *Voluntary property acquisition*

The issue is still under consideration. The LAAs have proposed an official level meeting. It will be arranged after the announcement of the TSG settlement in December.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff are currently employed at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, Swansea; what are their areas of responsibility; and how many staff are employed in each section.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* The total number of staff employed at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, Swansea on 31 October 1992 was 3,107. This is divided according to grade and organisation as follows.

Grade		*Organisation*	
Administrative and executive	2,817	Driver licensing	919
Support, secretarial and technical	290	Vehicle licensing	1,471
		Administration and common services	717
Total	3,107		3,107

The responsibilities of the agency are described in its annual report, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the trial schemes that are currently being undertaken by the DVLA.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* I shall write to the hon. Member.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the addresses of all local offices of the DVLA, the number of people employed in each and their work responsibilities.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* The information requested is set out in the table. These offices provide a local service for the registration and licensing of new vehicles and related work—shown as "transactions" in the table—and are responsible for the enforcement of the payment of vehicle excise duty.

Office and address	*Number of staff*	
	Transactions	*Enforcement*
Aberdeen 3rd Floor Atholl House, 84/88 Guild Street, Aberdeen AB9 1XH	5·0	3·5
Bangor Penrhos Road, Penrhosgarnedd, Bangor LL57 2JF	4·0	7·5
Birmingham St. Martins House, 10 The Bullring Birmingham B5 5DP	15·0	31·0
Bournemouth Tregonwell Court, 118 Commercial Road Bournemouth BH2 5LN	10·0	15·5
Brighton PO Box 357, Circus House, New England Road, Brighton BN1 1DH	11·0	25·5
Bristol Northleigh House, Lime Kiln Close, Stoke Gifford Bristol BS12 6SR	9·0	28·0
Cardiff 14 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF1 9RB	7·0	21·0
Carlisle Ground Floor, 3 Merchants Drive, Parkhouse, Carlisle CA3 0JW	4·0	6·0
Chelmsford 2nd Floor, Parkway House, 49 Baddow Road, Chelmsford CM2 0XJ	15·0	27·5
Chester Norroy House, Nuns Road, Chester CH1 2ND	9·0	8·0
Coventry Greyfriars House, Greyfriars Lane, Coventry CV1 2HB	8·0	14·5
Dudley Churchill Precinct, Dudley DY2 7BN	11·0	11·0
Dundee 4th Floor, Overgate House, 121 Marketgait, Dundee DD1 1JL	5·0	3·0
Edinburgh Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh EH11 3XE	0·0	13·0
Exeter 16 Dix's Field, Exeter EX1 1TP	9·5	18·0
Glasgow 107 Bothwell Street, Glasgow G2 7EE	18·5	24·0
Gloucester Elmbridge Court, Cheltenham Road, Gloucester GL3 1JY	8·5	11·5
Guildford 32 High Street, Guildford GU1 3ED	12·5	14·5
Haverfordwest Winch Lane, Haverfordwest SA61 1RD	4·0	2·0
Huddersfield Kirklees House, Market Street, Huddersfield HD1 2HR	8·0	7·5
Hull Kingston House, Myton Street, Hull HU1 2PE	7·0	6·5
Inverness Caledonia House, 63 Academy Street, Inverness IV1 1RP	4·5	2·5
Ipswich Podium Level, St. Clare House, Greyfriars, Ipswich IP1 1UT	9·0	9·5
Leeds 24a Union Street, Leeds LS2 7JR	16·0	22·5

Office and address	*Number of staff*	
	Transactions	*Enforcement*
Leicester 2nd Floor, Rutland Centre, 56 Halford Street, Leicester LE1 1TT	8·5	13·5
Lincoln Mill House, Brayford Side North, Lincoln LN1 1YW	9·5	12·0
Liverpool Corn Exchange Building, Fenwick Street, Liverpool L2 7TT	12·0	22·5
London 1 Zoar Street, London SE1 0SY	20·0	0·0
Ground Floor, Quest House, 11 Cross Road, Croydon CR9 6EW	14·5	0·0
23 Balfour Road, Ilford IG1 4HH	9·5	0·0
Government Building, Canon Park, Honeypot Lane, Stanmore HA7 1BD	17·5	0·0
18 Great Marlborough Street, London W1V 2BD	0·0	112·0
12/18 Station Road, Sidcup, London DA15 7DA	9·0	132·5
Luton 2 Dunstable Road, Luton LU1 1EB	18·5	34·5
Maidstone Coronet House, 11 Queen Anne Road, Maidstone ME14 1XB	14·0	26·0
Manchester Trafford House, Chester Road, Manchester M32 0SL	21·0	25·0
Middlesbrough 9th Floor, Corporation House, 73/75 Albert Road, Middlesbrough TS1 2BP	8·0	9·5
Newcastle Eagle Star House, Regent Farm Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE3 3QF	9·0	21·0
Northampton Wootton Hall Park, Northampton NN4 9BG	9·0	13·0
Norwich Rouen House, Rouen Road, Norwich NR1 1UP	9·5	11·0
Nottingham Lambert House, Talbot Street, Nottingham NG1 5NJ	13·0	16·5
Oxford Ground Floor, 3 Cambridge Terrace, Oxford OX1 1RW	8·5	10·0
Peterborough 88 Lincoln Road, Peterborough PE1 2ST	10·0	10·0
Portsmouth 1/4 Queen Street, Portsmouth PO1 3JD	10·0	17·5
Preston Buckingham House, Glovers Court, Preston PR1 4DQ	14·0	16·5
Reading Minister House, 52/53 Minster Street, Reading RG1 2JS	13·0	16·0
Sheffield St. Peter's House, Hartshead, Sheffield S1 1JX	12·0	15·0
Shrewsbury 1st Floor, Princess House, The Square, Shrewsbury SY1 2NB	5·0	3·5
Stoke London House, 4th Floor, Hide Street, Stoke ST4 1EL	9·5	6·5
Swansea DVLC, Longview Road, Swansea SA99 1DE	5·0	7·5
Swindon 2 The Meads, Business Centre, Ashworth Road, Bridgemead, Swindon SN5 7YR	7·0	8·5
Taunton Brendon House, High Street, Taunton TA1 3DT	6·0	8·5
Truro Pydar House, Pydar Street, Truro TR1 2TG	5·0	8·5
Worcester Haswell House, St. Nicholas Street, Worcester WR1 1NX	7·0	9·0

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the contribution of the DVLA to road safety, law enforcement and tax collection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* DVLA makes a strong contribution to road safety. It helps keep off the roads vehicles and people who should not be on them and restricts the circumstances in which some people can drive. The validity of insurance and MOT certificates is checked before vehicle licences are issued. The agency gives invaluable assistance to vehicle manufacturers who wish to recall vehicles because of safety defects.

The DVLA driver and vehicle databases are accessed extensively by the police and other law enforcement agencies in the investigation of all categories of crime in which a motor vehicle may be involved. Details of disqualified drivers are passed to the police and endorsements and disqualifications handed down by courts are entered on the driver record.

DVLA collected some £3 billion in vehicle excise duties in 1991-92.

Roads (Investment)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what research he has commissioned into *(a)* the economic and *(b)* the employment impact of new road building;

(2) what assessment he has made of the implications of *(a)* road construction and *(b)* road maintenance for job creation;

(3) what assessment he has made of the implications of road building for regional policy;

(4) what assessment he has made of the implications of the road programme on employment relocation, job destruction and job creation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* The programme of road construction is aimed at meeting the needs of industry and other road users through the provision of a modern strategic road network. This reflects the Government's commitment to a road infrastructure which strengthens the competitive performance of the economy. This was reiterated by the statement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the House yesterday.

The economic appraisal of road schemes measures the benefit they generate for the economy. There is a continuing process of research carried out by the Department which supports this analysis.

Decisions on the programme take account of local development objectives such as, for example, inner-city regeneration and the development of docklands.

The employment implications of our expenditure on new construction and road maintenance is complex because so many industries are involved in the process. However, estimates confirmed by the CBI and other industry groups identify around 3,100 jobs created by every £100 million spent on new construction. We estimate that road maintenance is at least as labour intensive.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will reconsider the financial criteria which apply to investment in transport policy and road construction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* The Department of Transport's booklet, "The Role of Investment Appraisal in Road and Rail Transport", describes the technical procedures, and their background, at present used by the Department for appraising proposed investments in roads and rail transport. I would also refer the hon. Member to the autumn statement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the existing rules for calculating the rate of return on road investment.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* Trunk road schemes are appraised using standard computer programs, namely COBA 9, URECA, and QUADRO 2. They have accompanying manuals which explain the techniques used. The Department's booklet, "Getting the Best Roads for our Money: The COBA Method of Appraisal", summarises COBA, which is the most commonly used program.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the animal food manufacturers to which BSE has been traced.

Mr. Soames: BSE was caused by the use of ruminant-derived protein in cattle rations. This material was in common use prior to 18 July 1988 and no particular manufacturers were implicated.

Sheep Dip

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will investigate the effect of organophosphorus on human beings.

Mr. Soames: As part of the current review of pharmaceutical veterinary medicinal products to ensure that up-to-date standards on safety are met, and following recommendations from the independent Veterinary Products Committee to the licensing authority, the companies that manufacture organophosphorus (op) sheep dips have been asked to carry out some further work on the effects of these products. This will include blood tests on farm operators, providing details of protective clothing worn, and studies to show which areas of the bodies of operators are most exposed. In addition, the veterinary medicines directorate is continuing to fund work by the national poisons unit as a follow-up to its recent report on cases of sheep dip exposure.

Furthermore, the Health and Safety Executive is currently funding research into the possible chronic neuropsychological and neurological effects of occupational exposure to ops and is also carrying out a detailed occupational hygiene assessment of sheep dip working practices and processes.

Administration Costs

Mr. Richards: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the United Kingdom's agricultural budget is spent on administration; and what information he has on the corresponding figure in other EC member states.

Mr. Curry: The administration costs relating specifically to agriculture over the United Kingdom as a whole are not readily available. The costs of this Department and the Intervention Board include elements for food and fishing; the administration costs for agriculture in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are contained within the votes of the Welsh Office, Scottish Office and Northern Ireland Office respectively.

Information on general administration costs for the Department and the Intervention Board are however set out in the Departmental Report (Cm 1903) and particularly in the cash plans tables included in that document.

I have no information on administrative expenditure in other EC member states.

Food and Environment Protection Act

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many orders under section 1(8) of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 have been introduced in each year since 1985.

Mr. Curry: The Ministry has laid the following orders before Parliament under Section 1(8) of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985:

1985: None
1986: 5 (all relating to the Chernobyl accident)
1987: 1
1988: None
1989: 11 (10 relating to the lead in animal feed incident)
1990: 5
1991: 3
1992: 3

Subsidies

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of farmers' income stems from price support, subsidy and other forms of state intervention; what was the relative percentage in 1979; and if comparable figures are available for the EC as a whole.

Mr. Curry: Estimates of the cost of support depend critically on the assumptions used. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has, however, estimated the transfers from consumers and taxpayers resulting from agricultural policies in the European Community—separate figures for the United Kingdom are not available. These indicate that, for the period 1979-81, the transfer represented 88 per cent. of gross value added by agriculture. The estimate for 1990, the latest period available, is 94 per cent. The estimate for the earlier period is not directly comparable because it excludes Spain, Portugal and the former German Democratic Republic.

As the OECD makes clear, these estimates do not take into account the impact on world prices, and on other variables, if farm support were to be removed. They are likely, therefore, to overstate the true extent of support to the agricultural sector.

Production Regions

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will identify the specifically agricultural factors which support the division of the United Kingdom into the announced separate production regions, pursuant to his exercise of his powers and duties under article 3 of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1765/92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: United Kingdom Agriculture Ministers announced proposals for the division of the United Kingdom into regions in accordance with this regulation on 29 September 1992. The decision followed a careful examination of the available data on yields throughout the United Kingdom, the basis of which is set out in the regionalisation plan submitted to the European Commission on 16 September 1992. Copies of the plan have been placed in the Library of the House. During the coming year we shall be carrying out further work on yield patterns to see whether alternative regionalisation arrangements might be warranted for future years.

Common Agricultural Policy

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he has had from the EC about the estimated levels of CAP expenditure in the current year and the next three years.

Mr. Curry: The budget for the common agricultural policy for 1992 is 37,289 mecu (£26,390 million[1]). The draft CAP budget for 1993 is 38,985 mecu (£31,798 million[2]). These figures include the budget for European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund guarantee and guidance measures and 1,000 mecu (£708 million[1], £816 million[2]) for the monetary reserve. There will be no call on the monetary reserve in 1992.

It is not normal practice to forecast anticipated expenditure for subsequent years, which depend on decisions yet to be taken.

[1] Converted at £1 = 1·1413 ecu.

[2] Converted at £1 = 1·226 ecu.

Set-aside Scheme

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many acres of land in the United Kingdom are covered by the set-aside arrangements; how much subsidy per acre is paid; and whether the responsibility for payment rests with the European Community, or national governments.

Mr. Curry: Under the voluntary five-year set-aside scheme some 155,000 hectares—383,000 acres—have been set aside in the United Kingdom. This scheme is now closed to new entrants.

Payment rates under the five-year scheme are determined by member states within limits laid down in Council Regulation (EEC) 2328/91. Payments in the United Kingdom range between £100 and £222 per hectare —£40 to £90 per acre—depending on the management regime followed by the participant and on whether the land has less favoured area status. Scheme payments are made by national governments but are 60 per cent. reimbursed from the EC budget.

In future, growers who wish to claim the new arable area payments under the main scheme will have to set aside

15 per cent. of the area on which they claim. The set-aside period does not start until 15 December and it is not possible at this stage to say precisely how much land will be set aside in 1992-93.

The set-aside payment is fixed by Council Regulation (EEC) 1765/92 at 45 ecu/tonne converted to an area payment on the basis of average historic regional yields. For the United Kingdom the regional rates in ecu per hectare (acre) are:

	Hectare £	*Acre* £
England	266·85	106·74
Scotland (LFAs)	216·45	85·58
Scotland (non-LFAs)	254·25	101·70
Wales	209·25	83·70
Northern Ireland	211·95	84·78

These payments will be converted to pounds sterling at the rate applicable on 1 July 1993. The current green exchange rate is 1 ecu=£0·818896. These payments are fully reimbursed from the EC budget.

Under both schemes responsibility for payment rests with national governments, but the Commission has responsibility for checking that member states have satisfactory arrangements for payments and controls.

Rape Seed Oil

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many acres of land in Great Britain are currently used for growing rape seed oil; and what plans he has for the use of rape seed oil to run public transport systems.

Mr. Curry: The area planted to rape seed in Great Britain for harvest in 1992 is estimated at about 1·04 million acres—421,000 hectares. The Government have no plans to use rape seed oil to run public transport systems.

Sheep and Goats (Blood Testing)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 5 November, *Official Report*, column 342, if he will publish the detailed findings of the random slaughterhouse survey of blood samples from sheep and goats carried out under directive 91/68/EC and the results of screening samples for maedi visna; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The slaughterhouse survey for Brucella melitensis, Brucella ovis and Contagious agalactia tested the following numbers of sheep and goats:

	Sheep	*Goats*
Brucella melitensis	27,965	2,193
Brucella ovis	875	0
Contagious agalactia	20,948	2,400

For the results of the survey I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 5 November.

From the initial testing of 2,531 samples, 14 were sero-positive for maedi visna. Those batches containing positive samples were tested again. An additional 24 reactors were identified from 703 re-tested samples.

Habitats

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking in order to implement those aspects of the new EC habitats directive which require the avoidance of deterioration of habitats in the wider countryside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

There are a number of initiatives which will help meet our obligations under the EC habitats directive regarding the wider countryside. These include the establishment of environmentally sensitive areas, the hedgerow incentive scheme, the Hedgerow Protection Bill proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) which the Government are supporting, the countryside stewardship scheme and English Nature's wildlife enhancement and reserves enhancement schemes, and the development of guidance on the preparation of indicative foresty strategies. The Government have in place a number of measures to reduce agricultural pollution, such as new farm waste storage regulations and codes of good agricultural practice for the protection of water and air. The EC agri-environment regulation, agreed in May as part of the reforms to the CAP, provides scope for a range of new schemes.

My right hon. and learned Friend expects to consult on the proposals to implement the directive in the next few months.

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will place in the Library a copy of the employment service's health and safety policy.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. John McAllion, dated 16 November 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question on placing a copy of the Employment Service's Health and Safety policy in the Library.

As requested, I have arranged for a copy of the Employment Service's Health and Safety to be placed in the Library.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list those agencies in her Department which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The only agency in the Department, the Employment Service, is not a candidate for privatisation or contractorisation. However, these options are considered as a part of the regular three-year review of the agency. The next such review will be completed by September 1993.

Training Schemes

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to review the youth training and employment training schemes in England; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The training and enterprise councils working group has been set up at the invitation of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to look at the whole range of education and training options available to 16 to 19-year-olds, and see how better co-ordination and coherence might be achieved.

In the meantime we are progressively extending training credits with the aim of ensuring that, by 1996, every 16 and 17-year-old leaving full-time education will have the offer of a training credit.

A review of adult training provision was only recently completed. My right hon. Friend announced on 12 November a new programme, training for work, to replace both employment training and employment action. Training for work gives greater flexibilities to training and enterprise councils to design programmes which will most effectively meet the needs of unemployed people.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people leaving youth training in 1991-92 will have gained a national vocational qualification level 2 or higher.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not yet available.

Wages Councils

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 29 October to the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), *Official Report*, column *825*, if she will list the studies about the link between pay and jobs in wages council industries mentioned in her answer.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend, the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) on 4 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *298-99*.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many compensatory awards over £30,000 were made by industrial tribunals in 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: None. The statutory limit on compensatory awards is £10,000.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many companies liquidated in 1991 owed compensatory awards following hearings at industrial tribunals.

Mr. McLoughlin: I regret that the information is not available.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will consider bringing the compensatory element awarded by industrial tribunals within the insolvency provisions of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have no plans to do so.

Road Haulage

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement about progress in implementing the national vocational qualification in road haulage; when she expects it to be available; and what steps she is taking to achieve wider recognition of this particular qualification.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am pleased to record that a number of national vocational qualifications applicable to road haulage have been submitted to the National Council for Vocational Qualifications for accreditation. Therefore they are likely to become available early in 1993. The Road Haulage Industry Training Standards Council, the lead body, is in the final stage of producing a comprehensive plan to promote the use, uptake and recognition of these qualifications in all sectors of its industry.

Pit Closures

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement listing those training and enterprise councils which have supplied her with local job creation plans in areas affected by the seven proposed pit closures under the statutory redundancy procedure; and what proportion of the £75 million she has allocated has been requested to fulfil those plans.

Mr. McLoughlin: Initial proposals for additional labour market measures to alleviate the effects of the closures of the eight pits in England on the list of 10 uneconomic pits, subject to the statutory 90-day consultation period, have been submitted by the following training and enterprise councils:

Barnsley and Doncaster TEC
North Nottinghamshire TEC
Greater Nottingham TEC
QUALITEC and METROTEC (Wigan) (a joint plan)
County Durham TEC
Staffordshire TEC

Final action plans, including the proportion of the £75 million available, have yet to be agreed.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Building Societies (Negative Equity)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what circumstances he requires building societies to account for negative equity.

Mr. Nelson: Building society accounts are the responsibility of the board of directors and are subject to the usual independent audit. They must conform to the Building Societies Accounts Regulations and accounting standards generally. The Building Societies Commission has recently issued guidance to assist societies in arriving at provisions against a residential mortgage book.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what indemnities have been made available by the Bank of England to companies, individuals or auditors in connection with the collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Mr. Nelson: It is standard practice, when the Bank of England commissions a section 41 report, for the letter appointing the reporting accountants to include an indemnity against any cost, liabilities and expenses arising out of their appointment, investigation or report. Such an indemnity was included in the letter sent to Price Waterhouse commissioning the section 41 into BCCI.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the executive agencies for which the Treasury has approved a group bonus scheme.

Mr. Portillo: The following executive agencies have had Treasury approval to operate group bonus schemes.

Central Office of Information
Companies House
Directorate—General of Defence Accounts
Driving Standards Agency
Forensic Science Service
Historic Royal Palaces Agency
Intervention Board
Laboratory of the Government Chemist
Meteorological Office
Radiocommunications Agency
Royal Mint
Vehicle Certification Agency
Vehicle Inspectorate

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the executive agencies which have been authorised to introduce an agency-specific pay system for some or all of their staff.

Mr. Portillo: The following executive agencies have had such approvals:

Agricultural Development Advisory Service
Her Majesty's Stationery Service
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre
Royal Mint

In addition, the Inland Revenue, as a Chancellor's department run on executive agency lines, has been given approval to introduce its own pay system.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the effect on the calculation of the public expenditure planning figure for 1993-94 of the convergence criteria under the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 11 November 1992]:* The Government's policies are designed to achieve permanently low inflation, sustainable economic growth and sound public finances, and are consistent with the Maastricht criteria.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the differences in definitions of public sector borrowing requirement between EC member states, with particular reference to *(a)* local authority spending of capital receipts and *(b)* local authority borrowing.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 11 November 1992]:* There are no internationally agreed guidelines for the definition of the public sector borrowing requirement. Different measures of the Government's financial balance are the focus of policy in different EC member states. Comparisons between member states are normally made using the general government financial deficit (GGFD). This is a national accounts concept, the definition of which is covered by international guidelines on how these accounts should be drawn up. The GGFD includes local authorities' income and expenditure, and scores their gross domestic filled capital formation net of receipts from sales of land and buildings.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what plans he has to distinguish between the treatment of revenue expenditure and capital expenditure within the public sector borrowing requirement;

(2) what plans he has to distinguish between the treatment of revenue expenditure and capital expenditure within the public expenditure planning total.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 11 November 1992]:* From the first unified Budget in December 1993, the Government accounts will be drawn up in a way which makes a distinction between current and capital transactions.

Economic Forecasts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a table comparing Treasury economic forecasts made in *(a)* the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" and *(b)* the "Autumn Statement" for each of the last four years with the actual economic outturn in terms of growth in (i) gross domestic product, (ii) balance of payments and (iii) unemployment.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 11 November 1992]:* The "Financial Statement and Budget Report" and the "Autumn Statement" do not contain forecasts of unemployment. The published balance of payments forecasts are in current prices rather than growth rates. The table compares calendar year forecasts of growth in gross domestic product, and of the balance of payments current account, with outturns.

Forecasts of GDP and the balance of payments current account

	Year for which forecast was made			
GDP, percentage changes on a year earlier	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
FSBR 1988	3·00	—	—	—
Autumn Statement 1988	4·50	3·00	—	—
FSBR 1989	—	2·50	—	—
Autumn Statement 1989	—	2·00	1·25	—
FSBR 1990	—	—	1·00	—
Autumn Statement 1990	—	—	1·00	0·50
FSBR 1991	—	—	—	−2·00
Autumn Statement 1991	—	—	—	−2·00
Outturn	4·50	2·00	0·75	−2·50

Forecasts of GDP and the balance of payments current account

Current account balance £ billion	*Year for which forecast was made* 1988	1989	1990	1991
FSBR 1988	−4·00	—	—	—
Autumn Statement 1988	−13.00	−11·00	—	—
FSBR 1989	—	−14·50	—	—
Autumn Statement 1989	—	−20·00	−15·00	—
FSBR 1990	—	—	−15·00	—
Autumn Statement 1990	—	—	−15.50	−11·00
FSBR 1991	—	—	—	−6·00
Autumn Statement 1991	—	—	—	−6·50
Outturn	−16·25	−21·75	−17·00	−6·25

Treasury Forecasts

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the forecasts made by the Treasury for *(a)* the public service borrowing requirement, *(b)* public expenditure, *(c)* inflation, *(d)* unemployment, *(e)* growth of gross domestic product and *(f)* the balance of payments, in both the autumn statements and the Budget statements for the financial years 1987-88 to 1992-93, together with the actual performance in each year and the latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 11 November 1992]:* The Government do not publish unemployment forecasts. Forecasts of the other variables are shown in the table. A new forecast was published to accompany the Chancellor's autumn statement on Thursday 12 November.

Autumn statement and FSBR forecasts
PSBR

£ billion

	Year for which forecasts made 1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
FSBR 1987	3·9	—	—	—	—	—
Autumn Statement 1987	1·0	—	—	—	—	—
FSBR 1988	—	−3·2	—	—	—	—
Autumn Statement 1988	—	−9·8	—	—	—	—
FSBR 1989	—	—	−13·8	—	—	—
Autumn Statement 1989	—	—	−12·6	—	—	—
FSBR 1990	—	—	—	−6·9	—	—
Autumn Statement 1990	—	—	—	−3·0	—	—
FSBR 1991	—	—	—	—	7·9	—
Autumn Statement 1991	—	—	—	—	10·5	—
FSBR 1992	—	—	—	—	—	28·1
Outturn	−3·4	−14·7	−7·9	−0·5	13·7	n/a

General government expenditure

£ billion

	Year for which forecasts made 1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
FSBR 1987	173·5	—	—	—	—	—
Autumn Statement 1987	172·8	—	—	—	—	—
FSBR 1988	—	182·9	—	—	—	—
Autumn Statement 1988	—	180·9	—	—	—	—
FSBR 1989	—	—	194·3	—	—	—
Autumn Statement 1989	—	—	196·3	—	—	—
FSBR 1990	—	—	—	212·7	—	—
Autumn Statement 1990	—	—	—	215·7	—	—
FSBR 1991	—	—	—	—	234·8	—
Autumn Statement 1991	—	—	—	—	236·1	—
FSBR 1992	—	—	—	—	—	258·5
Outturn	173·2	179·7	200·8	217·4	235·9	n/a

RPI fourth quarter, percentage changes on a year earlier

	Year for which forecasts made 1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
FSBR 1987	4·00	—	—	—	—	—
Autumn Statement 1987	4·00	4·50	—	—	—	—
FSBR 1988	—	4·00	—	—	—	—
Autumn Statement 1988	—	6·25	5·00	—	—	—
FSBR 1989	—	—	5·50	—	—	—
Autumn Statement 1989	—	—	7·50	5·75	—	—
FSBR 1990	—	—	—	7·25	—	—
Autumn Statement 1990	—	—	—	10·25	5·50	—
FSBR 1991	—	—	—	—	4·00	—
Autumn Statement 1991	—	—	—	—	4·00	4·00

	Year for which forecasts made					
	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
FSBR 1992	—	—	—	—	—	3·75
Outturn	4·00	6·50	7·50	10·00	4·25	n/a

Real GDP, percentage changes on a year earlier

	Year for which forecasts made					
	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
FSBR 1987	3·00	—	—	—	—	—
Autumn Statement 1987	4·00	2·50	—	—	—	—
FSBR 1988	—	3·00	—	—	—	—
Autumn Statement 1988	—	4·50	3·00	—	—	—
FSBR 1989	—	—	2·50	—	—	—
Autumn Statement 1989	—	—	2·00	1·25	—	—
FSBR 1990	—	—	—	1·00	—	—
Autumn Statement 1990	—	—	—	1·00	0·50	—
FSBR 1991	—	—	—	—	−2·00	—
Autumn Statement 1991	—	—	—	—	−2·00	2·25
FSBR 1992	—	—	—	—	—	1·00
Outturn	4·50	4·50	2·00	0·75	−2·50	n/a

Current Account Balance

£ billion

	Year for which forecasts made					
	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
FSBR 1987	−2·50	—	—	—	—	—
Autumn Statement 1987	−2·50	−3·50	—	—	—	—
FSBR 1988	—	−4·00	—	—	—	—
Autumn Statement 1988	—	−13·00	−11·00	—	—	—
FSBR 1989	—	—	−14·50	—	—	—
Autumn Statement 1989	—	—	−20·00	−15·00	—	—
FSBR 1990	—	—	—	−15·00	—	—
Autumn Statement 1990	—	—	—	−15·50	−11·00	—
FSBR 1991	—	—	—	—	−6·00	—
Autumn Statement 1991	—	—	—	—	−6·50	−9·50
FSBR 1992	—	—	—	—	—	−6·50
Outturn	−4·50	−16·25	−21·75	−17·00	−6·25	n/a

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the levels of capital expenditure in real terms in the public expenditure levels for each financial year for 1979-80, including the latest estimate for 1992-93 and the forecasts for 1993-94; and what percentage of total public expenditure they represent.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 11 November 1992]:* Figures for public sector asset creation between 1978-79 and 1991 -92 were published in cash and real terms in table 8.3 of the Statistical Supplement to the 1991 "Autumn Statement" (Cm 1920). Figures for central Government and nationalised industries' asset creation between 1986-87 and 1994-95 were published in tables 4.6 and 6.3 of the Statistical Supplement to the 1991 "Autumn Statement".

Figures showing total public expenditure were published in table 2.1 of the Statistical Supplement to the 1991 "Autumn Statement".

Similar analyses will be published in the Statistical Supplement to the 1992 "Autumn Statement".

Unemployment Benefits

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the public sector expenditure total has been spent on benefits related to unemployment for each financial year from 1979-80; and what is the latest estimate for 1992-93 and the expenditure forecast for 1993-94.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 12 November 1992]:* Figures on social security benefits by broad group of beneficiaries, including rate rebates and community charge benefit, for years 1986-87 to 1994-95 were published in table 5 of the 1992 Social Security Departmental Report (Cm 1914). Figures on general government expenditure for years 1979-80 to 1994-95 were published in table 2.1 of the Statistical Supplement to the 1991 "Autumn Statement" (Cm 1920).

Figures for social security benefits to the unemployed prior to 1986-87 are as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	1,470
1980-81	2,530
1981-82	4,020
1982-83	5,010
1983-84	5,700

	£ million
1984-85	5,320
1985-86	6,960

Later figures for general government expenditure will be published in this year's "Autumn Statement". Later figures for social security benefits will be published in the 1993 Social Security Departmental Report.

Manufacturing and Construction

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what percentage of gross domestic product has been produced by *(a)* manufacturing industry, and *(b)* the construction industry in each financial year since 1979-80; and what are the latest estimates for 1992-93 and the forecast for 1993-94;

(2) what is the change in output in real terms by *(a)* the manufacturing industry and *(b)* the construction industry for each financial year since 1979-80, including the latest estimate for 1992-93 and the estimates for 1993-94.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 12 November 1992]:* Information on the share of current price GDP by industry is available only for calendar years. Figures up to and including 1991 are given in table 16.4 of the Central Statistical Office publication "United Kingdom National Accounts", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library. Information on output in volume terms, by industry, is available quarterly. Estimates, up to and including the second quarter of 1992, from which the information requested can be derived are available on the CSO database which may be accessed through the Library. The relevant database identifiers are manufacturing—DVIS, Construction—DVJO. A new forecast for manufacturing output for calendar years 1992 and 1993 is included in the "Autumn Statement".

EC Financial Years

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those EC countries whose financial year does not match the calendar year.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 12 November 1992]:* The United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland are the only EC countries in which the financial year does not run concurrently with the calendar year.

Banned Imports

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what relaxations will be in force from 1 January 1993 on the imports of species of *(a)* animals, *(b)* plants and *(c)* pathogens that are currently banned from being imported into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: I have been asked to reply.

There will be no relaxation from 1 January 1993 of the prohibitions currently in force on the importation of particular animals, pathogens and plants into the United Kingdom.

Imports of live animals will remain subject to harmonised Community animal health rules or, in their absence, national legislation, and existing import prohibitions will remain in force.

Imports of animal pathogens will remain subject to existing national legislation. Discussions on EC and third country trade in animal pathogens are under way and harmonised arrangements are unlikely to be introduced before 1 January 1994.

In relation to plants and plant pathogens, I announced on 2 November that existing plant health arrangements will continue after 1 January 1993 for a period of up to six months. In consequence no significant changes will take place on import arrangements at the beginning of 1993.

EDUCATION

Music Teaching

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he proposes to take to maintain the quality and level of peripatetic music teaching.

Mr. Forth: Provision of peripatetic music teaching is a matter for local education authorities to determine in the light of local spending priorities.

Pupils Statistics

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils in each local authority are currently in schools that have grant-maintained status; and how many pupils in each local education authority are in maintained and voluntary schools.

Mr. Forth: The number of full-time pupils in schools currently operating as grant-maintained and the total number of full-time pupils in maintained primary, middle and secondary schools, including grant-maintained and voluntary schools, in each local education authority in England are given in the table. Pupil numbers shown relate to January 1991, the latest date for which reliable information is available.

Number of full-time pupils in grant-maintained schools and all maintained primary, middle and secondary schools.

Local education authority	*Pupils in Grant Maintained schools*	*Pupils in all Maintained schools*[3]
City	0	202
Camden	0	19,373
Greenwich	0	31,792
Hackney	0	22,324
Hammersmith	1,178	14,206
Islington	0	20,644
Kensington and Chelsea	629	9,461
Lambeth	594	23,238
Lewisham	0	29,153
Southwark	391	27,802
Tower Hamlets	871	28,885
Wandsworth	3,695	24,640
Westminster	0	15,578
Barking	0	22,152
Barnet	1,894	39,050
Bexley	426	31,055
Brent	1,687	30,723
Bromley	9,103	34,714
Croydon	921	39,276
Ealing	4,701	35,737
Enfield	0	36,723
Haringey	0	24,634
Harrow	0	25,662
Havering	0	33,805
Hillingdon	7,164	29,510
Hounslow	0	29,478
Kingston upon Thames	0	15,836
Merton	0	18,829
Newham	393	33,380

Local education authority	*Pupils in Grant Maintained schools*	*Pupils in all Maintained schools*[1]
Redbridge	0	30,392
Richmond upon Thames	0	15,701
Sutton	3,941	21,351
Waltham Forest	1,003	28,657
Birmingham	4,619	163,169
Coventry	0	44,964
Dudley	0	42,600
Sandwell	626	45,135
Solihull	0	31,008
Walsall	2,327	42,433
Wolverhampton	1,696	36,402
Knowsley	0	24,681
Liverpool	1,014	73,159
St. Helens	0	28,310
Sefton	0	43,125
Wirral	0	49,697
Bolton	1,035	41,661
Bury	0	25,325
Manchester	0	66,569
Oldham	0	37,749
Rochdale	236	32,539
Salford	0	34,382
Stockport	0	41,079
Tameside	758	33,847
Trafford	0	28,328
Wigan	0	48,198
Barnsley	0	30,535
Doncaster	0	45,907
Rotherham	0	39,648
Sheffield	71	63.950
Bradford	940	77,635
Calderdale	1,398	30,318
Kirklees	1,048	57,584
Leeds	0	98,014
Wakefield	0	45,156
Gateshead	0	28,007
Newcastle upon Tyne	0	36,991
North Tyneside	0	28,489
South Tyneside	0	22,667
Sunderland	0	45,708
Isles of Scilly	0	282
Avon	1,388	126,553
Bedfordshire	1,554	79,532
Berkshire	7,194	100,544
Buckinghamshire	4,122	90,400
Cambridgeshire	2,500	95,929
Cheshire	464	146,402
Cleveland	0	94,007
Cornwall	0	64,766
Cumbria	4,941	70,496
Derbyshire	2,406	130,165
Devon	462	128,968
Dorset	5,723	77,508
Durham	0	87,727
East Sussex	0	78,435
Essex	18,710	214,735
Gloucestershire	11,220	73,179
Hampshire	4,659	206,088
Hereford and Worcester	0	92,920
Hertfordshire	4,935	138,442
Humberside	82	132,027
Isle of Wight	0	16,902
Kent	23,975	213,268
Lancashire	3,968	204,774
Leicestershire	347	133,400
Lincolnshire	13,209	81,861
Norfolk	7,056	98,221
North Yorkshire	0	95,599
Northamptonshire	4,064	90,225
Northumberland	0	46,541
Nottinghamshire	363	138,515
Oxfordshire	0	69,911
Shropshire	457	59,083
Somerset	579	61,257
Staffordshire	0	154,149
Suffolk	0	85,666
Surrey	7,877	114,402
Warwickshire	3,726	67,951
West Sussex	0	89,051
Wiltshire	1,369	76,085
England	191,709	6,635,396

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[1] Including grant-maintained and voluntary schools.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools in each local authority are currently making applications for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: The figures requested are given in the table:

	Number
Bedfordshire	7
Berkshire	2
Bexley	1
Bradford	4
Brent	2
Bromley	1
Buckinghamshire	3
Calderdale	1
Cambridgeshire	5
Cheshire	2
Croydon	1
Cumbria	4
Derbyshire	6
Devon	4
Doncaster	1
Dorset	1
Dudley	2
Essex	18
Gloucestershire	4
Hackney	1
Hampshire	9
Havering	3
Hereford and Worcestershire	2
Hertfordshire	8
Hillingdon	4
Hounslow	2
Kent	13
Kingston-upon-Thames	1
Lambeth	2
Lancashire	1
Leicestershire	1
Lincolnshire	3
Norfolk	4
Northamptonshire	5
Nottinghamshire	2
Rochdale	1
Shropshire	2
Southwark	1
Staffordshire	3
Surrey	4
Sutton	2
Tameside	1
Trafford	3
Walsall	1
Wandsworth	3
Wolverhampton	1

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many parents in each local authority have voted for, and how many have voted against, grant-maintained status for their children's school.

Mr. Forth: Statistics are collected as total numbers of eligible votes cast and numbers of votes in favour of grant-maintained status for each local authority. It is not possible to derive a figure for votes against grant-maintained status by subtracting votes in favour from votes cast because this would not take account of spoiled papers. The figures are as follows:

	Total eligible votes cast	*Votes in favour*
Avon	1,960	979
Barnet	3,214	2,206
Barnsley	1,479	402
Bedfordshire	10,522	6,435
Berkshire	7,767	5,596
Bexley	2,573	1,625
Birmingham	11,787	8,335
Bolton	1,271	1,116
Bradford	4,834	3,118
Brent	4,681	3,363
Bromley	12,590	9,130
Buckinghamshire	8,415	5,441
Calderdale	2,639	2,100
Cambridgeshire	12,657	7,981
Cheshire	5,921	2,732
Cleveland	1,397	310
Cornwall	41	30
Croydon	3,109	2,069
Cumbria	7,416	5,757
Derbyshire	15,082	8,568
Devon	6,871	4,099
Doncaster	830	306
Dorset	8,272	6,032
Dudley	4,104	2,874
Durham	1,407	341
Ealing	6,772	3,689
Essex	41,450	31,245
Gateshead	1,613	718
Gloucestershire	18,158	11,688
Hackney	772	254
Hammersmith	1,357	1,279
Hampshire	13,264	9,081
Harrow	1,082	438
Havering	4,153	2,035
Hereford and Worcester	1,994	1,478
Hertfordshire	15,681	10,638
Hillingdon	10,838	9,522
Hounslow	2,196	1,929
Humberside	2,031	614
Kensington	906	858
Kent	39,806	31,863
Kingston	1,620	1,226
Kirklees	3,271	1,760
Knowsley	1,481	39
Lambeth	2,260	2,020
Lancashire	9,160	4,270
Leicestershire	2,112	1,350
Lewisham	594	361
Lincolnshire	16,672	13,277
Liverpool	1,416	771
Manchester	1,061	358
Merton	841	382
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1,056	397
Newham	681	349
Norfolk	12,482	7,817
North Yorkshire	969	370
Northamptonshire	13,730	9,247
Nottinghamshire	3,898	1,584
Oldham	1,158	172
Oxfordshire	1,220	468
Redbridge	765	171
Rochdale	2,588	1,034
Salford	1,575	711
Sandwell	2,235	1,182
Sheffield	1,577	809
Shropshire	1,621	1,435
Solihull	2,006	1,166
Somerset	772	634
Southwark	750	685
Staffordshire	3,244	2,031
Stockport	1,204	316
Surrey	9,890	8,111
Sutton	7,160	5,756
Tameside	2,618	1,815
Tower Hamlets	1,519	740
Trafford	2,870	1,761
Wakefield	44	38
Walsall	7,180	3,675
Waltham Forest	1,117	579
Wandsworth	6,985	5,602
Warwickshire	4,847	2,984
West Sussex	2,894	519
Wigan	324	274
Wiltshire	3,501	1,763
Wolverhampton	2,322	1,750

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools in each local authority now have grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: The figures requested are given in the table:

	Number of schools
Kent	36
Essex	35
Lincolnshire	23
Gloucestershire	16
Norfolk	16
Surrey	15
Bromley	12
Berkshire	11
Northamptonshire	11
Hillingdon	11
Cambridgeshire	11
Hertfordshire	10
Hampshire	10
Birmingham	9
Warwickshire	8
Buckinghamshire	8
Cumbria	7
Dorset	7
Ealing	7
Lancashire	6
Sutton	6
Derbyshire	5
Wandsworth	5
Wiltshire	4
Bedfordshire	3
Calderdale	3
Barnet	3
Avon	2
Bexley	2
Bolton	2
Brent	2
Cheshire	2
Kirklees	2
Lambeth	2
Somerset	2
Walsall	2
Wolverhampton	2
Croydon	2
Bradford	1
Devon	1
Dudley	1
Hammersmith	1
Humberside	1
Kensington	1
Kingston	1
Leicester	1
Lewisham	1
Liverpool	1

	Number of schools
Newham	1
Nottinghamshire	1
Rochdale	1
Sandwell	1
Sheffield	1
Shropshire	1
Solihull	1
Southwark	1
Staffordshire	1
Tameside	1
Tower Hamlets	1
Waltham Forest	1

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what amount of the special purposes grant for 1993-94 for grant-maintained schools will be used to cover those activities that would be covered by the grants for education support and training programme in local authority maintained schools.

Mr. Forth: Decisions have not yet been taken about the precise details of special purpose grant (development) allocations in 1993-94.

Surplus School Places

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his oral statement of 9 November, *Official Report*, column 63, if he will give the arithmetical basis for his estimate that £300 million of public expenditure can be saved by the elimination of surplus school places, distinguishing between *(a)* once for all capital receipts for sale of surplus premises and *(b)* annual revenue savings; and if he will give the period to which the estimated savings refer and the appropriate number of primary and secondary places concerned.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend was referring to the annual cost of maintaining surplus places. The figure of £300 million given in my right hon. Friend's oral statement of 9th November is based on an average figure for the premises-related cost of maintaining a school place, based on returns from local education authorities, of approximately £150 a year for a primary school place and £250 a year for a secondary school place at 1991-92 prices. It is based on an estimate of some 800,000 surplus primary places and 700,000 surplus secondary school places. The figure does not include one-off savings that may accrue from the sale of surplus premises.

Teachers, North Yorkshire

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will state the full-time equivalent numbers of teachers employed in *(a)* north Yorkshire infant and primary schools and *(b)* north Yorkshire secondary schools in each year since 1974.

Mr. Forth: The table shows the number of teachers employed in the maintained nursery, primary and secondary school sector in north Yorkshire, for each of the years 1981 to 1992. Comparable figures for pupils in north Yorkshire are also shown. Figures prior to 1981 are not readily available.

	Full-time equivalents				
	Nursery and Primary		*Secondary*		*Nursery, primary and secondary*[1]
	Teachers	*Pupils*	*Teachers*	*Pupils*	*Teachers*
1981	2,463	[2]—	3,324	[2]—	5,967
1982	2,509	53,408	3,309	53,640	5,818
1983	2,441	50,845	3,297	53,407	5,751
1984	2,390	49,936	3,281	52,549	5,682
1985	2,399	50,228	3,218	50,962	5,631
1986	2,400	50,408	3,148	49,884	5,561
1987	2,414	51,081	3,107	47,939	5,532
1988	2,497	52,114	3,041	45,419	5,548
1989	2,551	53,138	3,020	43,712	5,570
1990	2,638	54,423	2,953	42,483	5,590
1991	2,711	54,700	2,945	42,732	5,656
1992	2,762	[2]—	3,041	[2]—	5,803

[1] Includes a small number of teachers who cannot be allocated to one particular sector.

[2] Not available.

Technology

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to set out a new definition for technology in the national curriculum establishing the subject as a practical technical subject concerned with the design and manufacture of products and systems.

Mr. Forth: The current review of the statutory requirements for national curriculum technology aims to clarify the technical skills and knowledge which pupils should acquire at each stage of their compulsory education and in particular to ensure that these are developed through work with construction materials and related components and systems. When my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and for Wales have considered the review group's recommendations they will make a full statement.

Science Undergraduates

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to set a target date for doubling the number of science undergraduates in United Kingdom universities.

Mr. Forman: No. However, the number of full-time students taking science-based higher education courses has formed formed a more or less constant proportion of a rapidly rising total throughout the 1980s. While students cannot be compelled to take particular subjects, our commitment to encourage recruitment to science based courses is clear.

In higher education, the publicly funded tuition fee for laboratory and workshop based courses is already set at 50 per cent. above the classroom rate, and we are planning to increase the relative incentive to develop such courses. My right hon. Friend has also asked the Higher Education Funding Council for England to encourage continuing expansion of science and technology through its funding.

Non-degree Qualifications

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to set a target date for tripling the numbers achieving technical non-degree qualifications in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Forman: No. However, the Government have endorsed the national education and training targets for:

80 per cent. of young people to have achieved qualifications at NVQ level 2, or the broad equivalent of four GCSEs at grades A to C, by 1997;

50 per cent. of young people to have achieved qualifications at NVQ level 3, or the broad equivalent of two A levels, by the year 2000;

50 per cent. of the work force to be qualified to NVQ level 3, or equivalent, by the year 2000.

These targets imply a very considerable increase in the numbers achieving vocational qualifications.

My right hon. Friend has also asked the Higher Education Funding Council for England to provide incentives to promote two-year full-time diploma qualifications in higher education, in particular those with a vocational emphasis.

Science and Technology

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action is currently being undertaken by his Department to ensure that pupils studying science and technology in secondary schools are taught by teachers with appropriate degrees.

Mr. Forth: Trainee teachers on secondary PGCE courses must have first degrees relevant to the school curriculum. Undergraduate courses of secondary teacher training must include at least two years' subject study at degree level which build on appropriate A-levels or equivalent qualifications. The Open university is developing PGCE courses in science and technology to increase the supply of appropriately qualified teachers. Shortage subject bursaries encourage recruitment to PGCE courses in science and technology.

The Department has also funded many initiatives to improve science and technology teaching, including distance learning courses for existing physics and chemistry teachers. The grant for education, support and training (GEST) specific grant programme for 1993-94 will support £46 million of LEA expenditure on in-service training for the basic curriculum and assessment, and a further £85 million is to be devolved to schools to spend on in-service training or books and equipment according to their needs.

Pre-school Education

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children were in pre-school education in *(a)* 1982 and *(b)* 1992.

Mr. Forth: In January 1982, there were 235,000 pupils below compulsory school age in maintained nursery schools or nursery classes in maintained primary schools in England. The provisional figure for January 1992 is 330,000.

Reading

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to initiate a nationwide campaign to encourage parents to read to their children at home; and if he will make a statement on children's reading.

Mr. Forth: It is already the Government's policy to encourage parental involvement in children's reading. There is a general requirement at key stage 1—ages five to seven—of national curriculum English that teachers should actively encourage parents to share in their child's reading. The National Curriculum Council's non-statutory guidance for teachers of English stresses that teachers will need to involve parents as fully as possible in this aspect of the curriculum by discussing with them their child's reading and providing advice if necessary.

In addition, the Department has supported a study by the United Kingdom Reading Association (UKRA) of family reading groups (FRGs), as a result of which UKRA are preparing guidelines on how to set up and run these groups successfully.

More generally, my right hon. Friend's recent announcement of a review of national curriculum English made clear the Government's commitment to improving standards in essential skills such as reading.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many employees entitled to maximum compensatory awards from industrial tribunals in 1991 failed to obtain payment.

Mr. Forman: None.

Higher Education

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the changes in the numbers of home-based students in higher education over the past five years.

Mr. Forman: The Department does not collect details of higher education students by place of residence. Students in receipt of mandatory awards receive grant at a different rate if they are living at home. It is estimated that the number of mandatory award holders in England and Wales receiving grant at parental home rates rose from about 30,000 in 1986-87 to about 39,000 in 1990-91.

Further Education Funding

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he has about the amount of money spent by local education authorities for each of the last five years on education in those areas which will come under the auspices of the Further Education Funding Council *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* in constant 1992 purchasing power.

Mr. Forman: This information is not available centrally. LEAs' expenditure returns do not distinguish between expenditure on courses for which the FEFC will be responsible from next April and those for which LEAs will have continuing responsibility.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on what basis the resources currently available to the Further Education Funding Council for 1993-94 were calculated; and how much they are in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* constant 1992 purchasing power.

Mr. Forman: The Government's expenditure plans for further education in England in the financial year 1993-94 provide for the launch of the newly independent sector, taking account of a projected 8 per cent. increase in student numbers compared with the financial year 1992-93. The total funds to be made available to the

Further Education Funding Council in 1993-94 are planned to be £2,549 million for recurrent expenditure and £152 million for capital expenditure: expressed in 1991-92 prices, the real terms figures are £2,380 million and £142 million respectively.

Examinations

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will state the name of the private company responsible for compiling the national table of school examination results by local authority area.

Mr. Forth: Two organisations were involved in the compilation of the database and the tables. They are Bath university, which merged the examination entries and results supplied by the examinations boards and groups, and PMS Communications Ltd., which arranged for the checking of the data by schools and which prepared the national and local tables for publication.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will state the number of independent schools operating in the secondary sector and the number that have volunteered their examination results to be reported as part of the national reporting of examinations scheme.

Mr. Forth: In January 1992, information available to the Department indicated that there were 1,025 independent schools which had pupils aged 15 and/or 17 years. All these schools were invited to take part in the publication of comparative tables of examination results and 259 did so.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if the Central Statistical Office Survey Control Unit has approved the method by which the examination results from schools have been collected and the manner in which they will be published.

Mr. Forth: No. The collection and publication are administrative matters concerning identifiable schools and are not therefore covered by the arrangements under which the survey control unit approves statistical inquiries.

"Choice and Diversity"

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will place in the Library copies of the responses to the White Paper, "Choice and Diversity."

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) on 2 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *16*.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Longford Hall

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will give the dates on which Longford Hall, Stretford was inspected by representatives of his Department or its predecessor since that building was listed.

Mr. Brooke: I understand that the hall was inspected by officers of English Heritage, who are my statutory advisers on these matters, in February 1990.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will give details of representations made to him and his predecessors about the failure to maintain Longford hall, Stretford since that building was listed, and what action resulted.

Mr. Brooke: Local residents have made frequent representations to officials of my Department and the Department of the Environment about the state of the building, the demolition or removal of various interior features, and the possible use of the Secretary of State's powers to secure repairs. As I told the hon. Member on 29 October, *Official Report*, column *779*, officials have, as a result, been in regular touch with the owners on this issue.

National Lottery

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 5 November, *Official Report*, column *350*, which firms were invited to tender for the contract to provide advice on the impact of a national lottery on the football pools industry and charitable donations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Information on those firms that were not successful in the tendering process for work on the national lottery is commercially sensitive and therefore their names cannot be given.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 5 November, *Official Report*, column *350*, what criteria he used in determining which firm of consultants should undertake the contract to advise him on the impact of a national lottery on the football pools industry and charitable donations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The criteria used to determine the choice of consultants included price, quality and access to expert knowledge. In addition, consultants had to assure the Department that they were not currently working for and would not in future work for any companies that had an interest in bidding to operate the national lottery and that the advice they gave would be impartial and free from conflicts of interest of any kind.

DEFENCE

Vulcan Bombers

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the last Vulcan bomber was withdrawn from active service with the Royal Air Force; what plans he has for its disposal; what representations he has received from those wishing to maintain this aircraft in flying condition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Vulcan XH 558 completed its operational service with the RAF in September 1984 and formed the RAF's Vulcan display flight in November of that year. The Ministry of Defence plans to sell the aircraft to the public and invitations to tender will be issued to prospective purchasers as soon as possible. We would, however, be prepared to consider any well-founded sponsorship proposals to keep the Vulcan in flying condition for air displays, but the sponsor would need to accept full financial responsibility for the aircraft and guarantee to meet all its operating, maintenance and other costs. To date no sustainable sponsorship proposals have been received. My Department has received a large number of representations from hon. Members and from members of the public about the future of the aircraft.

Dartmoor National Park (Loop Road)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money has been spent by the Ministry of Defence on the resurfacing of the loop road from Okehampton barracks into the Dartmoor national park; who was consulted before work commenced; when planning permission was obtained; and what category the road holds.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The MOD spent £31,505 on maintaining the loop road during financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92. The defence land agent Plymouth consulted the Duchy of Cornwall to confirm that the work proposed was within the terms of the MOD licence and to gain approval. Consultations also took place with the Dartmoor national park officer regarding the materials used. Planning permission was not necessary in this case as it is a private road on Duchy of Cornwall land within Dartmoor national park over which the public is allowed access when live firing is not in progress on Okehampton range.

Front-line Squadrons (Aircraft)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his Department's assessment of the number of Tornados that will be deployed in front-line squadrons in *(a)* 1994 and *(b)* 2000;

(2) what is his Department's assessment of the number of Harriers that will be deployed in front-line squadrons in *(a)* 1994 and *(b)* 2000.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Annex C of the 1992 "Statement on the Defence Estimates" includes numbers of aircraft assigned to RAF squadrons based in Europe as at 1 April 1992, together with the main changes due to take place in the current financial year. We plan to update this information on an annual basis. It is not our policy to publish detailed plans for future operational strengths.

Contracts

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts have been awarded since 1980 by his Department to International Military Services.

Mr. Aitken: Until it ceased trading in July 1991, the role of IMS was to supply overseas Governments with equipment and services in the defence field, as a prime contractor, operating within guidelines laid down by my Department. Consequently there would normally be no reason for my Department to place contracts on the company. The only exception to this was an arrangement to fund the cost of a single individual employed by IMS in the late 1980s to provide after-sales service on equipment developed by my Department in service with an overseas customer.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts have been awarded by his Department to W. S. Atkins and Partners since 1980.

Mr. Aitken: Since May 1990, the Department's directorate of works services has invited W. S. Atkins to tender 32 times. It was successful on 10 occasions, and received contracts valued at £8,068,300 in total. There have also been a number of smaller contracts for works in connection with specific projects.

Prior to May 1990 the Property Services Agency of the Department of the Environment was responsible for all works-related contracts.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contacts ministers or officials of his Department have had with International Military Services since 1980.

Mr. Aitken: International Military Services is a company whose shares are vested in the Secretary of State for Defence. Consequently my Department is responsible for monitoring company policy and performance. Contact for this purpose is frequent at official level. Contact at ministerial level is relatively rare.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contacts or dealings ministers or officials of his Department have had with W. S. Atkins and Partners since 1980.

Mr. Aitken: My Department does not hold a central record of contacts or dealings with industry, so I am unable to provide the hon. Gentleman with a full reply without incurring disproportionate cost. However, officials in my Department are in continuing discussion with W. S. Atkins in connection with tenders, contracts awarded by the Department—and awarded by PSA on the Department's behalf prior to May 1990—and future opportunities.

Iraq

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the assessment made by his expert advisory group on whether an export licence should be granted to Matrix Churchill for equipment which is now the subject of a judicial inquiry.

Mr. Aitken: No. The assessments will, of course, be made available to Lord Justice Scott's inquiry if it wishes to see them.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how often the group of experts referred to in his Department's answer of 26 April 1990, *Official Report*, column *332*, on military trade with Iraq met in the years 1987 to 1991 and on what dates; and what is the remit under which the group of experts operated.

Mr. Aitken: Normally the working group met monthly. Its remit is to make a military assessment of applications for defence-related exports to Iran—and to Iraq until the UN embargo—within the guidelines which relate to the export of equipments to Iran-Iraq.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the definition of lethal used by his Department in assessing the nature of equipment supplied to Iraq since 1980.

Mr. Aitken: My Department defines lethal equipment as "military equipment designed to kill".

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions the assessment of the military significance of export licence applications made by his Department's group of experts was overruled by Ministers between 1987 and 1991.

Mr. Aitken: In some borderline cases Ministers sought further clarification and in the light of this did not, on some occasions, endorse the recommendation made to them. It has not been possible to determine the precise number of instances in which this occurred, but we believe that they were rare.

Operation Granby

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 28 October, *Official Report*, column *711*, how much money was given by each of the contributing countries in each year towards the cost of Operation Granby; and what further contributions are expected.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Cash burden-sharing contributions towards the cost of Operation Granby were received as follows:

£ million

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*Total*
Belgium	—	15	15
Germany	274	—	274
Hong Kong	16	—	16
Japan	25	167	192
Kuwait	110	550	660
Saudi Arabia	—	582	582
South Korea	—	18	18
United Arab Emirates	86	192	278
Other	13	1	14
Total	524	1,525	2,049

No further burden-sharing contributions are expected.

Chemical Weapon Convention

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy that signatories to the chemical weapon convention should remain subject to controls exercised by the Australia group.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

The Australia group harmonises national export controls by consensus. It is for each member state to apply its individual controls. The Australia group (AG) has undertaken to review its work to ensure consistency with the provisions of the chemical weapons convention. AG members, including the United Kingdom, have declared their intention to be early signatories of the convention. In this context, the United Kingdom will seek to ensure within the AG and nationally that we maintain effective controls against chemical and biological weapons proliferation.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy towards the continued operation of the Australia group once the chemical weapon convention has been signed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

The Government's principal objective is to prevent the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons. The Australian group (AG) has played a major role in the effort. All AG members, including the United Kingdom, have welcomed the conclusion of the CWC negotiations and have declared their intention to be early signatories. The work of the group is to be reviewed to ensure consistency with the provisions of the convention. The United Kingdom intends to take an active part in this review.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. Oliver Pryce

34. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the decision of the Director of Public Prosecutions not to proceed with prosecutions arising from the unlawful killing of Mr. Oliver Pryce.

The Solicitor-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions decides whether a case should be prosecuted on the basis of the available evidence and in accordance with the code for Crown prosecutors. In this case, she had the advantage of leading and junior counsel's advice and concluded that there was insufficient evidence to justify a prosecution.

Pension Funds

35. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the assistance given by the Serious Fraud Office to those seeking recovery of assets of pension funds.

The Solicitor-General: The Serious Fraud Office is pleased to assist those so engaged to the extent that it is lawfully able to do so.

ENVIRONMENT

Sellafield

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate has been made of the change in the level of emissions of radioactive substances as a result of the opening of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Maclean: Activity limits proposed in the draft authorisations published jointly today by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food would ensure a continued decline in the maximum radiation dose to the public from Sellafield even when including the contribution from THORP at its full operating capacity.

Primates

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ban the import of wild-caught primates into the EC for research and testing.

Mr. Maclean: The import of primates into the EC is already controlled under regulations governing the wildlife trade. These are conservation measures, intended primarily to ensure that wild populations are not seriously depleted. They are not concerned with the purpose of import, except for endangered species. While we are currently negotiating a new European wildlife trade regulation to tighten existing controls, we have no plans to seek a general ban on the import of any animals for use in research and testing. Controls on the use of animals for such purposes within the United Kingdom are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much each urban development corporation has spent on consultants' reports since their inception.

Mr. Robin Squire: Urban development corporations contract out project management, legal, recruitment, architectural, engineering design and a range of other services to private sector consultancies and advisers. Approximate expenditure on consultants' reports, where available, is set out in the table.

	£ million
Urban Development Corporation	
Birmingham Heartlands	0·0
Black Country	2·9
Bristol	0·6
Central Manchester	[1]—
Leeds	[1]—
London Docklands	[1]—
Merseyside	2·8
Sheffield	0·5
Teesside	4·1
Trafford Park	[1]—
Tyne and Wear	3·6

[1] Not available.

Plucked Birds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to include the control of the exporting of plucked birds under the provisions of the Species (Import and Export) Act 1976; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: It is the Department's policy not to require export licences for plucked specimens of game bird species covered by the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976 because they cannot be readily identified. We have no plans to alter this policy.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with organisations that run residential care homes as to the effect that paying the new council tax will have on such homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have received a number of representations from care home owners about the council tax. My officials have met a delegation from the Joint Care Committee to discuss the effect of the tax. They explained that, for the reasons given in my answer to the hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Harvey) on 7 July, *Official Report,* column 157, the council tax bills faced by care home owners are likely to be modest. In many cases these bills are likely to be further reduced by transitional relief.

Hillingdon Hospital

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many and what kind of complaints the London Waste Regulation Authority has received from residents of Hillingdon about the breaking of the conditions of licence issued by the authority for the operation of the incinerator plant at Hillingdon hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The London Waste Regulation Authority (LWRA) has responsibility for the licensing of disposal facilities in the Greater London area. It is therefore for it to consider the most appropriate action to take if it receives complaints alleging breaches of licence conditions. I suggest that my hon. Friend approaches the LWRA for this information.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many times during the past 12 months Her Majesty's inspector of pollution has been informed by Basic Energy (UK) Ltd. that the dump stack at Hillingdon hospital incinerator has been used; what information he has about the purpose of using this equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: HMIP has been informed by Basic Energy that the dump stack has been used on five occasions in the past 12 months.

The purpose of the dump stack is to protect operators and plant during certain fault conditions. It operates only for a short time and the impact on the environment is not significant.

Housing Expenditure

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the level of public expenditure on housing in 1978-79 and the most recent available year in real terms and cash prices.

Mr. Baldry: The information for England is as follows:

	£ millions	
	Cash	*1991-92 prices*
1978-79	3,750	10,130
1991-92 (provisional)	10,360	10,360

The figures are based on total general government expenditure on housing, including local authority self-financed expenditure from receipts and expenditure on housing benefit subsidies.

North West Water

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with North West Water on its plans to introduce water metering throughout its area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: None. It is for each water company to determine its method of charging, subject to the overriding requirement that they do not show undue preference to or unduly discriminate against any class or group of customers.

Ultra-violet Radiation

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to enhance the current monitoring arrangements for ultra-violet radiation in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 30 October, *Official Report*, columns 939-40.

Economic Development

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list each piece of legislation within the responsibility of his Department which bestows economic development powers or economic development assistance on local authority areas and which are based, in whole or in part, on statistics related to the relevant travel-to-work area.

Mr. Robin Squire: Section 33 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 provides all principal local authorities with a power to take such steps as they may from time to time consider appropriate for promoting the economic development of their area. The Local Government (Promotion of Economic Development) Regulations 1990 limit the giving of grants, loans and guarantees to a business conducted with a view to profit to a total of £10,000 per business per annum, unless the local authority providing the assistance is listed in schedule 1 to the regulations (as amended). One of the criteria for scheduling is that the local authority, in whole or in part, falls within a travel-to-work area with above average unemployment.

Section 13 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 empowers the Secretary of State to make grants in the assisted areas for the improvement of a basic service for which he is responsible. Local authorities would be eligible to apply for such assistance.

Eco-labelling

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contributions are Greece, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Holland, Ireland and Luxembourg making to EC eco-labelling.

Mr. Maclean: All the member states of the European Community are involved in the eco-labelling scheme. All should by now, under the terms of the EC regulation, have set up competent bodies. A number are currently leading studies to develop further criteria for product groups. I understand that further studies by other member states are about to begin or are under consideration.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the criteria for the award of eco-labels for kitchen towels, toilet tissue, photocopier paper, writing paper, laundry detergents, paints and varnishes, washing machines, dishwaters, light bulbs, hair sprays, T-shirts, bed linen and batteries to be agreed by all EC states.

Mr. Maclean: As I told the House on 9 November, *Official Report*, column 724, we hope to have agreement on a range of products in the first part of next year.

Water Supplies

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what emergency arrangements are made in pre-payment water meters to enable water to be taken on credit in the event of fire or accident.

Mr. Maclean: I understand that pre-payment water meters are installed on an internal wall in the property. About four days before credit on a meter runs out, the meter emits a noise followed by a continuous flashing warning light. When all the credit has been used, the meter will still allow the customer to receive water until the following morning. The meter also has a facility to enable the customer to obtain a further seven days water in an emergency.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 4 November, *Official Report*, columns 234-35, how many of the disconnections of domestic water supply mentioned in his answer were reconnected within 24 hours.

Mr. Maclean: Information on reconnections is not collected by my Department or by the Office of Water Services, and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. I understand that the water industry associations believe the majority of those disconnected—and contactable—are reconnected within 24 hours.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what emergency arrangements are made to ensure access to water in domestic or commercial properties where the supply has been disconnected.

Mr. Maclean: Where a water company disconnects or reduces for more than 24 hours the supply of water provided to any premises—dwellings, commercial or otherwise—for domestic, ie drinking, cleaning, washing, cooking, heating and sanitary, purposes to carry out necessary works, it must ensure that an emergency supply has been made available within a reasonable distance of the premises. In respect of disconnection for non-payment I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 11 November 1992, *Official Report*, column 795.

Travellers

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state for 1990, 1991 and 1992 the number of travellers in England and Wales in *(a)* authorised local authority encampments, *(b)* authorised private encampments and *(c)* unauthorised encampments; and if he will break the figures down by region.

Mr. Baldry: The Department has no reliable information about numbers of travellers. I am placing in the Library of the House a table showing the number of gypsy caravans on the three types of encampment requested by the hon. Member, for each region in England. The information is derived from bi-annual counts by local authorities. Similar information for Wales is available from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Derelict Land Grant

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much derelict land grant expenditure there has been in the Darlington travel-to-work area in each year since 1984 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1984 prices.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on derelict land grant expenditure is not available by travel-to-work area. However, expenditure in the Darlington local authority area was as follows:

	(a) *Current prices (£)*	*(b)* *1984 prices (£)*
1984-85	254,514	254,514
1985-86	589,788	558,942
1986-87	536,772	492,504
1987-88	269,442	234,474
1988-89	284,697	231,054
1989-90	563,164	428,821
1990-91	529,567	372,715
1991-92	356,164	234,274
Total	3,384,108	2,807,298

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the expenditure on derelict land grant in the assisted areas in each year since 1984-85 at *(a)* curent prices and *(b)* 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on derelict land grant expenditure is not available by assisted area. However, derelict land grant in the assisted areas and derelict land clearance areas combined was as follows:

	(a) *Current prices (£)*	*(b)* *1984 prices (£)*
1984-85	63,260,029	63,260,029
1985-86	60,688,860	57,514,833
1986-87	58,603,092	53,770,095
1987-88	57,667,935	50,183,790
1988-89	51,137,068	41,501,822
1989-90	84,096,414	64,035,214
1990-91	67,135,519	47,250,650
1991-92	79,450,627	52,260,239
Total	522,039,544	429,776,672

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of derelict land grant spending took place in the assisted areas *(a)* in each year since 1984-85 and *(b)* in total since 1984-85.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on derelict land grant expenditure is not available by assisted area. However, the percentage of derelict land grant paid in the assisted areas and derelict land clearance areas combined was as follows:

	per cent.
(a) 1984-85	93·2
1985-86	90·4
1986-87	85·2
1987-88	76·6
1988-89	76·2
1989-90	92·6
1990-91	93·4
1991-92	92·3
(b) TOTAL	87·7

City Challenge

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are the rules concerning bidding for city challenge scheme funds in years two to five for the 11 pacemaker authorities in the first round; and what guidance has been issued to such authorities;

(2) in what circumstances a pacemaker authority, for the purposes of the city challenge scheme, may not receive moneys in years two to five.

Mr. Robin Squire: The action plans of the 11 city challenge pacemakers, covering five-year regeneration programmes 1992 to 1997, were agreed in February and March this year. Full financial provision for these programmes has been included in the settlement announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 12 November. The agreement to provide funding is subject to individual annual reviews of progress toward achieving the strategic objectives and outputs specified in the plans. The first round of annual reviews, to be chaired by Ministers, is intended to take place in February 1993. The format and procedure for the reviews have recently been piloted with the pacemakers and this will be followed up with further guidance on the issues to be covered.

Housing Management

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing how many tenants and tenants' organisations have responded to the consultation on his proposals to extend compulsory competitive tendering to housing management; how many of these *(a)* supported and *(b)* opposed his proposals; and if he will place copies of all the responses in the Library.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 6 November to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), *Official Report,* column *454*. I shall be placing copies of all the responses in the Library.

Defective Housing

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many properties sold to sitting tenants under the right-to-buy have been re-purchased by English local authorities under defective housing legislation.

Mr. Baldry: By the end of 1991-92 local authorities in England had repurchased some 13,200 dwellings under the housing defects legislation. It is expected that local authorities will repurchase a further 1,000 dwellings during 1992-93.

Displaced Persons

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to compensate local authorities for the extra expenditure they have incurred as a result of the influx of displaced persons from the former Yugoslav republic; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The resources made available to local authorities through the local government finance settlement include appropriate provision for dealing with the kind of needs which displaced persons present. I recognise that the recent influx from the former Yugoslav republic has placed an exceptional burden on a small number of authorities, however, and I am prepared to make available special grant to assist the worst affected cases. My officials will be discussing proposals for this with representatives of the local authority associations.

Impact Pricing

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce impact pricing into the planning system; what representations he has received on introducing impact pricing; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* My right hon. Friend has no such plans at present. A number of representations have been received following the announcement in February that the Department would undertake research into the scope and feasibility of development impact fees. Decisions on whether to develop the idea further will be taken in the light of that research, on which tenders will be issued shortly.

Homelessness

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the manner in which he has made provision, within the structure of standard spending assessments, for expenditure by local authorities on their statutory duties relating to homelessness for the current financial year and for the year 1993-94, respectively.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 22 October 1990]:* The total of standard spending assessments was set for 1992-93 in the light of the spending needs of all authorities including an appropriate allowance for expenditure on providing for the homeless. Proposals for the 1993-94 revenue support grant settlement will be announced later this autumn.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to assist the local authorities which had deposited money with BCCI.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 10 November 1992]:* Authorities which applied to do so were allowed to treat their losses as capital expenditure, so that they could be met from capital receipts or by borrowing. Authorities which sought temporary increases in their aggregate credit limits, in order to maintain their borrowing capacity, were granted them.

Environmental Protection Enforcement Agencies

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the visit of the heads of European environmental protection enforcement agencies in European Community countries to the United Kingdom on 3 to 6 November.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* The first meeting of representatives from EC environmental enforcement authorities was held in Chester on 3 to 6 November. The purpose of the meeting was to set up a network of such bodies.

The meeting was organised on behalf of the United Kingdom presidency by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and it was chaired by HMIP's chief inspector, Dr. David Slater. More than 50 representatives from the 12 EC member states and the European Commission attended.

All delegates welcomed the establishment of the network, the aim of which is to provide a mechanism for exchange of information and practical regulatory experience, to address issues of mutual concern and to enhance the quality of enforcement throughout the community.

The meeting agreed a framework for future work, including establishing a number of working groups to address aspects such as permitting, compliance monitoring, inspection and enforcement systems.

The next full meeting of the network will take place in May 1993 in Denmark, during the Danish presidency of the European Community.

Orimulsion

Mr. Oakes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to require any power station intending to burn orimulsion to install flue gas desulphurisation equipment before any of the fuel is burned.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer to November 1992]:* Such matters are for HM inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) in the first instance. I understand that applications have been made to HMIP under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to burn orimulsion at four power stations. None of these has been determined. In determining these applications, HMIP will consider the environmental consequences of all releases from the process to all three media: air, water and land. If HMIP authorises the burning of orimulsion it is required to ensure best available techniques not entailing excessive cost to prevent or minimise and render harmless any releases. I also understand HMIP regards flue gas desulphurisation as an available technique.

In view of my right hon. and learned Friend's appellate role in these matters it would not be appropriate for me to comment further.

Sellafield (Discharges)

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the public consultation relating to the new draft discharge authorisations for Sellafield to commence.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* In response to applications made under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 by British Nuclear Fuels plc (BNFL) to dispose of liquid and gaseous radioactive waste from Sellafield, the chief inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) acting jointly with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), has today sent out public consultation documents proposing new limits for liquid and gaseous radioactive discharges from BNFL's Sellafield operations. The consultation process which will run for eight weeks is being carried out widely and is based on draft authorisations and accompanying explanatory memoranda so that everyone can clearly see what HMIP and MAFF propose in response in the company's applications.

The draft authorisations will include proposed discharge limits for all relevant plant on the site. The effect of the authorisation would be to:

(a) bring into operation new treatment plant for liquid effluent;
(b) allow the operation of the new "THORP" thermal oxide reprocessing plant whose construction is nearing completion;
(c) provide for the decommissioning of redundant plant, and for the processing of wastes accumulated on the site;
(d) allow the incineration of slightly contaminated waste oil.

I am assured that HMIP and MAFF will not make up their minds about the applications until after the consultation period when they have considered relevant information and the responses they have received. Copies of the consultation documents will be placed in the Library of the House.

Council Tax

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account he is taking of the fall in property values since 1990 when finalising the introduction of the council tax in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 11 November 1992]:* The banding of each dwelling shown on valuation lists will be based on its estimated sale price on 1 April 1991, taking account of any significant change to the property between then and April 1993. That will establish its relative value compared with other dwellings and ensure that all dwellings are banded on the same basis.

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many letters of objection to the new thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield have been received by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 12 November 1992]:* By 11 November Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution had received in the order of 36,000 representations about the new thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield from individual members of the public together with several petitions containing a total of approximately 6,500 names.

Inland Waterways

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the findings of the review of navigation authorities for inland waterways.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* We will announce the results of the review when it is completed.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further announcements he proposes to make on the implications of the citizens charter for British Waterways.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* The implementation of the charter is primarily a matter for British Waterways. We expect British Waterways, like other public bodies, to take account of the charter's principles in its relations with its customers and users.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has concluded his review of the role and function of the inland waterways amenity advisory committee.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* We are consulting the chairman of the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council and British Waterways on our proposals for the future of the council, and will make an announcement as soon as possible.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the number of miles of inland waterways dredged by British Waterways for each of the last 10 years broken down by commercial and cruising waterways and the remainder.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* This is a matter for the British Waterways Board.

British Waterways Board

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he reappointed Mr. David Ingham as chairman of the British Waterways Board; and for how long.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* We are currently discussing with Mr. Ingram the terms of his reappointment. In the meantime, his appointment has been extended for one month until 21 November. A further announcement will be made shortly.

Home Repossessions

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many house repossession orders have been granted.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have been asked to reply.

The latest figures on mortgage repossession actions are contained in an information bulletin which has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament. These figures do not indicate how many houses have been repossessed through the courts as not all of the orders will have resulted in the issue and execution of warrants of possession. At this stage the 1992 figures are provisional and therefore liable to revision to take account of any late amendments.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

UN Development Fund for Women

40. **Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the United Kingdom contribution to the United Nations development fund for women in the present year and in 1979.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We contributed £150,000 this year (1992). The fund was first created in 1984.

Kenya (Elections)

41. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance has been given to the Government of Kenya in conducting elections.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have agreed to provide ballot boxes, office equipment and training for electoral officials, at a cost of approximately £745,000.

Aid and Trade

42. **Ms. Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he will be taking in concert with his counterparts from the other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries to ensure that aid to the third world is accompanied by trade.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Britain's aid programme, like those of our OECD partners, promotes economic growth in developing countries through support for economic reform. We give priority to the promotion of export-led growth by helping the private sector to flourish. We are working hard for a successful completion to the Uruguay round.

Somalia

43. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the overseas aid budget allocated to Somalia will be over the next year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This year Britain has committed almost £27 million of emergency humanitarian aid to Somalia including our share of EC aid. We shall continue to help. The amount of assistance we will be able to provide will be determined by need and the ability to deliver relief safely and effectively.

Sudan

44. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent Britain is able to contribute humanitarian aid directly or indirectly to the communities of southern Sudan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is difficult for relief agencies to reach the needy in southern Sudan because of continued civil war. We provide emergency assistance through United Nations agencies and British non-governmental organisations as and when access to communities is available.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the current state of access for relief work being undertaken by representatives of the United Nations and non-governmental organisations in southern Sudan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The continuing civil war in southern Sudan is severely impeding humanitarian aid efforts by the United Nations and non-governmental organisations; only small amounts are currently being delivered. We are pressing on all parties the need for humanitarian relief efforts to go ahead without interference.

Yugoslavia

45. **Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the level of overseas aid to be allocated to the former Yugoslavia over the next year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have committed more than £70 million for humanitarian aid to the former Yugoslavia up to the end of financial year 1992-93. This consists of £29·5 million bilaterally and a further £41 million which is our contribution to the EC's aid to the former Yugoslavia. This is in addition to our contribution of 2,400 British troops for the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and a field ambulance unit of 260. Decisions on the levels of humanitarian aid to the former Yugoslavia in 1993-94 will depend upon events in the region.

Food Aid

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the approximate annual expenditure of the European Community on *(a)* food aid of an emergency character and *(b)* other food aid, in ecu and pound sterling, together with an estimate of the additional costs that would need to be carried by FEOGA for either category, if not funded under the Community aid budget.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1991, the total cost to the Community aid budget of food aid for developing countries, including transport costs, was 590 mecu (£413 million). An accurate breakdown of costs between emergency and other food aid is not possible because of problems of definition but, in cost terms, approximately half of the programme went to five African countries severely affected by drought or civil strife: Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia and Sudan.

In addition, according to the Commission, food aid to the value of 259 mecu (£181 million) was provided for Eastern Europe, including the former Soviet Union, funded mainly from FEOGA.

The transfer of part or all of the cost of food aid for developing countries from the aid budget to FEOGA would result in an increase in FEOGA costs of approximately the same size as the decrease in cost to the Community aid budget. Such a transfer would tend to re-establish the links between surplus disposal and food aid which successive British Governments have sought to break.

EC Initiatives

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what specific initiatives have been taken by Her Majesty's Government during the course of Britain's presidency of the EC on *(a)* mutual and co-ordinated untying of aid by all EC donors, *(b)* reduction of debts owed by the poorest countries to the EC, to individual EC member countries and to commercial banks and *(c)* promoting development education in EC countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: At the Development Council on Wednesday 18 November 1992 the Commission will report on progress made during the British presidency of the EC on framing a proposal for the untying of aid at the Community level.

Britain has consistently been at the forefront of efforts to relieve the burden of debt on the poorest, most heavily indebted countries. As a result of the Prime Minister's Trinidad's term initiative, 10 countries have benefited from substantial reductions in their debts to governments. Debt servicing payments to the EC from loans made available under successive European development funds are recycled to provide new financing to developing countries.

The United Kingdom, in common with its EC partners, is already encouraging commercial bank debt reduction through the Brady plan.

No specific initiatives have been taken during our presidency to promote development education in EC countries.

Non-governmental Organisations

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the non-governmental organisations in receipt of grants from his Department for each year since 1990; and what was the size of each grant.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Details of all grants to NGOs in 1989-90 and 1990-91 are set out in the table. Similar details for the financial year 1991-92 are not immediately available but will be notified to the hon. Member within the next few weeks.

Agency	*1989-90* £	*1990-91* £
Acord	1,110,074	1,508,600
Actionaid	1,235,250	1,356,128
Action on Disability and Development	134,326	142,142
Action Water	10,000	—
Afghan Aid	1,700,000	1,000,000
Africa Now	9,960	28,601
African Medical and Research Foundation	201,179	400,281
Aga Khan Foundation	1,518,765	1,718,034
AHRTAG	141,863	231,503
Aid Armenia	12,261	—
Aid for India	35,960	—
Alternative for India Development	51,857	96,184
Anti Slavery Society	34,361	88,650
Appropriate Technology for Tibetans Trust	—	17,822
Apt Design and Development	—	24,626
Association of Commonwealth Universities	415,443	431,252
Band Aid	—	49,581
Boys Brigade	13,219	—
British Executive Services Overseas	360,000	390,000
British Red Cross Society	271,763	560,224
Business in the Community	—	10,000
Busoga Trust	33,333	33,334
Care	7,146,494	9,620,284
Catholic Fund for Overseas Development	5,580,702	7,837,864
Catholic Institute for International Relations	1,252,195	1,434,846
Child to Child	8,000	8,000
Christian Aid	6,193,505	8,811,828
Christian Outreach	267,000	470,751
Christians Abroad	18,000	23,659
Commonwealth Human Ecology Council	22,659	17,883
Commonwealth Trade Union Council	118,612	54,560
Concern	1,122,367	956,596
Conservation Foundation	123,790	—
Consortium of Christian Agencies	—	30,000
Consumer Research Laboratory	—	14,097
Co-operation for Development	497,184	158,029
Council for Education in World Citizenship	4,000	—
Cranfield Trust	—	15,000
Cusichaca project	37,000	25,000
DPCCN	400,000	—
Duke of Edinburgh award	77,000	40,000
Durham Lesotho link	—	18,903
Equipment to charity hospitals overseas	35,084	25,000
Faith Foundation	—	33,600
Farm Africa	55,000	387,253
Feed the Minds	8,330	7,282
Find your Feet	—	7,611
Food for the Hungry	—	40,000
Forum	—	5,000
Friends of the Earth	—	6,014
Friends of Urambo and Mwanhala	—	17,180
Goal	50,000	—
Great Britain China scholars	—	15,000
Gurkha Welfare Trust	—	476,642
Hand in Hand	7,397	9,325
Havest Help	40,076	30,581
Health Unlimited	175,893	187,686
Help the Aged	282,695	168,583
Henry Doubleday Research Association	—	10,382
Homeless International	12,771	75,561
Ideas aid International	—	20,000
Impact Foundation	7,096	3,652
India Development Group	33,325	33,077
Intercare	30,487	43,936
Intermediate Technology Development Group	277,763	691,555
International agricultural training programme	37,950	21,839
International Bee Research Association	32,000	—
International Boys Town Trust	33,180	—
International Committee of the Red Cross	100,000	1,900,000
International Council for Bird Preservation	33,943	69,594
International Extension College	249,796	150,000
International Institute for Environment and	63,000	266,755
International Medical Relief	80,600	—
International Planned Parenthood Federation	—	7,168,000
International Rescue	23,816	—
International Trust for Nature Conservation	3,898	2,830
Jalchatra Project	8,250	—
Karuna Trust	—	16,255
King Mahendra Trust	14,750	14,750
Leonard Cheshire Foundation	83,923	114,303
Living Earth	61,400	84,500
Luth World Federation	7,559	—
Marie Stopes International	520,520	602,309
Medical Aid for Palestinians	70,975	54,369
Methodist Church	—	65,244
Money for Madagascar	3,600	1,685
National Childrens Home	15,406	19,150
New Age Access	13,500	—
Ockenden Venture	248,536	371,088
Opportunities for Women	55,490	19,513
Order of St. John	125,000	109,700
Overseas Development Institute	570,000	411,280
Oxfam	5,810,354	7,699,622
Passe Partout	10,675	11,063
Plan	209,608	304,722
Population Concern	272,392	335,706
Quaker Peace and Service	—	4,064
Ranfurly Library Service	115,000	100,099
Reed Charities	117,969	37,890
Regional Conference on International Volunta	5,000	—
Richmond Fellowship	—	14,077
Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind	36,393	261,279
Royal Geographic Society	—	15,000
Ryder Cheshire Mission	30,000	40,000
Samburu Aid in Africa	—	22,000
Sandy Galls Afghanistan Appeal	134,000	80,000
Save The Children Fund	6,201,958	8,777,983
Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund	74,515	100,537
Scottish Education and Action for Development	7,000	—
Scripture Union	—	44,500

Agency	*1989-90* £	*1990-91* £
Semi arid lands training livestock improvement	25,272	17,451
Send a Cow	10,120	12,950
Sheffield Health Authority	53,020	10,591
Skillshare Africa	1,048,666	1,194,501
SOS Sahel	176,846	306,184
Special projects in Christian Missionary area	115,217	124,128
Tear Fund	58,749	50,374
Toc H	—	9,124
Traidcraft exchange	22,341	64,205
Trax	31,943	25,257
Trust for Education and Development	2,000	—
Uganda Society for Disabled Children	212,743	163,400
UK Foundation for the peoples of the South Pacific	79,360	88,747
United Nations Association International Service	611,904	700,403
University College	—	35,532
Urban Aid	15,000	15,000
Vetaid	75,053	12,715
Village Services Trust	—	5,768
Voluntary Services Overseas	10,384,155	11,347,623
War on Want	56,179	4,480
Water Aid	859,481	591,846
Womanaid	—	26,453
Womankind	—	67,781
Workstart	—	6,586
World Conservation Monitoring Centre	—	312,894
World University Service	535,636	1,389,625
World Vision	298,399	298,756
World Wide Fund for Nature	1,000,000	1,200,000
Y Care International	144,729	181,050
You and Me	21,000	40,000
Young Womens Christian Association	7,127	—
Zimbabwe Trust	31,350	151,461

Humanitarian Aid

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total, for the current financial year, of humanitarian aid for *(a)* Somalia and *(b)* the former Yugoslavia; what has been the United Kingdom share for each of EC aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 10 November 1992]:* To date, the total United Kingdom bilateral commitment for humanitarian aid for Somalia for the current financial year is £15·4 million, and for the former Yugoslavia about £29 million. Figures for EC aid are not available by financial year, but since the beginning of 1992 74 mecu (about £58 million) has been allocated for Somalia, of which the United Kingdom share is about 13 mecu (£10·2 million); and 276 mecu (about £217 million) has been allocated for the former Yugoslavia, the United Kingdom share of which is about 50 mecu (about £40 million).

Slovenia

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if Her Majesty's Government will make direct assistance available immediately to instal heating in refugee camps in former Yugoslav military barracks and prisons in Slovenia;

(2) what representations he has received from the Slovenian Foreign Office regarding assistance to refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina currently in Slovenia; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how much of the United Kingdom aid for humanitarian assistance in the former Yugoslavia has gone to assist refugees in Slovenia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 11 November 1992]:* Representatives of the Slovenian embassy have held discussions with ODA officials. We have committed more than £70 million for humanitarian assistance to the former Yugoslavia. This includes nearly £8 million to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other UN agencies, who are assisting refugees throughout the former Yugoslavia, including Slovenia.

SCOTLAND

Workers Educational Association

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current level of funding for the Workers Educational Association; what is the projected funding for the organisation for the next financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has agreed to pay the Scottish Council of the Workers Educational Association a grant of £180,000 in 1992-93 towards expenditure on headquarters administration. No decisions have yet been taken on the level of grant to be offered in 1993-94 to voluntary organisations in the community education field.

Legal Aid

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he is proposing to take to restrain the rate of growth in legal aid expenditure in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Expenditure on legal aid in Scotland has almost doubled over the past five years. In line with the proposals for England and Wales recently announced by the Lord Chancellor, I propose to introduce the following measures in order to ensure that expenditure on legal aid in Scotland does not rise even faster.

As far as financial eligibility for civil legal aid is concerned, my objective is to strengthen the legally aided clients' financial interest in the progress of the case and to bring the means assessment for legal aid more closely into line with that used for other means-tested benefits. I therefore intend to lay regulations to provide that, from 1 April 1993, the lower income limit for civil legal aid—that is, the limit of disposable income below which an applicant for legal aid pays no contribution—will be reduced to the equivalent income support limit. This means that, on current figures, the limit would be reduced from £3,060 per annum to £2,213 per annum. I propose to make equivalent changes to eligibility for advice and assistance.

The upper eligibility limits for civil legal aid—that is, the limits of disposable income above which an applicant for civil legal aid ceases to be eligible for assistance—will not be increased in April 1993.

I also intend to lay regulations providing that—

from 1 April 1993, dependants' allowances for civil legal aid will be reduced to income support levels;

from 1 April 1993, all those granted civil legal aid will be required to pay a contribution of one third of their disposable income above the lower limit; and

only those who would qualify for assistance free of contributions shall, from 1 April 1993, be able to receive advice under the advice and assistance scheme.

I do not propose to alter at present the existing financial eligibility criteria for criminal legal aid.

Students

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many undergraduate students received an award from the Scottish Education Department from session 1979 to date; and if he will give the figures by *(a)* type of establishment, *(b)* region and *(c)* faculty.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 November 1992]*: The available information is set out in the table. Information on the home region of award holders is not collated centrally, nor is information on the faculty offering the award holder's course. Information on type of establishment is not available for 1979-80.

Undergraduate awards 1979-80 to 1991-92

Academic session	*University*	*Scottish college of education*	*SOED Central institution*	*Scottish FE college*	*Other*	*Total*
1979-80	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	50,079
1980-81	30,767	3,657	8,295	6,968	2,027	51,714
1981-82	31,052	3,589	9,180	7,887	2,335	54,043
1982-83	30,507	3,323	9,837	8,555	2,390	54,612
1983-84	29,954	3,093	10,549	9,583	2,496	55,675
1984-85	29,437	2,927	10,704	10,045	2,456	55,569
1985-86	29,039	2,910	17,041	4,005	2,709	55,704
1986-87	28,813	2,894	16,910	3,968	2,643	55,228
1987-88	29,307	3,099	16,851	4,128	2,748	56,133
1988-89	30,537	3,110	17,772	4,622	2,739	58,780
1989-90	31,577	3,552	18,738	5,118	2,775	61,760
1990-91	32,994	4,182	20,830	5,740	2,726	66,472
1991-92	34,580	4,577	22,728	9,785	3,918	75,588

Notes:

1. The above figures relate to the position in the April following the start of each session. They exclude students whose awards had not been processed by this stage, and students who withdrew from their courses prior to this date.

2. Up to 1984-85 Napier polytechnic and Glasgow polytechnic were Scottish FE colleges. In 1985-86 they transferred to the SOED Central Institution sector.

3. Only the traditional universities are included in the column headed university.

4. The figures for FE colleges include full-time HNC students with effect from 1991-92.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many postgraduate students received an award from the Scottish Education Department in each session since 1978-79; and if he will analyse the figures by sex and by region.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 November 1992]*: The available information is set out in the table. No breakdown by sex is available prior to 1980-81. Information on the home region of award holders is not collated centrally.

Postgraduate Awards 1978-79 to 1991-92

Academic Session	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
1978-79	n/a	n/a	3,085
1979-80	n/a	n/a	3,521
1980-81	1,444	1,767	3,211
1981-82	1,338	1,605	2,943
1982-83	1,328	1,525	2,853
1983-84	1,303	1,482	2,785
1984-85	1,253	1,374	2,627
1985-86	1,343	1,508	2,851
1986-87	1,399	1,593	2,992
1987-88	1,387	1,521	2,908
1988-89	1,335	1,409	2,744
1989-90	1,310	1,478	2,788
1990-91	1,322	1,567	2,889
1991-92	1,626	1,845	3,471

Note:

[1] The above figures relate to the position in the April following the start of each session. They exclude students whose awards had not been processed by this stage, and students who withdrew from their courses prior to this date.

Scotland-Northern Ireland Power Cable

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions have taken place with the representatives of fishermen anent Scottish Power's proposals to lay an electric power cable between Scotland and Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 13 November 1992]*: The proposed undersea power cable between Scotland and Northern Ireland is the responsibility of Northern Ireland Electricity plc (NIE). My right hon. Friend understands that NIE has requested ScottishPower to assist it with consultations in Scotland about the undersea cable. These consultations have included a meeting between representatives of ScottishPower and the Clyde Fishermen's Association. Any formal application to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport in respect of the undersea cable will of course be a matter for NIE.

Local Enterprise Companies

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list for each local enterprise company the budget made available from his Department for 1991-92 and 1992-93 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1992-93 prices, indicating in both cases the percentage difference;

(2) if he will list for each local enterprise company the budget made available from his Department for the provision of youth training places for 1991-92 and 1992-93 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1992-93 prices, indicating in both cases the percentage difference;

(3) if he will list for each local enterprise company the budget made available from his Department for the

provision of employment training places for 1991-92 and 1992-93 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1992-93 prices, indicating in both cases the percentage difference.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 13 November 1992]*: The Scottish Office does not make budget allocations to local enterprise companies. The allocation of resources to the companies is an operational matter for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I have asked the chairmen of these bodies to write to the hon. Member.

Insurance Claims

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many companies have been proceeded against and convicted for submitting fraudulent insurance claims for fire-damaged property or goods in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 November 1992]*: The information requested is not separately identifiable within the Scottish Office's classification of crimes and offences.

Lees Group

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much Highlands and Islands Development Board or Highlands and Islands Enterprise investment in the form of loans or grants was provided to the Lees group of companies in the 1980s.

Mr. Lang: I have asked the chairman of Highlands and Islands Enterprise to write to the hon. Member with the information he has requested.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

European Coal and Steel Community Levy

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will specify the proposed means by which revenue equivalent to the 0·3 per cent. European Coal and Steel Community turnover levy will be raised to provide for the expenditure of training ex-coal and steel workers, research and development and job creation;

(2) if he will make a statement on his consultations with his opposite numbers in the European Community on the abolition of, or bringing forward of the date of abolition of, the European Coal and Steel Community levy;

(3) what consultations he has had with his opposite numbers in the European Community concerning the use of the £500 million accumulated in the European Coal and Steel Community turnover levy; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what is his most up-to-date estimate of the date of cessation of levying of the European Coal and Steel Community levy.

Mr. Sainsbury: The last substantive discussions at ministerial level on the European Coal and Steel Community reserves were in April 1991. A further discussion is expected at the Industry Council on 24 November which should reflect the view of European industry that the levy should end and reserves be drawn down during the run-up to 2002.

RECHAR

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to ensure that a second phase of the RECHAR programme is maintained; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The 11 United Kingdom RECHAR programmes do not have phases. They run from 1989 to 1993. Thereafter it would be more effective if structural funds assistance to eligible coal-mining areas was channelled through the general structural funds programmes covering the areas concerned.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a copy of the health and safety policy of each of the agencies within his Department.

Mr. Eggar: I will place a copy of the available agency health and safety policy statements in the Library. Those agencies which have not yet finalised their statements are covered by the Department's health and safety policy, a copy of which I have placed in the Library.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list details of each consignment of plutonium 239 exported since 1979; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the new international atomic energy nuclear supplier guidelines on such transfers.

Mr. Eggar: Information is not available in the form requested. The strict conditions on the supply of fissile materials, including plutonium, under the Nuclear Suppliers Group guidelines have not changed.

Green Issues

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who in his Department has been appointed to oversee and develop green issues; how many civil servants have been allocated new or additional responsibilities to deal with the management and development of green issues; and what additional allocation of resources has been made to support programmes related to green issues in his Department.

Mr. Eggar: The Department set up a new environment division in July this year dealing with green issues which reports at ministerial level through me to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. The division, which is headed by Dr. David Evans (G3), brings together staff previously in the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Energy dealing with environmental questions who currently number 65. The tasks of the division include ensuring that proper account of environmental issues is taken in the development of all Department of Trade and Industry's policies, stimulating an effective business response to environmental developments and ensuring that the Government's overall environmental policy takes proper account of the impact on business.

The division also calls on resources elsewhere in the Department of Trade and Industry for publicity and awareness activities, support for environmental technology and the carrying out of economic and other analytical studies to support the development of policy. The division's spend on these activities in 1992-93 is likely to be about £9 million. In addition, a number of other divisions whose focus is on other policy matters have staff devoted wholly or in part to environmental issues.

Wind Energy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many sites for wind farms are currently under consideration; how many are under construction; and how many wind turbines are already linked to the national grid.

Mr. Eggar: Of the wind farms which have received contracts under the non-fossil fuel obligation (NFFO), the following is my understanding of the situation:

1. Under consideration—16 sites
2. Under construction—13 sites
3. Already linked to the grid—five sites, including 56 wind turbines.

I am not aware of any wind farms outside the NFFO, although there probably are some in the first category, being given consideration in anticipation of future NFFO orders.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to encourage wind energy production in areas where the average wind speed is between 6·5 and 7·5 metres per second.

Mr. Eggar: I have no plans to constrain any future non-fossil fuel obligation orders for wind energy by either wind speed or geographic location. I believe potential developers must be free to exploit the best sites which are acceptable to the planning authorities.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his Department's estimated target in megawatts for wind energy production in the United Kingdom in the year 2000.

Mr. Eggar: The Government are currently working towards a figure of 1,000 MW of new electricity generating capacity from renewables by the year 2000. I do not have a target for individual technologies, such as wind, within that figure.

Renewables

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to set a target of 4000 MW of renewables to be in service in the United Kingdom by the year 2000.

Mr. Eggar: Targets for the exploitation of renewable energy are under consideration as part of the current review of the Government's renewable energy programmes and of the review announced on 26 October, *Official Report*, columns 522-23.

Sportsworld plc

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will investigate the conduct of Sportsworld plc in organising holidays to the Barcelona olympics.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Investigation of anti-competitive practices or monopolistic behaviour is the responsibility of the Director General of Fair Trading. I understand the director general is considering this matter, following which he will decide what action, if any, he should take.

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will bring forward proposals to prevent the establishment of a monopoly in the supply of tickets to major international sporting events.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: It is the responsibility of the Director General of Fair Trading to keep all markets under review and to refer them to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission where he considers it necessary.

Offshore Installations

Dr. Godman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many persons have been proceeded against in Northern Ireland because of failures or defaults in adhering to the conditions laid down by him relating to the carrying out of abandonment programmes under section 9 of the Petroleum Act 1987; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many notices have been issued, under the terms of section 1 of the Petroleum Act 1987, in each of the past four years to persons in order to enable them to carry out abandonment programmes; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many proposals under section 4 of the Petroleum Act 1987, for abandonment programmes he has *(a)* accepted and *(b)* rejected in each of the past four years; and if he will make a statement;

(4) how many abandonment programmes have been carried out under the terms of section 8 of the Petroleum Act 1987; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what vetting procedures are used in the assessment of *(a)* the capability and *(b)* the financial resources of those persons who have submitted or have given notice of submitting proposals for abandonment programmes under the terms of the Petroleum Act 1987; and if he will make a statement;

(6) who carries out the inspection of sites following the completion of abandonment programmes under the terms of the Petroleum Act 1987; and if he will make a statement;

(7) how many persons have been proceeded against in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* England and Wales because of failures or defaults in adhering to conditions laid down by him, relating to the carrying out of abandonment programmes under section 9 of the Petroleum Act 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The following notices have been issued under the terms of section 1 of the Petroleum Act 1987 in each of the past four years:

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	[1] *1992*
Offshore installations	280	12	29	164	132
Offshore pipelines	186	56	189	155	35

[1] To date.

During the same period, abandonment programmes have been approved in respect of the following installations: Piper Alpha, Crawford, Blair and Argyll, Duncan and Innes. None has been rejected.

The abandonment programmes in respect of Piper Alpha, Crawford and Blair have been carried out. The first phase of the programme in respect of Argyll, Duncan and Innes is currently under way and the second phase will be carried out during the summer of 1993. All these programmes are subject to continuing monitoring obligations.

The obligation to submit programmes and to carry them out when approved is joint and several. The Department has satisfied itself in respect of every installation for which notice has been served under section 1 of the Act that there is among the parties served at least one capable of meeting the entire abandonment obligation.

Where inspection of the site is appropriate, the President of the Board of Trade requires certification that relevant conditions attached to the abandonment programme have been complied with. The certifying body varies according to requirements.

There have been no proceedings under section 9 of the Act against any party in relation to default in carrying out programmes.

Oil and Gas Exploration

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement regarding the licences awarded to Hamilton Oil Company to explore for oil and gas in the Lleyn peninsula; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Hamilton Oil Company was awarded two blocks north-west of the Lleyn peninsula in the twelfth round of offshore oil and gas licensing. In view of the environmental importance of this area, the then Nature Conservancy Council proposed special licence conditions designed to safeguard the environment. All the conditions were accepted. They include bans on drilling in a 7 km safety zone around Bardsey island and in the rest of block 107/6 between March and September, when seabirds are breeding.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received since August regarding exploration for fossil fuels in *(a)* the Lleyn peninsula, *(b)* Cardigan bay, *(c)* the Pembrokeshire islands, *(d)* the Bristol channel and *(e)* Lundy island; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have received a small number of letters since August expressing concern about any possible environmental effects of exploration for fossil fuel in one or more of these areas. I have been able to reassure correspondents that special conditions have been and will be attached to licences in these areas to safeguard their marine ecology. In total, the numbers of references to each area has been as follows:

	Number
a. Lleyn peninsula	7
b. Cardigan bay	11
c. Pembrokeshire islands	3
d. Bristol channel	2
e. Lundy island	Nil

Areas adjacent to the Pembrokeshire islands and Lundy have not been offered for licensing.

Iraq

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what export licences have been granted since 1980 to International Military Services and to W. S. Atkins and Partners in connection with Iraq.

Mr. Needham: It is not our practice to discuss such matters, on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Manufacturing

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he intends to take further to assist the United Kingdom's manufacturing industry.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 12 November 1992]:* I fully appreciate the vital role manufacturing industry plays in securing the United Kingdom's long term prosperity. The underlying theme of the Government's policy towards manufacturing industry is to help businesses to win in the increasingly international market place, both at home and abroad.

The first strand of the Government's strategy is to create the right climate for manufacturing industry to thrive. Low inflation is the key to sustainable growth. Interest rates are now at their lowest level for nearly 15 years. The cut by 8 percentage points over the past two years represents a £10 billion a year reduction in industry's costs. Industry is also now able to take advantage of a very competitive exchange rate.

Secondly, DTI and ECGD assist manufacturing industry. In order to achieve this there must be an effective dialogue with industry. I have recently reorganised the DTI to help in this by creating a clear contact point for each sector of manufacturing industry. I have also established an industrial competitiveness division, which among other functions is examining what lessons can be learnt from other leading industrial countries.

My current initiatives include strengthening our support of exporters. A further £700 million of ECGD cover is being made available, and some of the constraints on cover for individual countries eased. So as to help exporters take advantage of the current opportunities I have now invited over 100 British companies to second 100 top quality men and women to DTI to help in our export promotion work.

I am also working with the CBI, chambers of commerce, training and enterprise councils and local authorities on arrangements for one stop shops to provide support and advice for smaller businesses.

Thirdly, other Government policies are important for the health of manufacturing industry. Examples include initiatives like the TECs to help provide the training and enterprise support best suited to local needs, and those set out in the recent White Paper on education which are designed to help provide industry with the future work force it will need.

A very clear example of the importance of wider Government policies is the autumn statement. The abolition of special car tax will bring benefits not only to the automotive industry, but also to its suppliers. It will also help customers, many of whom are industrial. The measures on capital allowances should also assist British industry not only by helping each firm to invest but also by enhancing the domestic market for United Kingdom manufacturers. Similarly the new arrangements for leasing, and for the private financing of capital projects, create new opportunities for British businesses. This is in addition to those which will arise from the priority given by the Government to capital expenditure within the tight overall public expenditure settlement.

PRIME MINISTER

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister what use his Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

The Prime Minister: My Office has not made use of private detectives.

President Yeltsin

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent visit of President Yeltsin of Russia.

The Prime Minister: President Yeltsin paid a highly successful visit on 9 and 10 November, the first official visit to the United Kingdom by a President of Russia. During his visit he addressed Members of both Houses in the Royal Gallery, attended a luncheon given by Her Majesty the Queen and met businessmen at the London Stock Exchange. I hosted a dinner for the President in the painted hall of the Royal Naval College, Greenwich.

President Yeltsin and I signed a treaty on the principles of relations between the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation and five other agreements and memoranda of understanding were signed by representatives of the two Governments during the visit. In discussions with the President, I welcomed the new and friendly relations between the United Kingdom and Russia and underlined the Government's support for the process of economic and political reform in Russia.

Classless Society

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister what progress has been made towards the creation of a classless society in Britain.

The Prime Minister: The Government's policies are aimed, and will continue to be aimed, at widening choice and opportunity for all members of society. Most recently, progress has been made through the introduction in the 1992 Budget, of a new lower rate band which reduced the marginal rate to 20 per cent. for almost 4 million people on low incomes, including over 1 million working wives; through our recent reforms in education and health; and through other public service initiatives, including the introduction of the citizens charter.

Environment

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Prime Minister what progress has been made on implementing the involvement of young people in environmental awareness following the decisions agreed at the 1992 Earth summit; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Many of the recommendations relating to young people in Agenda 21 have already been implemented in the United Kingdom; for example, the requirements of a number of subjects in the national curriculum include studies relevant to the environment. We are also supporting informal environmental education initiatives through the Department of the Environment's grant schemes. Chapter 17 of the Second Year Report (Cm 2068) on the anniversary of the "Environment" White Paper explains our action in detail.

Office Telephone Lines

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 10 November, *Official Report*, column *672*, regarding facilities for the public to telephone his Office, if he will give details of the existing practice.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the reply that I gave the hon. Member on 10 November at column *672*.

Iraq

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) on 10 November, *Official Report*, columns 737-38, what was the start date for the application of the full embargo on the supply of arms to Iraq.

The Prime Minister: The full embargo came into force at midnight on 8 August 1990 in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolution 661.

All relevant issues will be covered by Lord Justice Scott's inquiry whose terms of reference will be:

> "Having examined the facts in relation to the export from the United Kingdom of defence equipment and dual use goods to Iraq between December 1984 and August 1990 and the decisions reached on the export licence applications for such goods and the basis for them, to report on whether the relevant Departments, Agencies, and responsible Ministers operated in accordance with the policies of Her Majesty's Government; to examine and report on decisions taken by the prosecuting authority and by those signing public interest immunity certificates in R v Henderson and any other similar cases that he considers relevant to the issues of the inquiry; and to make recommendations".

The terms of reference have not been restricted to Matrix Churchill. They include the supergun and other defence and dual-use sales.

The terms of reference relate not just to arms questions but to decisions taken on the prosecution of companies and on public interest immunity.

All Ministers who are called will give evidence.

All civil servants who are called will be instructed to co-operate.

All papers that the inquiry calls for will be made available.

Lord Justice Scott will be entirely free to decide on the publication of his report and of the evidence he takes.

If Lord Justice Scott finds that his powers are in any way insufficient, he can invite the Government to alter the basis of his inquiry and the Government would agree to do so.

The inquiry will report to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Cabinet Committees

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Prime Minister whether the rules of collective responsibility for decisions made in a Cabinet Committee are applied only to those attending the meeting.

The Prime Minister: Decisions reached by the Cabinet or Ministerial Committees are binding on all members of the Government.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Fund

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total administrative cost of social fund payments for the last 12-month period for which figures are available, for *(a)* community care grants, *(b)* budgeting loans and *(c)* crisis loans; and if he will provide separate figures for each district office.

Mr. Scott: Information on social fund adminstration costs for 1991-92 is in the Library. Information about administrative costs by application type and district office is not available.

Personal Damages Awards

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to uprate the £2,500 limit in personal damages awards below which no recovery of social security payments is made by the compensation recovery unit in his Department.

Miss Widdecombe: We have no such plans but we are keeping the figure under review.

Incomes

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answers of 16 July, *Official Report*, columns *946-47*, and 28 October, *Official Report*, column *738*, what is the additional cost of *(a)* providing information for the mean as well as the median for subdivisions of the income distribution and *(b)* distinguishing 1988 and 1989 income date from data for both years combined.

Mr. Burt: Additional costs are not a material consideration in the use of median rather than mean data. The reasons for the use of median measures are explained in paragraphs 4.72 to 4.25 of the "Stocktaking" report, a copy of which is in the Library. Paragraphs 2.8 to 2.12 of the report also explain why years of data are combined for reasons of statistical reliability rather than cost.

Costs are the determining factor in not providing results covering every year from 1979 to 1989, as stated in my reply of 16 July at columns *946-47*. Databases consistent with households below average income methodology as recommended in the "Stocktaking" report are available only for the years 1979, 1981, 1987, 1988 and 1989. To produce databases for the other years would cost in the order of tens of thousands of pounds, and would delay the next edition of HBAI.

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answers of 13 July, *Official Report*, column *454*, and 28 October, *Official Report*, columns *738-39*, what consideration his Department has given to presenting family expenditure survey data in the form presented in the households below average income "Stocktaking" report for *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* for 1989 and 1990 combined, in July.

Mr. Burt: Improvements in timeliness will enable us to publish the next edition of HBAI in mid-1993 using the most recent data. This will feature figures for 1990 and 1991 as well as 1988 and 1989; there are no plans to give figures for 1990 on its own. This complies with the recommendations of the 1991 "Stocktaking" report, a copy of which is in the Library.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make available statistics relating to the take-up of invalidity benefit by region.

Mr. Scott: Information is held on the number of recipients of invalidity benefit, by standard statistical region, which is in the table[1].

Region	*Numbers*
Scotland	181,400
Wales	146,600
England	
Northern	126,300
Yorkshire and Humberside	124,500
East Midlands	74,200
East Anglia	28,800
South East	219,200
South Western	71,900
West Midlands	105,900
North Western	219,800
Overseas	7,400
Total	1,306,000

[1] Information from a 1 per cent. sample of claimants as at 30 March 1991.

Emphysema and Bronchitis

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he now expects to make a statement on the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council's report on emphysema and bronchitis in metal workers and miners; how many intended beneficiaries of its recommendations have died since the report was submitted to the Government; and how many are now terminally ill.

Mr. Scott: The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council's report will be published by the end of November and a statement will be made then. The information requested is not available.

Invalidity Benefit Appeal

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has concerning the timing of the hearing of the appeal, at the Court of Appeal, of the chief adjudication officer against a commissioner's decision (CS/27/91); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: A date for this case to be heard by the Court of Appeal has not yet been set since a decision is awaited on another case dealing with related issues and which is currently before the European Court of Justice.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what date the last claims for the independent living fund will be accepted; and on what date outstanding independent living fund claims will cease to be processed.

Mr. Scott: The independent living fund is an independent charitable trust administered by trustees. The issues of policy and administrative arrangements, including the processing of applications, are matters for the trustees of the fund.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps were taken to inform all recipients of mobility allowance under the age of 66 years of the new disability living allowance; and what instructions he has issued to adjudication officers in respect of late claims.

Mr. Scott: Since January 1992, 16 million tailored letters have been issued to some 1·5 million beneficiaries of attendance allowance and mobility allowance, giving advice about disability living allowance. These letters were in a series of 16, eight of which were designed by mobility allowance recipients and people who had been refused mobility allowance. The letters enclosed an explanatory leaflet which set out how the changes would affect individuals and, where appropriate, recipients were invited to claim extra benefit available through disability living allowance. Regulations allow awards of this extra benefit to be backdated to 6 April, if the person was entitled to attendance allowance or mobility allowance at that date.

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications from Hartlepool, north Tees and Cleveland county have been received for the disability living allowance by the disability living allowance unit; how many of these have resulted in awards; how many of these awards have been at the lowest rate of the care component; and how many have been at the lowest rate of the mobility component.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the health and safety policy of each of the agencies within his Department.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Copies of the health and safety policies of the Natural Resources Institute and of Wilton Park have been placed in the Library.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Government of Sir Lanka concerning the protection of workers and the promotion of environmentally sound techniques on re-privatised tea plantations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No. The plantation restructuring unit, which is responsible for overseeing the privatisation process, is looking to appoint an independent company to monitor the estates. It will take environmental issues into account, particularly sustainability. The plantation workers are represented by unions which are active on their behalf.

Mr. Arjumand Naqvi

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Abu Dhabi authorities concerning the death in detention of Mr. Arjumand Naqvi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Following Mr. Arjumand Naqvi's death on 3 November 1992 our embassy in Abu Dhabi formally requested a copy of the post mortem report.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he took, before the death in Abu Dhabi of Mr. Arjumand Naqvi, to encourage the Abu Dhabi authorities to *(a)* release him, *(b)* charge him, *(c)* provide proper legal representation and *(d)* provide proper medical attention.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have made repeated representations to the Abu Dhabi authorities asking them either to charge or release all those detainees, including the late Mr. Arjumand Naqvi, for whom we have consular responsibility. The detainees are free to engage legal representation. A doctor pays regular visits to the detainees.

Bosnia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) which United Kingdom posts in Bosnia are able to supply visa application forms to Bosnian nationals wishing to visit the United Kingdom; and what delay there is between a post receiving such applications and decisions being taken;

(2) how many British officials are present at United Kingdom posts in Bosnia dealing with those applying for visas to visit the United Kingdom; how many interpreters are available to assist at interviews; and in what languages application forms and guidance notes are printed.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There is no British post in Bosnia.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what circumstances the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has been authorised to issue visas on behalf of the United Kingdom to Bosnian nationals wishing to visit the United Kingdom; what documentation is required by UNHCR before visas are issued; how many applicants have *(a)* been granted visas to date, *(b)* been refused visas to date and *(c)* appealed against refusal of visas.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: UNHCR has not been authorised to issue United Kingdom visas.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements are being made to send humanitarian relief by air to those parts of Bosnia difficult to supply by road.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Lack of airfields and security risks make delivering supplies by air impractical. With the onset of winter UNHCR is concentrating its efforts on supplying humanitarian relief by road. UNPROFOR's mandate was extended by United Nations Security Council resolution 776 to protect road convoys, a more effective way to distribute relief. The Sarajevo airlift continues and has delivered over 17,500 tonnes of aid.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications have so far been made by Bosnian nationals, or other residents of Bosnia, to visit the United Kingdom, to date; how many applications have *(a)* been granted, *(b)* been refused and *(c)* how many people have applied to appeal against refusal.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British consulate general in Milan has received three applications. All were granted. The British embassy in Vienna arranged with the Home Office on 7 November for 115 Bosnians, who had started their journey before the imposition of the visa regime, to enter the United Kingdom without visas. The embassy subsequently referred 183 visa applications from people currently on the Austro-Slovenian border to the Home Office on 13 November. These and our other posts in the region have received a number of telephone inquiries.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what documentation Bosnian nationals are required to submit when applying for visas to visit the United Kingdom; and what evidence of support, maintenance and accommodation in the United Kingdom is required.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are no requirements specific to Bosnian nationals. All applicants for visas to visit the United Kingdom have to complete an application form, provide two photographs and pay the appropriate fee. There are no documents which must be presented in support of visa applications. However, in order to satisfy themselves that applicants qualify under the immigration rules, entry clearance officers may ask to see evidence of an applicant's financial standing and funds for the visit, or evidence that a United Kingdom sponsor can and will support and accommodate the applicant during the visit; or evidence of any firm travel plans made, and if appropriate, evidence that the applicant has leave of absence from an employer, and will leave the United Kingdom before the expiry of the period which s/he has been admitted.

Inhumane Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those states that have ratified or acceded to the inhumane weapons convention; and when he expects Her Majesty's Government to ratify the convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following states have ratified, accepted or acceded to the convention: Australia, Austria, Benin, Bulgaria, Byelorussia, China, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Ukraine and Yugoslavia.

We are currently considering ratification of the convention by the United Kingdom, and expect to reach a decision soon.

Iran

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what actions he proposes to take during the current session of the United Nations General Assembly over human rights abuses in Iran.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations Secretary-General's special representative on human rights in Iran, Mr. Galindo-Pohl, will present a report to the United Nations General Assembly later this month. Together with our EC partners we will work to ensure that his report's findings are fully reflected in any resolution adopted at the General Assembly.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the authorities in the former Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan over its sale of nuclear warheads to Iran.

Mr. Garel-Jones: None. We have no reason to believe that any nuclear warheads have been transferred from Kazakhstan to Iran.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of the Russian Federation over its sale of submarines to Iran.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We expressed to the Russian Government our serious concerns on this subject during President Yeltsin's visit on 9 and 10 November: my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence raised this matter with President Yeltsin on 9 November. It was also raised during the talks held by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs with the Russian Foreign Minister on 10 November.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what approaches have been made by the Iranian Government to reopen its office of procurement in London; and what response he has given.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Iranians have made a number of requests to be allowed to reopen their military procurement offices in London, which were closed in 1987. We have made it clear that this would not be appropriate or welcome.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards asking the United Nations General Assembly to introduce an arms and oil embargo on Iran in view of its continuing human rights abuses.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans to do so. The United Nations Secretary-General's special representative on human rights in Iran, Mr. Galindo-Pohl, will present a report to the United Nations General Assembly later this month. Together with our EC partners we will work to ensure that his report's findings are fully reflected in any resolution adopted at the General Assembly.

Human Rights

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what account is taken of human rights' records of recipient countries in allocating the aid budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Respect for human rights is a part of our good government policy and an important condition for achieving sustainable development. It is one of the main factors we take into account in deciding where aid resources should be allocated.

Malawi

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will make representations to the Government of Malawi regarding the case of Mr. Ulaya; what reports he has received concerning violations of human rights in Malawi since August; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are aware of reports that Mr. Ulaya and other members of pressure groups recently formed in Malawi have been subjected to harassment and detention by the Malawian authorities. We understand that many were detained only briefly, but that Mr. Ulaya remains in detention in Mzuzu. On many occasions, we have drawn to the attention of the Malawian Government, our concern about human rights abuses in Malawi, most recently in a joint EC demarche on 20 October. We will continue to monitor the situation closely, including the case of Mr. Ulaya.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the Government of Malawi concerning *(a)* the detention and trial of Chakufwa Chihana and *(b)* the holding of a referendum on multi-party democracy in Malawi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We made formal representations in April and August this year calling on the Malawian Government to release Mr. Chihana pending formal committal proceedings and informing them that we considered his arrest and the subsequent charges to be a flagrant violation of his right to freedom of speech. On 20 October, in acknowledging President Banda's decision to hold a nationwide referendum, we urged the Malawian Government to ensure that the process was conducted with transparency and that those groups advocating democratic reform were allowed to do so openly and freely.

Angola

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will indicate the methods whereby the United Kingdom and the EC will facilitate demobilisation, confinement of troops and collection of weapons in Angola, as indicated in the 4 November EC statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The questions of demobilisation, confinement of troops and collection of weapons are addressed in the Bicesse peace agreements, compliance with which we and our EC partners, and the United Nations, are actively seeking to promote.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the United Kingdom and the EC will hold responsible those parties which obstruct the peace process as indicated in the 4 November statement on Angola.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Any party which obstructs the implementation of the Bicesse peace agreements, to which all parties in Angola have committed themselves, will clearly carry responsibility for the frustration of the peace process. As indicated in UN Security Council resolution 785, any such party would be rejected by the international community.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 9 November, *Official Report*, column *547*, what steps he is taking through the international community to ensure that UNITA accepts the results of the Angolan election and abides by the terms of the peace accords.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We continue to be active in our support for the efforts of the United Nations to secure formal UNITA acceptance of the election results, consolidation of the cease fire which came into force on 1 November, and continued implementation of the Bicesse peace agreements.

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent visit to northern Somalia by the ambassador to Ethiopia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our ambassador to Addis Ababa visited northern Somalia on 2 to 5 November. He went to Hargeisa, Berbera, Sheikh and Burao. He met local leaders and clan elders as well as representatives of United Nations and other aid agencies. His visit was not intended to indicate any recognition of the so-called Republic of Somaliland.

European Community Officials

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made towards increasing the number of Britons employed by the EC; and if he will make a statement on the European fast-stream project.

Mr. Robert Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

Following representations from the British Government, the Commission has now started to hold regular recruitment competitions for graduates from all academic disciplines—"generalist" competitions. When the first of these competitions was introduced last year there was an enthusiastic response from United Kingdom candidates. In time we hope that a much greater number of Britons will be able to gain employment in the European Community via this route.

Meanwhile, the European staffing unit in my Department is tackling the problem of British under-representation in other ways. A main task has been to set up and run the "European fast-stream" scheme. Up to 30 administrators, economists and lawyers are recruited to the British civil service each year and helped to prepare for the European Community competitions through a combination of relevant postings and training. Currently, there are 59 European fast-streamers in post, and we plan to build up to a maximum of 120 by the end of 1994. Although the scheme is still in its infancy, the initial results have been encouraging: over 50 per cent. of those who took last year's generalist competition have been invited to the final interview stage.

Nuclear Material (Export)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what additional allocation of resources has been made by Her Majesty's Government in support of the application of International Atomic Energy Agency INFCIRC/254/rev parts I and II, of July 1992, to amend international export control provisions on nuclear material, equipment and technology; and if he will make a statement on the co-operation arrangements in place between the European Atomic Energy Agency and the IAEA in enforcing the safeguards guidelines.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

INFCIRC/254 records common principles and guidelines that nuclear supplier states have agreed to follow in considering nuclear exports. Implementation is therefore undertaken by the nuclear supplier states, not the IAEA. In the United Kingdom, application of the recent revisions to INFCIRC/254 will be met from within existing resources.

The arrangements for the application of safeguards in the non-nuclear weapon states of the community are set out in an agreement (INFCIRC/193) between these states, the European Atomic Energy Community and the IAEA. As announced by the IAEA on 29 April 1992, discussions are under way between Euratom and the agency, in the context of INFCIRC/193, to examine new approaches on the implementation of safeguards. This study has not yet been completed.

WALES

Home Renovation Grants

11. **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet the chief executive officer and leader of Blaenau Gwent borough council, together with representatives of other local authorities, to discuss the current capital allocation and its effect on the provision of mandatory home renovation grants.

Mr. David Hunt: I understand that a meeting between my officials and Blaenau Gwent will take place this week.

Motor Components Industry

12. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of the motor components industry in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The motor components industry has developed strongly in Wales and now employs about 18,000 with a wide range of products and companies.

Unemployment

13. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the level of male unemployment in Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. David Hunt: In October 1992, seasonally adjusted male unemployment in Wales was 103,000.

16. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales and in Clwyd are without jobs.

Mr. David Hunt: In October 1992 there were 127,191 and 15,762 unemployed in Wales and Clwyd respectively.

22. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new proposals he intends to introduce to curb the increase in Welsh unemployment.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Office and its agencies, which already operate a range of measures to increase employment opportunities, will continue to look for further opportunities which will increase employment prospects.

26. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current number of unemployed persons in Wales, Mid Glamorgan and Ogmore; and what were the numbers in 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1991.

Mr. David Hunt: In October 1992, there were 130,200, 25,586 and 3,300 unemployed claimants in Wales, Mid Glamorgan and Ogmore constituency respectively.

Comparable figures for Wales for 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1991 are 63,800, 154,400, 140,700 and 119,900 respectively.

Comparable data for 1979 are not available for Mid Glamorgan and Ogmore constituency, but for 1983, 1987 and 1991, the figures are 33,452, 24,418, 24,636; and 4,350, 3,841, 3,129 for Mid Glamorgan and Ogmore constituency respectively.

Welsh Language

14. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he intends to take to safeguard the teaching of Welsh following implementation in Wales of the White Paper on education proposals.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This Government have already taken steps to safeguard the teaching of Welsh by establishing it as a foundation subject in the national curriculum. The proposals in the White Paper will enable further improvements to be made to the teaching of Welsh in schools.

Local Government Reform

15. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest timetable for the implementation of changes to the structure of local government in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: My timetable is unchanged—I expect the new authorities to assume their responsibilities in April 1995.

Heart Surgery

17. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the Touche Ross report into cardiac surgery facilities in Wales will be published.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I expect the report to be submitted to my right hon. Friend later this year.

Bettws Colliery

18. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last visited the Bettws colliery, near Ammanford, to discuss the employment prospects in the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Arrangements are being made for me to meet a number of local authorities and other interested bodies to discuss local economic issues, including the effect of possible colliery closures.

Arable Support Scheme

19. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the criteria and reasoning supporting his decision to make Wales a single separate region for the arable support scheme, pursuant to Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1765/92.

Mr. David Hunt: I was obliged to have regard to the terms of the regulation and to the reliability of available data on cereal yields in recent years.

Second Severn Crossing

20. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on progress with the construction of the second Severn crossing.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Construction of this £500 million project is substantially under way. Preliminary offshore foundation work for the estuary crossing is progressing well. Tenders have been invited for the approach roads on both sides of the estuary.

Valleys Initiative

21. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what effect there has been on unemployment levels in the area covered by the valleys initiative since the scheme was launched.

Mr. David Hunt: The unemployment rate in the valleys is 8·3 per cent. lower than it was in 1988 when the programme for the valleys began. United Kingdom unemployment is now more than 20 per cent. higher than it was in 1988 when the programme for the valleys began.

Surplus School Places

23. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has concerning surplus school places in the primary and secondary sector in each local education authority in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: As the answer contains numerous figures I will, with permission, circulate them in the *Official Report*. There are, however, more than 118,000 surplus places in primary and secondary schools throughout Wales. The cost of supplying these places is estimated at about £25 million.

Following is the information:

Surplus places in maintained schools in Wales at 1 January 1991

County	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Total*
Clwyd	9,987	2,927	12,914
Dyfed	9,013	2,071	11,084
Gwent	9,799	10,604	20,403
Gwynedd	5,129	4,533	9,662
Mid Glamorgan	13,416	7,409	20,825
Powys	3,102	1,602	4,704
South Glamorgan	9,864	7,318	17,182
West Glamorgan	14,025	7,303	21,328
Wales	74,335	43,767	118,102

Assisted Areas

24. **Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has regarding the assisted area status of Llanelli travel-to-work area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received a number of representations about the Llanelli travel-to-work area, from local authorities and other organisations, some of which request that Llanelli be upgraded to development area status, others seek to maintain its present status.

Employment Information

25. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new initiatives he plans to introduce to improve the accuracy of employment information.

Mr. David Hunt: The Department of Employment is responsible for the preparation of employment estimates for Wales.

In the past two years, the Employment Department has completed three major projects to improve the reliability of the estimates. Other projects, including the first full census of employers since 1981 and the development with the Central Statistical Office of a register of employers, will be completed over the next three years.

NHS Trusts

27. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to ensure that the majority of members of the boards of national health service hospital trusts in Wales are elected.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No.

Grant-maintained Schools

28. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made towards the announcement of grant-maintained schools in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In addition to the three schools in Wales already enjoying grant-maintained status, four schools—Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan and Maelor comprehensive in Clwyd, Caergeiliog primary in Gwynedd, and Llanerfyl Church in Wales primary in Powys—have published proposals to become grant maintained. I hope to make an announcement to the first of these, Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan, shortly.

Higher Education

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress the Higher Education Funding Council is making in the development of higher education in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales assumes responsibility for the funding of higher education in Wales next April. Since its inception the council has met on four occasions and has concentrated on formulating a policy for funding the higher education institutions next year.

Student Grants

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many students have *(a)* applied for and *(b)* received discretionary grants in each local authority area in Wales in each of the last five years; and how much money has been allocated for discretionary grants in each of the last five years in each local education authority area.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the number of students who have applied for discretionary grants and the amounts allocated is not held centrally.

According to returns made to the Department of Education, 11,478 students received discretionary grants from local education authorities (LEAs) in Wales in the academic year 1990-91. This is the latest year for which such information is available. Similar information for previous years could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

The allocation of money for discretionary grants is a matter for LEAs. Each LEA determines its own discretionary grants policies, the cost being met from within its own resources.

Special Needs Education

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to ensure that the principles and good practice outlined in the all-Wales strategy for mentally handicapped people are fully implemented within special needs provision within the further education sector in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: An important contribution is made by further education in fulfilling the principles of the all-Wales mental handicap strategy. The Further Education Funding Council aims to ensure that the needs of students with a mental handicap are assessed and appropriate provision identified. The funding council is working to ensure the best possible response to students needs.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to grant increased funding to colleges in the further education sector in Wales for the running of special needs courses for students with learning difficulties.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Until 1 April 1993 responsibility for special needs courses in the further education sector in Wales rests with the local education authorities. From that date, responsibility will transfer to the Further Education Funding Council for Wales. My right hon. Friend, in his letter of guidance to the chairman of the funding council, asked that the council's decisions on the distribution of funds to the colleges should take account of the additional costs involved in making provision for students with learning difficulties.

Cancelled Operations

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many operations have been cancelled in Wales on the day the patient was due for the operation since April.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The requested information is not available centrally.

Learning Difficulties

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the specific courses for students with learning difficulties within further education colleges in Wales which have been disbanded in each year since 1987-88; and what was the reason for each course being brought to an end.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the designated courses for students with learning difficulties which have been offered by each college of further education in Wales in each academic year since 1987-88; and how many students followed each course in each academic year.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not held centrally.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to meet the chairman of the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend and his officials hold frequent discussions with the chairman and officers of the National Rivers Authority about matters of mutual interest.

Furniture Safety

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will bring forward proposals to grant support for premises to enable compliance with the draft Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the annual budget since its creation, of the TECs in Clwyd; and what is the percentage annual change in the central Government contribution to the budget.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The majority of the county of Clwyd is covered by North West Wales TEC. North East Wales TEC covers the western part of the county. Comparative information is only available for financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93. The following table sets out expenditure, budgets and percentage changes for the TECs concerned.

Total expenditure and budgets

£ million

TEC	*1991-92 expenditure*	*1992-93 budget*	*1991-92 to 1992-93 percentage change*
North East Wales TEC	11·363	11·164	−1·75
North West Wales TEC	12·883	14·163	9·94

Mencap

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures the Government are taking to ensure that county council funding of Mencap is adequate.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: County joint planning teams—which are led by social services departments and consisting of representatives of health authorities, housing associations, education authorities, voluntary organisations, service users and their carers—are responsible for the planning and the priority of services for the mentally handicapped including those provided by Mencap in Wales. The available resources are then allocated according to the locally determined priorities.

British Rail

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to meet the chairman of British Rail.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend meets Sir Bob Reid regularly. They last met on 7 September, but a date for their next meeting has not yet been arranged.

Education White Paper

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements he will propose for financing the education services provided by the National Library of Wales in consequence of the proposals contained in the education White Paper; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The proposals in Cm 2021 have no direct implications for the services provided by the National Library of Wales. With regard to the museum school service, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on 5 November, *Official Report*, column *388*.

Teenage Pregnancies

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to combat single teenage pregnancies in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Health Promotion Authority for Wales undertakes a range of initiatives in collaboration with national and local agencies, to promote healthy sexuality, and combat teenage pregnancy. They include provision of information and advice on contraception, sex education, pilot projects including parents, research on knowledge and attitudes/behaviour, the development of databases for professionals working in this area, and support for multi-agency initiatives. The Department also provides direct support to the Family Planning Association in Wales for its work which includes training for those working with young people.

District health authorities are also addressing the issue of teenage pregnancy and many have introduced measures geared to local needs, including health education programmes and services specifically for young people. Further guidance will be contained in the "Protocol for Investment in Health Gain: Emotional Health and Relationships", due to be published in early 1993.

Births

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many babies have been born in Wales since April; and how many nursing mothers were allocated qualified nurses, midwives or health visitors.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of live births in Wales from 1 April 1992 to 31 July 1992 which had been registered on or before 31 July was approximately 10,780. This figure includes all live births in hospitals in Wales, and live births at home to women usually resident in Wales. It does not include a small number of births which would have occurred elsewhere. Information about births registered after the end of July is not yet available.

The number of nursing mothers allocated qualified nurses, midwives or health visitors is not available centrally.

Child Psychotherapists

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many child psychotherapists are in practice in Wales; what plans he has to increase this number; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: At 30 September 1992 there were three—whole-time equivalent 1·5—child psychotherapists employed within the national health service in Wales. Information about the number of child psychotherapists in practice outside the NHS is not collected centrally. The Department is also funding a child psychotherapist post in Clwyd health authority, from the mental illness strategy.

Training

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will review the youth training and employment training schemes in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment today, *Official Report*, columns *24-25*.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for improving the training and enterprise councils in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The training and enterprise councils (TECs) in Wales have made good progress in tackling skills and business development needs in their local communities. My right hon. Friend has issued strategic guidance setting out the key issues he wishes them to address and Ministers meet regularly with the chairmen of the Welsh TECs to discuss and review progress.

National Record of Achievement

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will review the cost implication of the stationery required for the national record of achievement post-16 for high schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No. The national record of achievement is not compulsory for post-16 in high schools. It is therefore for individual schools to decide whether to fund the NRA's introduction for post-16 students.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the cost to individual high schools of the post-16 national record of achievement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: As the national record of achievement is not compulsory post-16, central records are not kept and the information is not available. However, if individual schools decide to introduce the NRA post-16, the cost varies according to the numbers ordered, ranging from £7·00 per folder for ordering one to £3·27 per folder for bulk orders of 100 or more.

University Research Funding

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the amount of research funding to universities in Wales from agencies funded by his Department.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Financial allocations for programmes, including higher education, within the Welsh block will be announced in the near future.

Sixth Form Students

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of students in the sixth forms of Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In September 1991 there were 23,185 pupils in sixth forms in Wales.

This figure includes the number of pupils in the two sixth form colleges in Wales.

High Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local education authority high schools there are in each of the local education authorities of Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The number of local education authority secondary schools in Wales as at September 1992 was as follows:

	Number
Clwyd	33
Dyfed	31
Gwent	31
Gwynedd	23
Mid Glamorgan	42
Powys	13
South Glamorgan	27
West Glamorgan	26
WALES	226

These figures include two local education authority sixth form colleges, one in Clwyd and the other in South Glamorgan.

Pit Closures

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of the £75 million allocated to fulfil plans for local job creation in areas affected by pit closures has been requested by each of the training and enterprise councils covering Betws, Point of Ayr and Taff Merthyr collieries.

Mr. David Hunt: I have already announced that, over the next 18 months, I shall be making available up to £4·8 million for employment and training measures in the areas affected. I am considering the action plans from the TECs involved and will announce my decisions on funding in due course.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency concerning personnel procedures and guidelines; and if he will make a statement on departures by the agency from the standard procedures.

Mr. David Hunt: I meet regularly with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency to discuss a range of issues.

America's Cup

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what requests he has received for public sector assistance for a Welsh challenge for the America's cup; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There have been informal discussions about the possibility of a Welsh entry in the America's cup. I have received no formal request for financial assistance from the public sector.

HEALTH

London Ambulance Service

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current sick leave rate for the London ambulance service; what is the national average for sick leave; what is the position of the London service in the rank order of ambulance services with the highest amount of sick leave; and if she will ensure that this aspect of the management of the London ambulance service is considered by the inquiry into the service.

Mr. Sackville: Information on sick leave among ambulance staff is not regularly reported to the Department of Health. The results of a recent survey of urban (1) ambulance services are set out in the table.

Average per cent. of ambulance staff on sick leave

	Per cent.
London	9·88
South Yorkshire	7·00
West Midlands	6·94
Surrey	6·50
West Yorkshire	6·50
Avon	6·00
Cleveland	5·50
Greater Manchester	4·90
Mersey	3·50

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the dates, the purpose on each occasion, and the name of the Minister for each official visit to the headquarters of the London ambulance service between 10 April and 25 October.

Mr. Sackville: I visited the London ambulance service on 13 May and 30 September.

On 13 May, I met Mr. James Harris, chairman of the London ambulance service board, to discuss the performance of the service.

The purpose of my visit on 30 September was to meet control room and ambulance personnel.

Patients' Transport

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the Government are doing to encourage district health authorities to make use of *(a)* taxis in general and *(b)* the new design of taxi with its special facilities for the disabled in their provision of non-emergency patient transport services.

Dr. Mawhinney: Guidance issued by the Department advises that non-emergency patient transport services purchasers should make use of all modes of transport from a range of patient transport service operators who can provide a reliable and flexible service to patients, including, for example, the NHS ambulance service, private ambulance operators, vehicle hire, taxis and voluntary car services. The form of transport used will be determined locally and should be the most suitable for each patient's needs, taking into account any recommendation made by the patient's doctor.

Hypothermia

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing, for men aged 65 years and over and women aged 60 years and over, the number of deaths from hypothermia in *(a)* Pendle, *(b)* Lancashire and *(c)* the United Kingdom for each year since 1987.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Number of deaths with mention of hypothermia on the death certificate for males aged 65 years and over and females aged 60 years and over in (a) Pendle, (b) Lancashire and (c) United Kingdom for the years 1987 to 1991.

	Males aged 65+	*Females aged 60+*
1987		
United Kingdom	199	387
Lancashire	2	14
Pendle	0	0
1988		
United Kingdom	169	317
Lancashire	3	9
Pendle	0	0
1989		
United Kingdom	152	307
Lancashire	6	6
Pendle	0	0
1990		
United Kingdom	164	282
Lancashire	5	4
Pendle	0	0
1991		
United Kingdom	188	363
Lancashire	5	7
Pendle	0	0

Health Authority Budgets

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* the actual and *(b)* the percentage difference in budget between 1991-92 and 1992-93 for each district health authority in England.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not collected centrally.

NHS Supplies Authority

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what salary is payable to the chairman of the NHS Supplies Authority; and how many days a week he is expected to devote to his duties.

Dr. Mawhinney: The chairman of the National Health Service Supplies Authority is currently paid £20,925 per annum. He is expected to devote sufficient time to NHS Supplies to meet fully the responsibilities of his office.

Staff Relocation

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting support staff have been or will be relocated from Woodseats house, Chesterfield road, Sheffield, to London.

Mr. Sackville: None have moved. The English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting is considering the possibility of relocation as part of a cost-savings programme.

NHS Prescriptions

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total annual cost of NHS prescriptions; and what is the total cost of items supplied by appliance contractors.

Dr. Mawhinney: The total cost of national health service prescriptions in the family health services in England, including dispensing fees, amounted to £2,924 million in 1991-92, of which around £30 million related to prescriptions dispensed by appliance contractors.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what differences there are in the arrangements for paying appliance contractors and pharmacists.

Dr. Mawhinney: For dispensing appliances, appliance contractors receive a dispensing fee and payment of between 25 per cent. and 15·8 per cent. of the cost of the appliances, depending on the number of prescriptions they dispense in a month. Pharmacy contractors currently receive a dispensing fee, 2·5 per cent. of the cost of the appliances and various minor allowances. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 30 October, at column *941*. We shall be reviewing the structure of payments to appliance contractors in the light of changes we are making to pharmacists' remuneration.

Dentists

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library a list of the dentists in England that are refusing to take on new national health service patients.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists are currently unemployed in each health region in England.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

Community Care

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she has taken to ensure that arrangements for community care will work for people who do not come from stable backgrounds or have recognisable local links.

Mr. Yeo: We believe that homeless people who need care should receive it on the same basis as all other citizens. Local authorities have statutory responsibilities towards people of no settled residence as well as people ordinarily resident in their areas. We will issue guidance to local authorities early next year to help them determine from April 1993 "ordinary residence" and responsibility for funding in individual cases.

Accident and Emergency Services

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of commissioning York Health Economics Consortium to carry out the review of the accident and emergency services; and to whom the cost falls.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. M. F. Emberton, chairman of Liverpool health authority, for details.

Budgets, Merseyside

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total annual budget for *(a)* the Liverpool district health authority and *(b)* the North Mersey Health Consortium for the current year.

Mr. Sackville: Liverpool health authority's total purchasing budget for the current year, excluding GP fund holders, amounts to £218 million.

The North Mersey Health Consortium, which includes Liverpool, South Sefton, St. Helens and Knowsley and Southport and Formby district health authorities, has a current purchasing budget of some £460 million.

Out-patients

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what percentage of out-patients in each health authority in England were *(a)* given a specific appointment and *(b)* seen within 30 minutes of that time for each of the last available financial years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library a copy of the health and safety policy of each of the agencies within her Department.

Mr. Sackville: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the NHS Estates Agency under its chief executive, Mr. John Locke, and to the Medicines Control Agency under its chief executive, Dr. Keith Jones. I have asked them to reply to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. Locke to Mr. John McAllion, dated 13 November 1992:

The Secretary of State for Health has asked me to reply in writing to the Parliamentary Question (No. 1779) you tabled on the health and safety policy of the NHS Estates agency.

NHS Estates currently adopts the policy of the Department of Health as a whole. A copy has been placed in the House of Commons Library as requested.

We shall be moving to our own offices in Leeds next year and may have to develop our own health and safety policy for staff in that building and administer it within the agency then.

I hope that you find this helpful.

Letter from R. A. Alder to Mr. John McAllion, dated 16 November 1992:

The Secretary of State for Health will have advised you that your recent Parliamentary Question will be answered directly by the Chief Executive of the relevant agencies. I give below the response for the Medicines Control Agency6:

Parliamentary Question P.1779

This Agency, being part of the Department of Health, operates the same policies on health and safety at work as the Department. Therefore, we are arranging for a copy of the Department's Policy Statement to be placed in the Library.

Waiting lists

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to her answer of 22 October, *Official Report*, column *369*, how many self-deferred cases are included in the figures for March 1992 of *(a)* in-patient admissions and *(b)* day case admissions of (i) in each NHS region and in England in total and (ii) in each specialty.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 11 November 1992]*: The information requested is given in the table.

This shows that the total number of patients who declined an offer of admission fell by nearly 4,000 (or 8 per cent.) compared with March 1991.

Day case self-deferred—March 1992 by region and specialty

Region	*Northern*	*Yorkshire*	*Trent*	*East Anglia*	*North West Thames*	*North East Thames*	*South East Thames*	*South West Thames*	*Wessex*	*Oxford*	*South Western*	*West Midlands*	*Mersey*	*North Western*	*SHAs*	*England*
* Data includes Trusts																
General Surgery	230	220	391	214	123	318	348	333	105	151	311	392	279	371	24	3,808
Urology	119	83	79	94	54	178	37	75	31	19	112	114	58	87	10	1,150
Trauma and Orthopaedics	148	92	249	110	141	187	70	203	98	177	275	276	134	119	29	2,304
ENT	25	29	71	46	36	60	10	82	13	53	56	35	25	72	4	639
Opthalmology	27	17	28	38	32	17	6	75	18	9	61	50	30	70	72	546
Oral Surgery	18	74	36	65	46	48	37	94	39	29	89	107	35	110	6	853
Restorative Dentistry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Paediatric Dentistry	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	63	79
Orthodontics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neurosurgery	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	5	12
Plastic Surgery	41	8	52	16	63	25	10	26	0	68	56	25	15	131	0	634
Cardiothoracic Surgery	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Paediatric Surgery	16	6	0	0	2	0	6	16	35	0	1	13	0	1	15	111
Accident and Emergency	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	11	1	0	0	29	0	0	0	47
Anaesthetics	2	21	6	12	0	6	0	8	0	8	0	29	9	16	0	117
General Medicine	0	0	13	121	20	30	2	60	4	3	14	188	3	83	0	541
Gastroenterology	0	30	21	0	32	41	0	3	0	13	2	5	28	16	0	191
Endocrinology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
Clinical Haematology	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3
Clinical Physiology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clinical Pharmacology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Audiological Medicine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clinical Genetics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CL Cytogenetics/Molecul	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rehabilitation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Palliative Medicine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cardiology	0	5	2	0	2	13	0	11	0	0	0	1	0	0	12	46
Dermatology	5	1	4	0	0	0	0	7	4	0	0	2	0	27	2	52
Thoracic Medicine	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	5	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	9
Infectious Diseases	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Genito-Urinary Medicine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nephrology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Medical Oncology	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Nuclear Medicine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neurology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6
Clinical Neuro-Physiology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rheumatology	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	7
Paediatrics	5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Paediatric Neurology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Geriatric Medicine	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	13
Dental Medicine Specialist	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Obs and Gyn (Gynaecology)	59	215	143	150	35	273	61	254	82	120	47	281	137	86	7	1,950
GP (Non Maternity)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	8

Region	Northern	Yorkshire	Trent	East Anglia	North West Thames	North East Thames	South East Thames	South West Thames	Wessex	Oxford	South Western	West Midlands	Mersey	North Western	SHAs	England
Mental Handicap	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mental Illness	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Child Adolescent Psychiatry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Forensic Psychiatry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Psychotherapy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Old Age Psychiatry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Radiotherapy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Radiology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
General Pathology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Blood Transfusion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chemical Pathology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Haematology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Histopathology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Immunopathology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Medical Microbiology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neuropathology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community Medicine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Occupational Medicine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
All Specialities	694	799	1,116	854	588	1,204	489	1,285	480	850	1,004	1,773	774	1,199	262	13,151

In-patient self-deferred—March 1992 by region and specialty

Region	Northern	Yorkshire	Trent	East Anglia	North West Thames	North East Thames	South East Thames	South West Thames	Wessex	Oxford	South Western	West Midlands	Mersey	North Western	SHAs	England
* Data includes Trusts																
General Surgery	375	633	763	395	519	1,109	462	587	720	294	797	1,073	389	422	57	8,585
Urology	85	135	119	130	102	405	88	134	88	25	115	170	87	139	56	1,874
Trauma and Orthopaedics	346	318	874	313	408	875	198	313	362	218	462	781	188	247	43	5,942
ENT	225	261	366	261	353	585	169	445	205	193	453	386	175	306	22	4,385
Ophthalmology	124	96	120	121	205	100	116	185	159	62	158	271	179	191	284	2,349
Oral Surgery	58	150	173	187	158	230	87	116	178	114	192	203	6	78	8	1,919
Restorative Dentistry	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Paediatric Dentistry	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	7
Orthodontics	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
Neurosurgery	0	3	7	5	4	16	0	8	0	0	5	8	0	0	23	84
Plastic Surgery	87	26	147	54	130	84	62	78	0	121	172	31	13	118	8	1,131
Cardiothoracic Surgery	0	10	19	9	20	35	19	3	1	0	10	3	9	2	11	151
Paediatric Surgery	7	14	4	7	10	6	22	6	21	0	2	18	0	10	7	134
Accident and Emergency	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	4	0	0	0	9
Anaesthetics	0	1	2	3	1	4	2	9	0	0	0	2	6	0	0	30
General Medicine	1	1	7	4	5	51	0	12	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	85
Gastroenterology	0	0	0	0	6	27	24	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	3	66
Endocrinology	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	18
Clinical Haematology	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Clinical Physiology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clinical Pharmacology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Audiological Medicine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clinical Genetics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CL Cytogenetics/Molecul	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rehabilitation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
Palliative Medicine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cardiology	0	5	7	12	22	63	50	2	2	2	2	13	16	2	4	202
Dermatology	6	0	2	0	0	9	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	31
Thoracic Medicine	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16
Infectious Diseases	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Genito-Urinary Medicine	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Nephrology	0	0	1	1	8	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	18
Medical Oncology	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	30
Nuclear Medicine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neurology	12	1	0	2	7	18	1	3	0	2	1	7	20	9	53	136
Clinical Neuro-Physiology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rheumatology	0	4	14	0	0	4	4	3	0	7	3	7	0	2	1	49
Paediatrics	3	0	0	0	2	14	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	23
Paediatric Neurology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	8
Geriatric Medicine	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Dental Medicine Specialist	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Obs and Gyn (Gynaecology)	165	309	398	178	130	480	179	276	283	120	223	397	215	242	30	3,615
GP (Non Maternity)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	19
Mental Handicap	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mental Illness	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	6	1	9
Child Adolescent Psychiatry	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Forensic Psychiatry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Psychotherapy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Old Age Psychiatry	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Radiotherapy	0	0	0	2	0	12	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
Radiology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
General Pathology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Blood Transfusion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chemical Pathology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Haematology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Histopathology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Immunopathology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Medical Microbiology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neuropathology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community Medicine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Occupational Medicine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
All Specialities	1,495	1,966	3,088	1,684	2,095	4,151	1,503	2,163	2,044	1,159	2,597	3,376	1,306	1,777	662	30,965

Thrombosis

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assistance has been given in the past by her Department to the Thrombosis Research Institute; and what such resources will continue to be made available in the future;

(2) if she will make a statement outlining all the funding which is currently made available by her Department to research into the causes and treatments of thrombosis.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health made a grant to the Thrombosis Research Institute of £600,000 spread over three years ending in 1991-92 to assist with the establishment of the institute. We have no current plans to extend this funding. Consideration of support for research into the causes and treatment of thrombosis is a matter for the Medical Research Council.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has concerning the number of deaths from thrombosis in England and Wales in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Deaths from Thrombosis[1] for England and Wales 1982-1991

Year	*Number*
1982	120,102
1983	118,958
1984	115,685
1985	116,591
1986	111,810
1987	107,766
1988	103,932
1989	99,193
1990	95,799
1991	93,609

[1] ICD 410 Acute Myocardial Infarction.
ICD 434·0 Cerebral Thrombosis.
ICD 444 Arterial Embolism and Thrombosis.
ICD 452 Portal Vein Thrombosis.
ICD 453 Other Venous Embolism and Thrombosis.

Drug and Alcohol Misuse

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on future payment of development moneys for drug and alcohol clinics.

Mr. Yeo: An announcement regarding the specific grants to be made available for 1993-94 for the personal social services will be made shortly.

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements she proposes to ensure that local authorities give proper weight to the needs of alcohol and drug misusers under community care; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The special circumstances of alcohol and drug misusers have implications for both local authorities and service providers in funding for community care.

We propose to address these by issuing special guidance to encourage local authorities to pay special attention to meeting the needs of alcohol and drug misusers within community care and encouraging local authorities and alcohol and drug services providers to work together to establish "fast track" assessment procedures to ensure that decisions about service provision for these clients can be made quickly and establish good practice in identifying responsible authorities for out-of-area referrals.

We will also establish special monitoring arrangements for alcohol and drug misuse services in the first three months after the third stage of our community care reforms come into operation in April 1993.

We have already taken steps to ensure that the £539 million special transitional grant (STG), which will fund the additional community care responsibilities being assumed by local authorities from April next year, is spent on services which reflect client's wishes and causes minimal turbulence. These are:

(i) the pre-condition of the STG that health authorities and local authorities should have signed agreements on where their responsibilities lie;

(ii) that 85 per cent. of the transfer element of the STG be spent in the independent sector;

(iii) the direction on choice which will ensure that the views of alcohol and drugs misusers—like other community care clients—are taken into account when deciding the most appropriate package of care.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment she has made of the difficulties projects such as Phoenix House will face following the introduction of community care in April 1993 in negotiating contracts with many local authorities;

(2) what action she proposes to take to ensure the future funding arrangements of Phoenix House and other short-stay residential projects for drug misusers;

(3) if she will make it her policy to ring-fence funds to protect residential drug services within the funds earmarked for community care.

Mr. Yeo: A special transitional grant for community care of £539 million will be made available to local authorities in 1993-94. This money will be ring-fenced for use by local authorities for the whole range of community care, including services for drug and alcohol misusers. We have, however, recognised the special circumstances in relation to services for drug and alcohol misusers and I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) today.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 17 November 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) if he will take the necessary steps to ensure that no individual's civil action is statute barred as a result of their being unable to proceed with their action due to their eligibility for legal aid being wrongly assessed during the period 1 October 1991 to 30 March 1992;

(2) if he will make a statement on the circumstances which led to the incorrect assessment of income in relation to applications for civil legal aid between 1 October 1991 and 30 March 1992;

(3) if he will reimburse to solicitors their costs in checking clients' files in order to identify those cases where an incorrect assessment of income in relation to applications for civil legal aid was made between 1 October 1991 and 30 March 1992;

(4) what estimate he has made of the amount that will need to be repaid to those claimants who made a contribution to their civil legal aid costs but whose income was wrongly assessed during the period 1 October 1991 to 30 March 1992;

(5) how many claimants have been affected by his Department's incorrect assessment of income in relation to applications for civil legal aid during the period 1 October 1991 to 30 March 1992;

(6) what assessment he has made of the number of clients' files that will need to be checked by solicitors in order to identify those cases in which an error in the original assessment for civil legal aid was made between 1 October 1991 and 30 March 1992.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Legal aid dependants' allowances are, by regulation, set at 25 per cent. above income support allowances. From 7 October 1991, the income support allowances for dependent children were increased by £0·25 a week. However, as a result of administrative error, legal aid allowances were not adjusted. This meant that the amounts allowed by way of child dependants' allowances in legal aid means assessments were inaccurate to the extent of £0·31 per week.

In civil cases the assessments that may have been affected are those in which the financial application was completed between 1 October 1991 and 31 March 1992 and where the applicant had dependent children. Steps have been taken to ensure that those who may have been affected by this error will have their means reassessed. In the overwhelming majority of cases, the result of the error will have been that the individuals concerned will have been required to pay slightly more by way of contribution—around £4 per dependent child payable over one year—towards the cost of their legal aid than they otherwise would. Any such overpayment will be refunded. In these cases, the question of individuals being unable to pursue their cases as a result of the error does not arise. In the unlikely event that this error caused an individual who would otherwise have been within the financial limits to be assessed as financially ineligible, I am prepared to consider, in the light of the particular circumstances, whether it would be appropriate for special help to be given to such individuals.

It is not possible to provide accurate figures on the number of applications affected by the error, but the Benefits Agency estimates it to be about 8 per cent. of those cases assessed during the period of the error. I will consider any claims for reasonable and necessary costs incurred by individual solicitors in checking their clients' files.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Agencies

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to review the status of agencies set up as part of the Government's next steps programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The status of potential agencies is carefully considered before the agency is launched as the then Prime Minister explained to the House on 24 October 1988, at column *14*. The same alternative options of abolition, privatisation and contracting out the agency's functions will normally be re-examined during the periodic review of the agency's framework document that is a standard part of each agency's arrangements.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Education

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the level of funding next year for prison education.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have received a number of representations about the competitive tendering exercise which the Prison Service is currently undertaking to determine the arrangements for the provision of education in prisons from 1 April 1993. Some of these have referred to future levels of funding. The level of financial provision for 1993-94 will need to take account of the outcome of the competitive tendering exercise and will be published in the supply estimates in due course. Payments to local education authorities in 1992-93 for the provision of education in prisons are expected to total £29·9 million, an increase of 14 per cent.—over 8 per cent. in real terms—on expenditure in 1991-92.

Shotgun Incidents

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, column *412*, on domestic shotgun incidents, how many of the victims were women.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is given in the table.

Domestic homicide offences involving female victims where a shotgun was used

Police force area	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
	Year					
Avon and Somerset	0	1	0	0	0	1
Bedfordshire	1	0	0	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cheshire	0	1	0	0	0	1
Cleveland	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cumbria	0	0	1	0	0	0
Derbyshire	0	0	1	0	0	0
Devon and Cornwall	0	4	0	1	0	0
Dorset	0	0	0	1	1	1
Durham	1	0	1	0	0	1
Essex	0	0	1	0	0	0
Gloucestershire	0	1	0	0	0	0
Greater Manchester	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hampshire	2	0	0	0	0	0
Humberside	0	0	0	0	2	0
Kent	0	1	1	0	0	0
Lancashire	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leicestershire	0	0	0	1	0	0
Lincolnshire	0	0	1	0	0	0
London, City of	0	0	0	0	0	0
Merseyside	0	0	0	0	0	0
Metropolitan	1	0	1	1	0	0
Norfolk	2	1	0	0	0	0
Northamptonshire	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northumbria	1	0	0	0	0	0
North Yorkshire	0	0	0	0	0	1
Nottinghamshire	1	0	0	0	0	0
South Yorkshire	0	0	1	0	0	1
Staffordshire	0	0	0	0	1	0
Suffolk	1	1	0	1	0	1
Surrey	0	0	0	1	0	0
Sussex	0	0	1	1	1	0
Thames Valley	0	0	0	0	1	0
Warwickshire	0	0	1	0	0	0
West Mercia	0	1	0	1	1	1
West Midlands	0	1	0	0	0	1
West Yorkshire	0	1	0	0	0	1
Wiltshire	0	0	0	0	1	0
Dyfed-Powys	0	0	0	0	1	1
Gwent	0	0	0	0	0	1
North Wales	0	0	0	1	0	0
South Wales	0	0	0	1	0	0
England and Wales	10	13	10	10	9	11

Notes:

1. Offences currently recorded as homicide as at 1 September 1991.
2. The term "domestic" includes the following relationships of victim to suspect: daughter; parent; spouse; cohabitant or former spouse or cohabitant; other family; lover or former lover including spouse's lover or lover's spouse or other associate.

Wolds Prison

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many full-time equivalent probation officers are employed at Her Majesty's prison Wolds; and who is their employer.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Four probation officers work at Her Majesty's prison Wolds. They are employed by the local probation service.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many full-time equivalent chaplains are employed at Her Majesty's prison Wolds; and who is their employer;

(2) how many full-time equivalent *(a)* medical and *(b)* education staff are employed at Her Majesty's prison Wolds; and who is their employer in each case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Chaplains and education staff are employees of Group 4 Remand Services Ltd; medical staff are sub-contracted. The numbers are subject to commercial confidentiality and a matter for Group 4 Remand Services Ltd.

Electoral System

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 9 November to the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson), *Official Report*, column *630*, to which parts of the United Kingdom the shortfall figure for electoral registration refers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The estimate relates to England and Wales. A comparison between parliamentary electorates and the corresponding population estimates in England and Wales, and in Scotland, for each year since 1981 is contained in the OPCS publication "1992 Electoral Statistics", series EL No. 19, a copy of which is in the Library.

Women Prisoners

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which prisons allow home leave visits for *(a)* foreign women prisoners and *(b)* female prisoners convicted of drugs importation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Governors of female establishments may grant a period of home leave only to those prisoners who are eligible for home leave and who satisfy the conditions for granting such leave, as laid down in circular instruction 43/1992, a copy of which is in the Library.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of *(a)* women prisoners and *(b)* foreign women prisoners have (i) children and (ii) children aged under five years in this country; and what proportion of those children are put in care on the imprisonment of the mother.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The answers given to the national prison survey in January and February 1991 indicate that 47 per cent. of women prisoners had children under the age of 18 who were living with them just before they came into prison. At the time the survey was undertaken, 10 per cent. of these children were being looked after by foster parents, and 2 per cent. were in children's homes or in care.

A census carried out in December 1989 recorded that 28 per cent. of the sentenced women who responded had children under five years old.

There are no separate figures for foreign women from either of these sources.

Prisoners' Correspondence

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the requirement for letters to foreign prisoners to be sent for translation still stands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Correspondence written to prisoners in a language other than English requires translation only if it is liable to be read under the terms of circular instruction 10/1991, a copy of which is in the Library.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to enable prisoners with reading or language difficulties to get their letters read with minimum delay; and if he will list the prisons running such a scheme.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Prison staff are available, as part of their normal duties, to assist prisoners to get their letters read.

Miscarriages of Justice

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what investigations he has made into the percentage of possible miscarriages of justice referred to him that involve black people.

Mr. Jack: Representations received about alleged miscarriages of justice do not normally reveal the ethnic origin of the person or persons concerned. As a consequence, the statistics sought are not available.

Prisoners (Phone Calls)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration has been given to supplying £10 phone cards in prison to enable foreign visitors to make calls overseas; and which prisons currently allow free phone calls by foreign prisoners to their families.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Prisoners may purchase from earnings or private cash a minimum of two £2 or £4 phonecards a week. Consideration will be given to the need for £10 phonecards in the light of demand.

Governors have discretion to enable foreign visitors to phone home or allow incoming or reverse calls on official lines.

Information about those prisons that currently allow free phone calls by foreign prisoners to their families is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Homelessness

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish his proposals for a Bill on the use of residential property by homeless persons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Government are committed to strengthening and improving the law against the unlawful occupation of premises by squatters. We are considering the best way forward in the light of the responses received to our recent consultation exercise and we will announce our conclusions in due course.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what notice he gave to his counterparts throughout the EC of the decision to impose visa requirements on nationals of former Yugoslav states.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There is no requirement to give notice of the imposition of a visa regime and it is not the normal practice of member states to do so. Three days' notice was given to the Irish Republic because of the country's inclusion in the common travel area. Other member states were not given advance notice.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received following his announcement to impose visa requirements on nationals of former states of Yugoslavia.

Mr. Charles Wardle: By 12 November, seven hon. and right hon. Members, one Member of the European Parliament, 12 independent, charitable and church organisations and a number of members of the public had made written and telephone representations on matters arising out of the decision to implement the visa regime. These representations have mainly concerned requests to waive visa requirements in certain circumstances.

Police Cells

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were held in police cells for each day since 1 October.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is given in the table. Figures for weekends are not collected centrally.

Daily total of inmates held in police cells since 1 October

Date	*Inmates in police cells*
1 October 1992	792
2 October 1992	723
5 October 1992	738
6 October 1992	717
7 October 1992	702
8 October 1932	674
9 October 1992	675
12 October 1992	640
13 October 1992	647
14 October 1992	631
15 October 1992	620
16 October 1992	632
19 October 1992	622
20 October 1992	629
21 October 1992	642
22 October 1992	611
23 October 1992	584
26 October 1992	550
27 October 1992	563
28 October 1992	567
29 October 1992	546
30 October 1992	532
2 November 1992	525
3 November 1992	530
4 November 1992	498
5 November 1992	478
6 November 1992	481
9 November 1992	465
10 November 1992	466
11 November 1992	455
12 November 1992	441

Police Overtime

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total budget allocation for police overtime in England and Wales for the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Detailed information on current overtime expediture for provincial police forces in England

and Wales is not held centrally, but their overtime expenditure for 1992-93 has been estimated at £148·9 million. The 1992-93 police overtime budget of the Metropolitan police service is £71·2 million.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what police overtime payments in England and Wales have been routinely made since 1 October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recalculations for the police overtime budget in England and Wales there have been for the financial year 1992-93 since 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information about changes in current overtime budgets for the provincial forces in England and Wales is not available centrally. The Metropolitan police service 1992-93 budget has not been revised since the beginning of the financial year.

Prisons

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was *(a)* the date of official opening, *(b)* the date prisoners were first received, *(c)* the certified normal accommodation and *(d)* the prison roll at 1 November, for (i) HMP Holme House, (ii) HMP Lancaster Farms, (iii) HMP Wordhill, (iv) HMP High Down and (v) HMP Wolds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None of these establishments has yet had a formal opening. These usually take place some time after the prison has become fully operational. Construction of Lancaster Farms has not yet been completed and the establishment is still in the hands of the building contractors. The other information requested is shown in the table.

Establishment	*Date prisoners first received*	*CNA*	*Number of inmates 1 November 1992*
Holme House	18 May 1992	649	411
Woodhill	20 July 1992	565	148
High Down	[1]7 September 1992	[1]485	233
Wolds	6 April 1992	320	228

[1] High Down will have a CNA of 648 when it is fully operational. Although the establishment did not take its own prisoners until the date shown, patients from HMP Winchester were held in the prison hospital at High Down from 25 August 1992.

Demonstrations

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to bring forward legislation affecting the rights of persons wishing to demonstrate in public places.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Metropolitan Police

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the numbers of persons employed in the Metropolitan police in a civilian capacity and show by grade the minimum and maximum salary payable together with all other allowances.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: The Metropolitan police service employs 17,561 civil staff. A total of 13,458—11,319 non industrial and 2,139 industrial—are employed in civil service grades ranging from administrative assistance to grade 3, including office support grades, for example, messengers, professional staff, for example, scientists and industrial grades, for example, labourers. Pay is according to civil service agreements.

The remaining 4,103 staff are employed in departmental grades as follows:

Grade	*Number in grade*	*Minimum of pay scale £ pa*	*Maximum of pay scale £ pa*
Area Traffic Warden Manager	12	15,057	17,012
Traffic Warden Manager	156	12,285	13,880
Traffic Warden	1,551	10,024	11,796
Principal Identification Officer	10	21,798	26,522
Senior Identification Officer	32	19,378	23,578
Higher Identification Officer	66	17,227	20,152
Identification Officer	122	15,308	17,227
Senior Assistant Identification Officer	65	14,689	15,929
Assistant Identification Officer	173	9,734	14,689
Fingerprint Officer 1	9	15,929	19,378
Fingerprint Officer 2	38	14,071	16,565
Fingerprint Officer 3	9	8,551	14,689
Senior Scenes of Crime Officer	6	17,916	22,669
Scenes of Crime Officer 1	15	15,929	19,378
Scenes of Crime Officer 2	35	11,592	16,565
Senior Communications and Electronics Officer	34	25,503	28,687
Higher Communications and Electronics Officer	94	21,798	24,520
Communications and Electronics Officer	137	18,632	20,961
Communications and Technical Officer 1	190	14,689	17,916
Communications and Technical Officer 2	7	11,592	13,449
Director of Music	1	[1]22,618	—
Deputy Conductor	1	[1]17,227	—
Bandmember	31	9,128	12,833
Catering Manager A	19	12,833	15,308
Catering Manager B	36	10,317	12,133
Catering Manager C	61	9,556	10,641
Catering Manager D	35	8,479	9,841
Catering Manager E	1	8,215	9,092
Chief Inspecting Officer	1	18,632	24,520
Coroner's Officer	21	10,440	13,327
Director of Metropolitan Laboratory	1	[1]47,021	—
Director of Occupational Health	1	52,741	55,836
Director of Physical Training	1	25,330	27,065
London Examiner 2	6	12,285	14,456
Principal Public Carriage Examiner	1	18,632	23,578
Sports Officer	1	14,456	16,668
Technology-based Training Co-ordinator	1	25,554	26,615
Wireless Telegraphy Officer	8	10,230	12,795
Works Overseer 3	1	13,449	15,929
School Crossing Patrol	1,114	[2]3·64 or 4·03 per hour	
TOTAL STAFF	4,103		

[1] Single pay point.

[2] The amounts quoted are hourly rates of pay dependent on geographical location.

In addition to their salary, grade 3s receive a £2,000 London allowance and all other staff, except school crossing patrols receive London weighting at £1,000 per annum for intermediate London and £725 pa for outer London.

Allowances are paid in recognition of factors such as special skills, unsocial hours or a requirement to wear uniform clothing. The rates payable depend on varying factors such as grade, and the pattern of known workload, consequently levels of payment cannot be summarised.

The following civil service and departmental allowances are payable:

Civil Service Allowances

1. Automatic Data Processing Allowance
2. Additional Housing Cost Allowance
3. Footwear Allowance
4. Labourer's Fork Lift Truck Allowance
5. Language Allowance
6. Motor Mileage Allowance
7. Night Duty Allowance
8. On-Call Allowance
9. Personal Secretary's Allowance
10. Private Secretary's Allowance
11. Typing Proficiency, Process and Skill Allowances
12. Responsibility Allowance
13. Shift Disturbance Allowance
14. Stand-By Allowance
15. Subsistence Allowance
16. Telephone Allowance
17. Uniform Allowance
18. Allowance In Lieu Pending Receipt of Uniform
19. Functions Fee
20. Instructional Allowance
21. Lodging Allowance
22. Obnoxious Conditions and Confined Spaces Allowance
23. Recall to Duty Allowance
24. Staff Sent Home After Midnight Allowance
25. Tool Money Allowance

Departmental Allowances

1. Band Staff Allowance
2. Civilian Flight Observer's Allowance
3. Driving Allowance (Storeman/Drivers and Assistants)
4. Driving Specialised Recovery Vehicles Allowance
5. Fingerprinting Dead Bodies Allowance
6. Laundry Allowance
7. Shoe Allowance (Traffic Warden)
8. Stocking Allowance (Traffic Warden)
9. Towel Money Allowance
10. Driver's Duty Allowance
11. Enabling Allowance
12. Plain Clothes Allowance for Driver
13. Prison Van Cleaning Allowance
14. Riverside Lead

NATIONAL FINANCE

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library a copy of the health and safety policy of each of the agencies within his Department.

Mr. Nelson: The chief executive of the Valuation Office, Central Statistical Office and Royal Mint executive agencies have operational responsibility for health and safety. The three agencies have supplied me with statements on these matters and I am arranging for these to be placed in the Library.

Double Taxation

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy in his EC internal market negotiations to seek agreement that member states should not impose extraordinary levies on bank balances held by businesses owned in other member states; and if he will make a statement on recent such developments in Italy.

Mr. Dorrell: Direct taxation is a matter for the member states, provided that its provisions are not contrary to obligations under the treaty establishing the European Economic Community. The Commission of the European Communities has a responsibility to ensure that national laws are consistent with treaty obligations. As I have already indicated to my hon. Friend, the question of the levy on bank balances recently imposed in Italy is under discussion with the Italian authorities.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of the abolition of double taxation relief by the United States of America on the United Kingdom's overseas earnings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 12 November 1992]:* I am not aware of any such proposals. If the United States Administration were to propose any such change, the effect on United States and United Kingdom individuals and companies would depend on the precise nature of the United States proposals and the United Kingdom reaction to them.

Taxpayers

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number and percentage of standard rate and higher rate tax payers in *(a)* Pendle, *(b)* Lancashire and *(c)* the United Kingdom for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: The table provides estimates of the number and percentage of taxpayers in Lancashire and the United Kingdom liable to standard and higher rate tax for 1989-90, the latest available year for which information can be provided below the United Kingdom level. I regret that estimates are not available below county level. Married couples are counted as one unit in this last year before independent taxation.

Basic and higher rate taxpayers 1989-90

	Taxpayers liable at only basic rate		Taxpayers liable at higher rate	
	Thousands	*Percentage*	*Thousands*	*Percentage*
Lancashire	513	94·6	29	5·4
United Kingdom	20,100	92·0	1,750	8·0

Crown Estate Commissioners

Mr. Leff: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to amend the Crown Estates Act 1961 to enable the Crown Estate Commissioners to make significant charitable donations to organisatons operating within communities where the Commissioners own property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lamont: Section 4(2) of the Crown Estate Act 1961 allows the Commissioners to make financial contributions out of the income of the Crown Estate for any religious or educational purpose connected with land of the Crown Estate, or for other purposes tending to the welfare of persons residing or employed on any such land. I have no plans to extend this to the wider local community.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to tax invalidity benefit.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on 19 October, at column *190*.

Bank Rates

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the changes in *(a)* bank rate and *(b)* rate of interest paid on premium bonds, since 1 January 1987.

Mr. Nelson: The information is as follows:

(a) Changes in bank base rates

	Bank base rates[1]
1987	
March 9	10·5
March 18	10·0
April 28	9·5
May 8	9·0
August 6	10·0
October 26	9·5
November 4	9·0
December 3	8·5
1988	
February 1	9·0
March 17	8·5
April 8	8·0
May 17	7·5
June 2	8·0
June 6	8·5
June 22	9·0
June 28	9·5
July 4	10·0
July 18	10·5
August 8	11·0
August 25	12·0
November 25	13·0
1989	
May 24	14·0
October 5	15·0
1990	
October 8	14·0
1991	
February 13	13·5
February 27	13·0
March 22	12·5
April 12	12·0
May 24	11·5
July 12	11·0
September 4	10·5
1992	
May 5	10·0
September 16	[2]12·0
September 17	10·0
September 22	9·0
October 16	8·0
November 13	[3]7·0

[1] Date shown when Bank of England changed dealing rates. Base rates generally moved on next working day.

[2] MLR of 15 per cent. announced 16 September to apply 17 September but not implemented.

[3] MLR of 7 per cent. announced in Autumn Statement on 12 November to apply 13 November.

(b) Changes in underlying rate of interest which determines the size of the premium bond prize fund

	Per cent.
1 August 1987	7·0
1 July 1988	6·5
12 November 1992[1]	5·0

[1] Will take effect from 1 March 1993.

Tax Files

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when Mr. G. Williamson's tax file, reference number 336/N21/02/F, will be sent from Hull district 1 tax office to the Plymouth office.

Mr. Dorrell: I will be writing to my hon. Friend.

Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals to amend section 175(1) of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to bring it into conformity with the words of section 276(1) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970.

Mr. Lamont: No. Section 175(1) of the 1992 Act is not different in substance from section 276(1) of the 1970 Act. The slight difference in wording is an editorial consequence of the process of consolidating the tax provisions on capital gains.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount of VAT collected in each of the last 10 fiscal years expressed *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* at June 1992 prices and *(c)* as a percentage of total Exchequer income.

Sir John Cope: The information requested is shown in the table.

	VAT receipts		
	At current prices	*At 1992 Q2 prices*[1]	*As percentage of general Government receipts*
	£ billion	*£ billion*	
1982-83	13·8	23·4	11·3
1983-84	15·2	24·7	11·7
1984-85	18·5	28·6	13·1

VAT receipts

	At current prices £ billion	*At 1992 Q2 prices[1] £ billion*	*As percentage of general Government receipts*
1985-86	19·3	28·3	12·7
1986-87	21·4	30·4	13·4
1987-88	24·1	32·3	13·7
1988-89	27·3	34·2	14·3
1989-90	29·5	34·7	14·2
1990-91	31·0	34·4	14·2
1991-92	35·3	36·6	15·9

[1] Using the GDP deflator at market prices.

Exchequer Income

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount of *(a)* income tax, *(b)* capital gains tax and *(c)* corporation tax paid for each of the last 10 fiscal years expressed *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* at June 1992 prices and *(c)* as a percentage of total Exchequer income.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is shown in the tables.

Income tax receipts

£ billion

	at current prices	*at 1992 Q2 prices[1]*	*as per cent. of general Government receipts*
1982-83	30·4	51·5	24·8
1983-84	31·1	50·4	23·9
1984-85	32·5	50·2	23·0
1985-86	35·4	51·7	23·3
1986-87	38·5	54·6	24·1
1987-88	41·4	55·6	23·6
1988-89	43·4	54·4	22·7
1989-90	48·8	57·4	23·5
1990-91	55·3	61·3	25·4
1991-92	57·5	59·6	25·9

[1] Using the GDP deflator at market prices.

Capital tax receipts

£ billion

	At current prices	*At 1992 Q2 prices[1]*	*As percentage of general Government receipts*
1982-83	0·6	1·1	0·5
1983-84	0·7	1·1	0·5
1984-85	0·7	1·1	0·5
1985-86	0·9	1·3	0·6
1986-87	1·1	1·5	0·7
1987-88	1·4	1·9	0·8
1988-89	2·3	2·9	1·2
1989-90	1·9	2·2	0·9
1990-91	1·9	2·1	0·9
1991-92	1·1	1·2	0·5

[1] Using the GDP deflator at market prices.

Corporation tax receipts

£ billion

	At current prices	*At 1992 Q2 prices[1]*	*As percentage of general Government receipts*
1982-83	5·7	9·6	4·6
1983-84	6·2	10·0	4·7
1984-85	8·3	12·9	5·9
1985-86	10·7	15·7	7·1
1986-87	13·5	19·1	8·4
1987-88	15·7	21·1	9·0
1988-89	18·5	23·2	9·7
1989-90	21·5	25·3	10·4
1990-91	21·5	23·8	9·9
1991-92	18·3	18·9	8·2

[1] Using the GDP deflator at market prices.

Public Sector Pay

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his oral statement of 12 November *Official Report*, column 994, if he will set out how he intends to apply the conditions to public sector pay rises.

Mr. Dorrell: As my right hon. Friend announced in his autumn statement on 12 November, the Government's policy is to restrict public sector pay settlements to between zero and 1½ per cent. in the coming year. The Government expect this policy to be applied without exception throughout the public sector regardless of the normal method of settling pay. For central Government employees and NHS staff not covered by review bodies the Government will apply the policy directly as part of its responsibility for setting the pay of these groups. Application of the policy to staff covered by the pay review bodies was set out in my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's answer of 13 November 1992, at column *1002*. Spending allocations have been adjusted to reflect the impact of the policy on other public sector groups.

Valuation Office

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he has made to the Valuation Office executive agency's published key targets for the year 1992-93.

Mr. Nelson: Yes. The key target for the clearance of non-domestic rating appeals has been increased from 302,000 to 308,000. This is to take account of additional receipts from the Welsh Office to maintain the current good progress in clearing outstanding appeals.

United States-United Kingdom Taxation Agreements

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the United States-United Kingdom taxation treaties and agreements together with the dates when they took effect.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 12 November 1992]*: Two agreements are in place with the United States.

First, the taxation of income and capital gains is covered by arrangements which comprise a convention dated 31 December 1975, as amended by protocols of 26 August 1976, 31 March 1977 and 15 March 1979. The convention, as amended, in general took effect for the tax year, financial year or chargeable period beginning in 1975. The relevant provisions are detailed in Statutory Instrument 1980: No. 568 titled The Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (The United States of America) Order 1980.

Second, provisions regarding the taxation of inheritances and gifts are set out in Statutory Instrument 1979: No. 1454 titled The Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Estates of Deceased Persons and on Gifts) (United States of America) Order 1979. This convention was concluded on 19 October 1978 and took effect from 10 November 1979.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the amount of advance corporation tax repaid to United States companies with United Kingdom subsidiaries in each of the last five years.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 12 November 1992]:* Payments of tax credits to non-resident parent companies under the United Kingdom/USA double taxation convention—companies which control at least 10 per cent. of the voting stock of the United Kingdom company—are estimated to have been as follows:

£ million

	Tax credits payable
1987-88	310
1988-89	390
1989-90	410
1990-91	260
1991-92	180

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when either he or the Governor of the Bank of England knew of banking accounts held in the Bank of Credit and Commerce International by Matrix Churchill or its individual executives that were used for the export of equipment to Iraq which could be used for defence purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* Neither my right hon. Friend the Chancellor nor the Governor of the Bank of England has ever been given any such information.

Iraq (Military Equipment)

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when either the Government or the Bank of England was informed that accounts held in the Bank of Credit and Commerce International were used for the export of equipment to Iraq which could be used for defence purposes between 1987 and 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* Neither the Government nor the Bank of England has ever been given any such information.

Scotch Whisky

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the income from duties on Scotch whisky in each of the past 10 years in cash and constant price terms.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* The following is the estimated income which includes whiskey from Northern Ireland.

£ million

Year	*Excise duty receipts*	*At constant 1991-92 prices*
1982-83	478	784
1983-84	818	1,282
1984-85	591	883
1985-86	714	1,007
1986-87	667	910
1987-88	698	917
1988-89	681	844
1989-90	650	747
1990-91	726	761
1991-92	730	730

ENVIRONMENT

Ordnance Survey

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by location, the Ordnance Survey triangulation pillars that have currently been adopted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Responsibility for this subject has been delegated to the executive agency. I have asked Professor David Rhind, chief executive for the Ordnance Survey to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from David Rhind to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the adoption of Triangulation (Trig) Pillars.

Ordnance Survey has recently completed its assessment of the pillars it needs to maintain as part of its survey control network. We have decided to maintain 1,269 pillars, leaving 4,906 for which we have no further need.

Great interest has been shown by a wide variety of organisations and individuals in adopting single or groups of pillars for voluntary maintenance. We are now starting the process of dealing with these applications and publicising opportunities. This will take some time to complete because, whilst the pillars will remain the property of Ordnance Survey, we have to obtain the permission of the land owners for those adopting pillars to have access.

In short, no pillars have yet been adopted but the process for adoption is now under way. We anticipate this will take several months to complete.

Please let me know if you would like me to supply a list of adopted pillars and their locations when the exercise is over.

Fact-finding Visits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the fact-finding visits made in the last 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit.

Mr. Howard: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to my executive agencies under their chief executives. I have asked Mr. Roger Courtney to arrange for a reply to be given for the Building Research Establishment; Professor David Rhind for the Ordnance Survey; Mr. Stephen Crow for the Planning Inspectorate; Mr. Marcus Buck for the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre; and Mr. Roger Powell for the Buying Agency.

Letter from Roger Courtney to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

The Secretary of State has asked me to respond to your question regarding fact finding visits that I have made during the last twelve months.

My recent visits are listed below:

Transport Research Laboratory (Executive Agency, Department of Transport).

National Institute for Standards and Technology, USA.

Technical Research Institute, Finland, (VTT).

Such visits provide me with comparative information on sources of funding and associated policies, programme formulation and management, and operational arrangements and therefore assist the future development of BRE. Where appropriate, the scope for co-operative working is also explored, to mutual benefit. My many regular contacts with heads of research executive agencies and with my counterparts in other countries supplement these specific visits.

I would be happy to provide further information if you wish.

Letter from David Rhind to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

The Secretary of State for the Environment has asked me to reply to your question about fact finding visits made by the chief executives of agencies.

I have not made any visits which I would classify as "fact finding" since I took up my appointment as Chief Executive of Ordnance Survey in January of this year.

Letter from Stephen Crow to Mr. Martin Redmond Dated 28 October 1992:

In reply to your Parliamentary Questions, I am asked on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Environment to list both the titles of papers published by the Planning Inspectorate since it became an agency and the fact finding visits made by myself in the last 12 months; and to indicate the findings resulting from those visits. The Planning Inspectorate became an Executive Agency only on 1 April this year, and so a full 12 months have not yet elapsed.

The only Inspectorate paper published since 1 April is entitled "Good Practice at Planning Inquiries". It was published on 7 September 1992 as an Annex to Department of the Environment Circular 24/92 (Welsh Office Circular 47/92).

Since April I have made one fact finding visit, to Edinburgh and nearby, where I was shown some interesting examples of urban regeneration, and where I was able to discuss, with my opposite numbers in Scotland and Ireland, matters of mutual concern. The visit and meeting resulted in useful comparison of professional and managerial practice.

Letter from Mr. Marcus Buck to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

I am responding to your question regarding the fact finding visits undertaken during the last twelve months by Agency Chief Executives in the Department of the Environment, and the resulting findings.

During his last months in office, my predecessor, Roy Kendrick, did not undertake any fact finding visits. As Chief Executive designate I conducted a series of visits to conference centres in order to familiarise myself with the industry. My findings were not aggregated into a publishable form.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Letter from Roger H. Powell to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

I have been asked to reply direct to your parliamentary question regarding fact finding visits by Chief Executives.

I have undertaken no "fact finding" visits as such. I have visited a number of principal customers and suppliers but these have primarily been to promote relationships.

Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Howard: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to my executive agencies under their chief executives. I have asked Mr. Roger Courtney to arrange for a reply to be given for the Building Research Establishment; Professor David Rhind for the Ordnance Survey; Mr. Stephen Crow for the Planning Inspectorate; Mr. Marcus Buck for the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre; and Mr. Roger Powell for the Buying Agency.

Letter from R. G. Courtney to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

PQ: Executive Agency staff numbers and costs—BRE

The Secretary of State has asked me to respond to your question regarding BRE's staff numbers and costs for 1991-92 and 1992-93.

The average number of BRE staff in each grade during 1991-92 and the estimated equivalent for 1992-93 are given in the attached table. These figures include staff employed on a casual basis.

The "full economic cost" for the staff in post in 1991-92 was £16,734k and the present estimate for the equivalent cost in 1992-93 is £18, 330k.

Average number of staff at BRE in 1991-92 and 1992-93 by grade

Grade	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Grade 3	1·0	1·0
Grade 4	1·0	1·0
Grade 5	5·0	5·0
Grade 6	24·0	25·0
Grade 7	90·0	96·5
Senior Scientific Officer	97·5	100·5
Higher Scientific Officer	95·5	102·5
Scientific Officer	62·5	60·0
Assistant Scientific Officer	17·5	13·5
Senior Professional and Technology Officer	16·0	18·0
Higher Professional and Technology Officer	11·0	12·0
Professional and Technology Officer	12·0	12·0
Technical Grade I (PTO)	1·0	1·0
[illegible]nior Information Officer	6·0	7·0
Information Officer	7·0	9·0
Assistant Information Officer	2·0	4·0
Senior Librarian	1·0	1·0
Librarian	1·0	1·0
Assistant Librarian	1·0	1·0
Senior Photographic Officer	2·0	2·0
Higher Photographic Officer	3·0	4·0
Photographic Officer	5·0	4·0
Senior Executive Officer	1·0	1·0
Higher Executive Officer	9·0	11·5
Executive Officer	23·0	24·5
Administrative Officer	74·5	76·5
Administrative Assistant	5·5	3·0
Senior Personal Secretary	1·0	1·0
Personal Secretary	21·5	22·5

Grade	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Typing Manager	2·0	2·0
Typist	15·5	17·5
Graphics Officer	1·0	1·0
Technical Grade 1 (DOA)	1·5	1·5
Technical Grade 2 (Tracer)	2·0	2·0
Assistant Chief Reprographics Officer	1·0	1·0
Reprographics Officer I	3·5	3·5
Senior Messenger	1·0	1·0
Messenger	2·0	2·0
Telephonist	3·0	3·0
College-based Sandwich Course Student	—	—
Vacation Student	—	—
Industrial	94·0	82·5
Total	724·0	738·0

Letter from David Rhind to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

The Secretary of State for the Environment has asked me to reply to your question about staff numbers and cost. I enclose a table which shows the Ordnance Survey staff numbers by grade and their associated costs for 1991-92 and the corresponding estimated figures for 1992-93.

The cost figures quoted comprise salaries, ERNIC, superannuation, overtime and specialist allowances.

Ordnance survey staffing

Grade	*1991-92* No. of staff in 1991-92	*1991-92* Salary cost 1991-92 £	*1992-93 (estimated)* Forecast staff in 1992-93	*1992-93 (estimated)* Salary cost 1992-93 £
Unified grades				
Grade 3	1·0	68,198	1·0	71,477
Grade 5	3·0	162,486	3·0	170,313
Grade 6	8·0	373,496	8·0	393,880
Grade 7	39·0	1,419,132	40·0	1,530,960
Administrative grades				
SEO	27·0	727,110	28·0	790,920
HEO	73·0	1,563,039	82·0	1,851,321
EO	105·0	1,744,995	106·0	1,870,264
AO	168·0	2,127,216	175·0	2,347,450
AA	52·0	484,432	53·0	533,498
Senior personal secretary	1·0	17,049	1·0	17,849
Personal secretary	3·0	41,814	3·0	43,773
Typing manager	1·0	17,634	1·0	18,460
Typist	12·0	123,456	9·0	96,921
Graduate trainee	6·0	98,880	3·0	53,097
Librarian	1·0	22,638	1·0	23,735
Assistant librarian	1·0	18,618	1·0	19,520
Mapping and charting grades				
SMCO	61·0	1,777,784	67·0	2,057,101
HMCO	181·0	4,199,200	179·0	4,355,786
MCO	1,091·0	21,446,878	1,106·0	22,831,158
MCT1	362·0	6,101,510	274·0	4,875·830
MCT2	59·0	711,953	51·0	658,716
Carto assistant	1·0	14,125	0	0
Support grades				
Stores C	3·0	58,107	3·0	60,921
Stores D	4·0	63,240	5·0	85,640
Support manager 2	1·0	17,928	1·0	18,815
Support manager 3	3·0	43,143	3·0	46,539
Support grade band 1	35·0	419,580	37·0	472,490
Support grade band 2	74·0	736,966	74·0	784,548
P & T Group				
PTO	1·0	20,138	1·0	21,113
Technical grade 1	5·0	84,105	5·0	88,180
Industrial	32·0	291,340	14·0	134·211

Letter from Stephen Crow to Mr. Martin Redmond dated 3 November 1992:

1. The Secretary of State for the Environment has asked me to reply on behalf of the Planning Inspectorate to your recent Parliamentary Question in which you asked for a list by grade of the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92, and estimated figures for 1992-93.

2. The Planning Inspectorate was launched as a joint Agency in the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office on 1 April 1992. The Agency's estimated staff cost for 1992-93 is £13·9 million. The breakdown of permanent staff by grades (as at 1 September 1992) is in the attached table.

3. Prior to 1 April 1992 the Welsh Office were directly responsible for the Inspectorate's functions in Wales. The average number of permanent staff undertaking the Inspectorate's functions in England during 1991-92 was 613 and the salary cost was £12·3 million.

The Planning Inspectorate

Staff in Post as at 1 September 1992

Grade	*Staff in Post*
3	1·0
4	2·0
5	14·0
6	2·0

Grade	*Staff in Post*
7	7·0
Principal Housing and Planning Inspector	39·0
Senior Housing and Planning Inspector	117·0
Housing and Planning Inspector	84·0
Senior Executive Officer	7·0
Higher Executive Officer	33·5
Executive Officer	78·0
Senior Personal Secretary	1·0
Personal Secretary	14·0
Administrative Officer	167·5
Administrative Assistant etc.	69·5
Typist	1·0
Total	637·5

Letter from Mr. Marcus Buck to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

I am responding to your question regarding the above subject. Figures for The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre are as follows:

	1991-92	*1992-93*
AO	15	16
EO	11	10
HEO	4	4
SEO	1	1
SIO	2	1
Grade 7	5	4
Grade 6	0	1
Grade 5	1	1
HPTO	3	3
PTO	1	1
Personal Secretary	2	2
Typist	1	1
SGB1	1	1
SGB2	8	8
Specialists	10	9
Casual	1	1
Total	66	64
Costs	£1,525,000 (Actual)	£1,612,000 (Estimated)

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contect me.

Letter from Roger H. Powell to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

Michael Howard has asked the Chief Executives of Agencies attached to his Department to respond to your Parliamentary Question on the above matter.

I have set out at Appendix A 3 figures which represent snapshots of the situation as of December 1991, and October 1992 and a forecast for October 1993.

I have given staff in post figures which include a number of non-civil servants.

If I can be of further help please contact me.

Appendix A

	December 1991		*October 1992*		*October 1993*[1]	
	Staff	*Salaries*	*Staff*	*Salaries*	*Staff*	*Salaries*
Administration Officers	34	287,599	31	280,404	29	267,560
Support Grades	4	33,712	4	35,864	4	36,581
Typists	5	39,073	5	41,569	5	42,400
Executive Officers	22	268,745	20	259,134	20	264,317
Personal Secretaries	2	21,620	2	23,000	2	23,460
SM3/SPS/Typing Manager	3	36,987	3	39,348	3	40,135
Technical Officer	—	—	—	—	—	—
HEO	7	114,735	7	122,059	7	124,500
HPTO	6	137,059	10	236,950	12	290,027
SEO	4	93,382	4	99,343	4	101,330
SPTO	7	151,340	9	212,069	11	264,379
Grade 7	7	184,980	6	170,759	6	174,174
Grade 6	2	75,000	2	78,500	2	82,500
Grade 5	1	47,000	1	49,000	1	50,750
	104	1,496,232	104	1,653,499	107	1,779,523

[1] Forecast.

Airports (Planning Applications)

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the length of time between submitting the application and a final decision being announced in respect of all planning applications involving airport expansion that were subject to a local public inquiry since 1970.

Mr. Baldry: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. The table gives details of the length of time taken to determine most of the major airport expansions subject to public local inquiry since 1977.

(months)

Airport	*Date application made*	*Date final decision announced*	*Time taken*
Leeds Bradford	8 August 1977	17 December 1980	40
Heathrow (Terminal 4)	26 September 1977	17 December 1979	26
Manchester	2 February 1979	9 September 1980	19
Gatwick North	2 March 1979	9 November 1982	44
Birmingham	17 April 1979	30 May 1980	13
East Midlands	1 November 1979	1 February 1983	38
Heathrow (Terminal 4)	4 June 1984	18 September 1985	15
Leeds Bradford	23 January 1986	14 August 1989	42
Lydd	8 September 1987	24 September 1992	60
London City	12 September 1989	26 September 1991	24

Economic Development

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to change the procedures used to designate scheduled authorities for the purposes of the Local Government (Promotion of Economic Development) (Amendment) Regulations 1992, to ensure that scheduled authorities are those local authorities which have the highest levels of unemployment.

Mr. Robin Squire: No. Those local authorities designated by the Local Government (Promotion of Economic Development) (Amendment) Regulations 1992 which were not previously designated in the Local Government (Promotion of Economic Development) Regulations 1990, qualified on the basis that, in whole or in part, they fell within a travel-to-work area with an unemployment rate above the—narrow base—national average for England of 9·8 per cent. for the period from April 1991 to March 1992. The list of scheduled authorities will be reviewed again in the light of the unemployment statistics for April 1992 to March 1993.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many English local authorities, which were designated scheduled authorities for the purposes of the Local Government (Promotion of Economic Development) (Amendment) Regulations 1992, have higher levels of unemployment than *(a)* Southampton and *(b)* Gosport; and if he will list them and their current levels of unemployment.

Mr. Robin Squire: Fifty-six local authorities were newly designated as scheduled authorities under the Local Government (Promotion of Economic Development) (Amendment) Regulations 1992, on the basis that each authority, in whole or in part, fell within a travel-to-work area with unemployment above the—narrow base—national average for England of 9·8 per cent. for the period from April 1991 to March 1992. Southampton city council and Gosport borough council did not fall within such a travel-to-work area. The scheduled authorities added by the regulations are:

In the county of Dorset
Bournemouth Borough Council
Christchurch Borough Council
East Dorset District Council

In the county of East Sussex
Brighton Borough Council
Lewes District Council
Hastings Borough Council
Hove Borough Council
Wealden District Council

In the county of Essex
Basildon District Council
Brentwood District Council
Castle Point Borough Council
Chelmsford Borough Council
Epping Forest District Council
Maldon District Council
Rochford District Council
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Thurrock Borough Council
In Greater London
The Common Council of The Corporation of London
The council of the—
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
London Borough of Barnet
London Borough of Bexley
London Borough of Bromley
London Borough of Camden
London Borough of Croydon
London Borough of Enfield
London Borough of Harrow
London Borough of Havering
London Borough of Merton
London Borough of Redbridge
London Borough of Sutton
London Borough of Waltham Forest
London Borough of Westminster

In the county of Hampshire
East Hampshire District Council
Fareham Borough Council
Havant Borough Council
New Forest District Council
Portsmouth City Council
Winchester City Council

In the county of Hertfordshire
Broxbourne Borough Council
Hertsmere Borough Council

In the county of Kent
Dartford Borough Council
Gillingham Borough Council
Gravesham Borough Council
Maidstone Borough Council
Rochester upon Medway City Council
Sevenoaks District Council
Swale Borough Council
Tonbridge and Malling District Council
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

In the county of Surrey
Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Reigate and Banstead Borough Council
Tandridge District Council

In the county of West Sussex
Adur District Council
Chichester District Council
Horsham District Council
Mid Sussex District Council

Green Belt, Lancashire

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the planning decisions in Lancashire over the past 15 years where development on designated green belt land has been permitted; and if he will indicate those approvals granted after appeal to him.

Mr. Baldry: Information on local authority decisions is not available; reliable information on appeal decisions could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will hold meetings with the major financial lending institutions on the criteria they will use to determine their lending policies to house builders and house purchasers of homes built on contaminated land.

Mr. Maclean: Yes.

Plant Standards

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to set a timetable to ensure that all existing power stations and combustion plants operate according to new plant standards by 2000.

Mr. Maclean: Since 1 April 1991 all large combustion plants have been subject to integrated pollution control under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and therefore to regulation by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. When considering an application for authorisation HMIP is required to ensure the use of best available techniques not entailing excessive cost to prevent, or minimise and render harmless any releases. The precise timetable for the upgrading of existing plant, and the standards to be achieved, are matters for HMIP.

Emissions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been undertaken by his Department to date upon the use of selective catalytic reduction upon levels of nitrogen oxide emissions; and what plans he has to support and fund the selective catalytic reductions initiatives in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: Technologies for reducing nitrogen oxide emissions, including selective catalytic reduction, have been considered in two items of research commissioned by my Department; a general study of acid emission abatement technologies undertaken by the Fellowship of Engineering, and a report on nitrogen oxide abatement technologies for large combustion plants undertaken by DNV Technica. While I have no plans for funding or other specific support for the development of this technique, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is under a duty to keep such techniques under review for the purposes of part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to upgrade the United Kingdom plan to cut acid emissions.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom is already committed to substantial reductions in acid emissions of sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen. We continue to keep these plans under review in the light of both the developing scientific evidence of acid damage and the progress of negotiations, in which the United Kingdom is playing a full part, towards new international agreements for the control of acid emissions.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement upon the impact of the new EC action programme on the environment on Government support for the pollution control authorities in the dealings with plant operations.

Mr. Maclean: Among the many issues it addresses, the EC's fifth environmental action programme emphasises the importance of a scheme of integrated pollution prevention and control to regulate the operations of industrial plant. The European Commission is currently working on a proposal in this area. We introduced a scheme of integrated pollution control in the United Kingdom under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which came into force in April 1991 and is now being implemented by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. We therefore welcome the Commission's intentions.

Trees

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to encourage the provision of trees in towns and community forests in England.

Mr. Maclean: The Government provide grant aid for planting, including grants from the Forestry Commission through the woodland grant scheme and the new community woodland supplement, and support from Task Force Trees—a special unit of the Countryside Commission which is allocating some £17 million in grant to replace trees in both urban and rural areas lost in the storms of 1987 and 1990.

We also provide assistance to voluntary and other bodies which are active in planting trees in towns and the urban fringe and fund an important programme of research and the provision of advice, placing emphasis on the practical care and maintenance of trees.

The Countryside Commission and the Forestry Commission are engaged in a joint initiative to create a number of community forests near major towns and cities. The Government have funded the establishment of project teams to explore means of implementing these forests and are currently considering proposed business plans for the three lead schemes: Thames Chase, Forest of Mercia and the Great North Forest.

Housing, Pendle

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the housing investment programme bids by Pendle district council to his Department and the HIP allocation for each year since 1982.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is given in the table. The figures for 1990-91 and subsequent years are not directly comparable with those for earlier years because of the revisions to the capital finance system introduced in April 1990.

Housing investment programme (HIP) bids by Pendle district council and allocations and capital expenditure, 1982-83 to 1992-93

£ thousand

	HIP bids		*HIP allocations*[1]		*Housing capital expenditure*	
	Cash	*1992-93 prices*[2]	*Cash*	*1992-93 prices*[2]	*Cash*	*1992-93 prices*[2]
1982-83	6,014	10,447	5,163	8,969	5,173	8,986
1983-84	6,151	10,212	4,469	7,420	5,657	9,392
1984-85	8,115	12,823	3,815	6,028	6,324	9,993
1985-86	7,900	11,837	3,157	4,730	4,463	6,687
1986-87	7,206	10,460	2,980	4,326	3,777	5,483
1987-88	8,162	11,231	3,191	4,391	4,005	5,511
1988-89	11,375	14,590	3,196	4,099	5,169	6,630
1989-90	6,515	7,841	2,574	3,098	5,687	6,844
New capital finance system[3]						
1990-91	6,888	7,677	3,203	3,570	3,962	4,416
1991-92	5,610	5,848	2,468	2,573	[4]3,381	[4]3,525
1992-93	6,005	6,005	3,420	3,420	[5]4,220	[5]4,220

Notes:

[1] Allocations for the years up to and including 1989-90 are final allocations, i.e. the intial allocation plus any increases to the initial allocation made in-year. The allocations figures for 1990-91 and subsequent years are the HIP allocations—housing annual capital guidelines plus specified capital grants—issued prior to the start of the financial year. These figures do not include any supplementary credit approvals issued during the year.

[2] Cash figures have been converted to 1992-93 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP market prices deflator.

[3] From 1990-91, under the new capital finance system, the HIP allocation is an assessment of relative need for housing capital expenditure rather than a directly borrowing approval. Borrowing approval is now conveyed by the single, all service, basic credit approval.

[4] Provisional.

[5] Estimated.

Diesel Engine Trains

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department takes to monitor the level of pollution produced by diesel engine trains.

Mr. Maclean: The Department does not monitor directly pollution produced by diesel engine trains. Diesel motors of all kinds contribute to ambient levels of smoke, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide in particular, and these are monitored in many places throughout the United Kingdom. Rail transport is estimated to contribute about 1 per cent. of total United Kingdom emissions of nitrogen oxides, and negligible proportions of total emissions of other major pollutants.

(DOE Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics No. 14, 1991: Tables 1.1-2, 1.7, and 1.9-10).

Squirrel Monkeys

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average cost, nationwide, of a licence to keep squirrel monkeys under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976.

Mr. Maclean: Such information is not held centrally.

Radon Gas

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment is he will state the amount of grant awarded by each local authority for renovation to reduce the risk from radon gas, and the total paid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not collected by the Department.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the reasons for the proposed reduction in planned spending by his Department under the "Environment" heading in 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Howard: This heading comprises a variety of spending programmes including new towns, the urban block, Property Holdings, Ordnance Survey and the Office of Water Services as well as environmental initiatives. Forecast outturn for 1992-93 and the revised provision for 1993-94 and 1994-95 are higher than in previous plans.

The year on year changes between 1992-93 and 1994-95 reflect a number of factors, including a change in the forecast of receipts from the disposal of new towns assets. Provision rises throughout the period on the environment, countryside and wildlife block of expenditure programmes within the overall "Environment" heading.

Housing Action Trusts

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the relevant appointing body for the members of the board of each housing action trust, and the rate of remuneration received by each member of such bodies.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 13 November 1992]*: Members of the boards of housing action trusts are appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment on the basis set out in schedule 7 to the Housing Act 1988 and are entitled to receive remuneration of £4,890 per year, based on an assumed time input of half a day a week.

Waste Water Treatment

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the most recent estimate of the total level of capital investment required to meet the EC Municipal Waste Water Treatment directive.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 16 November 1992]*: Following discussions with the Department, the National Rivers Authority, and the water industry, the Director General of Water Services made certain assumptions in order to make an estimate of the possible capital costs for England and Wales in his consultation paper, "The Cost of Quality", published in August. Work continues, however, to identify the obligations arising from the directive and associated costs with greater precision.

Land (Public Access)

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the public can find out where they have rights of access to private land as a result of tax concessions being granted to the owners in return for greater public access.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 11 November 1992]*: I have been asked to reply.

The owner of land that has been conditionally exempted from inheritance tax is required to publicise the agreed public access arrangements. The extent of the publicity depends on the facts of each case. The owner will generally be required to take specific steps to publicise public access, for example by advertising the access arrangements in a local tourist office or town hall.

The appropriate heritage advisory agency, for example the Countryside Commission for scenic land in England, is able to supply information about public access to heritage land including conditionally exempt land, although land will not be identified as conditionally exempt. In addition, in England and Wales, a member of the public who wants information about public access in a specific area can contact the footpaths officer of the appropriate county council or national park authority. Details of footpaths and public access also often appear on maps and in commercial publications, particularly for major tourist areas.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Trade Fairs

Mr. Olner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to adopt a more flexible application of the three times rule in relation to a company's participation in trade fairs in a particular national market *(a)* in general and *(b)* for the apparel and textile industry.

Mr. Needham: The general policy of the three times rule does incorporate a certain level of flexibility in that flag ship events—that is major prestigious shows focusing on important sectors—are supported on five occasions. This additional level of support is also available for events in

Japan, North America and Germany, except that the latter two are restricted to three events within regions of those markets.

A review of the trade fairs support scheme is planned to take place during 1993. The results of that exercise will form the basis of a total review of the present policy.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what the (i) current account and (ii) manufacturing trade balance was for the calendar year 1989 in *(a)* United Kingdom and *(b)* Germany.

Mr. Needham: The information is in the table.

Balances on current account and in manufacturing in 1989

£ billion

	Current account balance	*Manufacturing balance*
United Kingdom	−21·7	−17·3
Germany	35·1	68·7

Notes:

1. All figures are on a balance of payments basis except the German figure for trade in manufactured trade goods, which is a crude balance.
2. Germany excludes eastern Germany.

Source: CSO, OECD, German national source.

Nuclear Processing

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what quantities of uranium and plutonium would be produced by reprocessing spent fuel from United Kingdom nuclear power stations under existing contracts with the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: *[pursuant to his reply, 4 November 1992, c. 308]:* The figure for the amount of plutonium arising from the reprocessing of spent fuels should have read eight tonnes.

EC Regional Development

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of EC regional development funding received by the United Kingdom has been spent within the United Kingdom assisted areas *(a)* in each year since 1984 and *(b)* in total since 1984.

Mr. Sainsbury: From 1984 to 1989 the European regional development fund—ERDF—grants were payable only in Northern Ireland, the assisted areas of Great Britain, and the remainder of the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Development Board of Rural Wales areas. Figures for the latter areas are not readily available, but would have comprised only a very small proportion of the United Kingdom's total allocation.

From 1989, eligibility for the ERDF has, with minor exceptions, been determined according to eligibility for objectives 1, 2 and 5b of the reformed structural funds. The great majority of the ERDF allocations resulting from these objectives go to Northern Ireland and the assisted areas, but figures on the exact proportion could not be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 9 November, *Official Report*, column 606, if he will list those areas in the United Kingdom that are *(a)* part of the United Kingdom's assisted areas map but do not qualify for EC regional development funding and *(b)* not part of the United Kingdom's assisted areas maps but which qualify for EC regional development funding.

Mr. Sainsbury: The areas in the United Kingdom that are assisted areas but do not qualify for EC regional development funding include: the whole travel-to-work-areas—TTWAs—of Cinderford and Ross-on-Wye, Corby, Kidderminster, and Whitby; and part of the TTWAs of Birmingham, Coventry and Hinckley, and Dudley and Sandwell.

The areas in the United Kingdom that are not assisted areas but qualify for EC regional development funding include: Northern Ireland; the whole TTWAs of Aberystwyth, Alnwick and Amble, Brecon, Burnley, Castleford and Pontefract, Camarthen, Chesterfield, Dolgellau and Barmouth, Inverness, Islay Mid Argyll, Keith, Llandeilo, Llandrindod Wells, Machynlleth, Mansfield, Newtown, Oban, Orkney Islands, Pendle, Retford, Shetland Islands, Thurso, Wakefield and Dewsbury, Welshpool, Whitehaven, Worksop; and part of the TTWAs of Alfreton and Ashfield, Edinburgh, Elgin, Goole and Selby, Manchester, Nottingham, and Stirling.

Development Funding

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much EC regional development funding has been spent in the Darlington travel-to-work area *(a)* in each year since 1984 and *(b)* in total.

Mr. Sainsbury: European regional development fund allocations to the Darlington travel-to-work area since 1984 have been as follows:

	£ Thousands
1984	3,816
1985	580
1986	348
1987	508
1988	225
1989	557
1990	617
1991	939
Total 1984 to 1991	7,590

The figures include allocations to projects which part fall outside the Darlington TTWA.

Economic Development Assistance

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list each piece of legislation within the responsibility of his Department which bestows economic development powers or economic development assistance on local authority areas and which are based, in whole or in part, on statistics related to the relevant travel-to-work area.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* Section 13 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 empowers my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to make grants in the assisted areas for the improvement of a basic service for which he is responsible. Local authorities would be eligible for such assistance. My right hon. Friend has no other powers bestowing such powers or assistance to local authorities in the manner described.

Export Credit Guarantee Finance

Mr. Straw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether prefabricated boxes made from steel mesh manufactured in Italy but in part assembled in the United Kingdom, and for the purpose of erosion protection for river banks and road embankments, are eligible for export credit guarantee finance, in respect of exports to African countries.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 16 November 1992]*: Export credit guarantee finance is provided to facilitate the supply abroad of goods and services by United Kingdom businesses. Depending on the details of individual cases, within strict limits foreign goods and services may also be financed.

If the hon. Gentleman has a particular transaction in mind he may like to write to me about it.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will place in the Library a copy of the health and safety policy of each of the agencies within his Department.

Mr. Key: My Department has only one agency, the Historic Royal Palaces Agency. I have asked the chief executive, Mr. David Beeton, to reply to the hon. Member and I shall place a copy of his reply in the Library.

Letter from David Beeton to Mr. John McAllion, dated 12 November 1992:

I have been requested by the Minister to reply to your Written Parliamentary Question on this subject.

The Historic Royal Palaces Agency currently follows the health and safety policy of its previous parent Department —the Department of the Environment—of which it was a part until it was transferred into the new Department of National Heritage in April this year. A copy of the DOE's policy statement is attached.

The Agency is now developing its own health and safety policy in consultation with the Department of National Heritage with the aim of finalising it in the new year.

I understand that the Minister is arranging for a copy of this reply to be placed in the Library of the House.

The policy statement has been placed in the Library.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list those agencies in his Department which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Mr. Key: The Department of National Heritage has only one executive agency, the Historic Royal Palaces Agency, HRPA. This was considered for privatisation and contractorisation in the normal way when it was set up. Its framework document is currently being reviewed in accordance with the usual procedures under which agency framework documents are considered every three years. The HRPA will continue to contract out a proportion of its services in line with Government policy.

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what have been the financial allocations to the BBC Scottish symphony orchestra in each of the past seven years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: This is a matter for the BBC, within the terms of the present royal charter and licence and agreement.

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what use his Department has made of private detectives since its inception; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Mr. Key: My Department has not used the services of a private detective.

SCOTLAND

Dentistry

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many dental checks were carried out in Scotland *(a)* in each of the three years preceding the withdrawal of free dental checks in the NHS and *(b)* in each year since then.

Mr. Stewart: Charges for dental examination were introduced on 1 January 1989. The figures available on the number of dental examinations carried out in Scotland in each of the years in question are contained in the table. The figures from 1 October 1990 are for adults only, as under the new dental contract introduced from that date children are now treated under capitation arrangements to provide continuing care, and information is not recorded separately on individual treatment items such as examinations for children. The number of children registered with a dentist under these arrangements for the periods since October 1990 is shown separately in the table.

Million

Year	*Number of examinations*	*Number of children registered October 1990 onwards*
1986	2·66	n/a
1987	2·64	n/a
1988	2·67	n/a
1989	2·69	n/a
1990 January to September	1·96	n/a
1990-91 October to March[1]	0·95	0·47
1991-92 April to March[2]	1·90	0·63

[1] New contract for general dental services introduced on 1 October 1990.

[2] With effect from 1 April 1991 the method of collecting statistical information was changed to reflect financial years.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now reverse the decision to withdraw free dental checks in the NHS.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no plans to reintroduce free NHS dental examinations.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will withdraw the draft regulations aimed at clarifying the existing statutory framework for compulsory competitive tendering issued on 16 June to local authorities, and amend them accordingly, following the Government's acceptance of the EC's acquired rights directive;

(2) whether the EC acquired rights directive will be applied retrospectively to all contracts awarded externally by Scottish local authorities under compulsory competitive tendering legislation; and what is his estimate of the number of workers involved in such contracts to date;

(3) what provision is made under the EC acquired rights directive for reinstatement of former pay and conditions to former local authority employees who have been transferred to the private sector under compulsory competitive tendering legislation, and who have suffered a reduction in pay or conditions as a result;

(4) what advice he will provide to Scottish local authorities and other public bodies to enable them to inform interested parties fully in the compulsory competitive tendering process of the implication of the Government's acceptance of the EC's acquired rights directive.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no plans to withdraw the consultation paper issued on 16 June 1992 which contained detailed proposals for the content of regulations and guidance to clarify the framework for compulsory competitive tendering. The consultation paper reflected our view that it would be most unusual for the provisions of the directive to apply to a normal contract let under the compulsory competitive tendering legislation. Responses to the consultation paper, including those relating to this particular point, will be carefully considered before the regulations and guidance are finalised. The interpretation of the law in its application to the individual case is, however, a matter for the courts.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of former public sector employees in Scotland transferred to the private sector under compulsory competitive tendering legislation; and what proportion of these workers come under the EC's acquired rights directive.

Mr. Stewart: Information about the number of former public sector employees in Scotland who are now employed in the private sector following the award of contracts under compulsory competitive tendering legislation is not held centrally.

Commissioner for Local Administration

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to extend the jurisdiction of the Commissioner for Local Administration in Scotland to those local authority services and statutory responsibilities which are transferred to private companies or other bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Although the Commissioner has no jurisdiction over the activities of private companies or other bodies undertaking local authorities' statutory duties or other services, the ultimate responsibility for the provision of such services remains with local authorities. Where a local authority has a statutory duty to provide a service, it cannot divest itself of that duty. It is therefore not necessary to extend the jurisdiction of the Commissioner to cover these circumstances. The Government will continue to review the Commissioner's powers in the light of any new factors which arise.

Nursing and Midwifery Students

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many nursing and midwifery students obtained posts in each health board area in each year since 1987; and if he will make a statement regarding the estimated level of such employment, assuming both volume and percentage changes.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 November 1992]:* The exact information requested is not available centrally. The table, however, gives a broad indication of the underlying trends, assuming that qualification rates stay constant, of the number of final year pre-registration nursing students finding direct employment in the NHS in Scotland within the year of qualifying. Final year students in post at a census date are shown classified by their status one year later. It should be noted that the methods by which this information is collected do not permit account to be taken of certain students, for example those who have been unable to complete their training within the normal three year period; those who, having qualified, may have chosen to have a break in service before seeking employment; those who have found employment as a nurse outwith the NHS; and those who may have qualified, joined the NHS and left within a census period. Those who qualify and work occasionally in the NHS,—for example, bank or agency nurses—also cannot be identified and have therefore been counted with the "not employed" category.

Comparable information on post-registration midwifery students is not available.

Final year basic student nurses—one year later[1]; by health board year beginning 30 September

	Total final year students	*Status in following year*			
		In post[2]	*Further training[2]*	*Not in NHS in Scotland[3]*	*Participation rate[4] (per cent.)*
1987					
Scotland	**2,198**	**1,608**	**76**	**514**	**76·6**
Argyll and Clyde	**134**	**103**	**3**	**28**	**79·1**
Ayrshire and Arran	**98**	**89**	**2**	**7**	**92·9**
Borders	**17**	**14**	**0**	**3**	**82·4**
Dumfries and Galloway	**71**	**44**	**3**	**24**	**66·2**
Fife	**104**	**70**	**3**	**31**	**70·2**
Forth Valley	**90**	**70**	**4**	**16**	**82·2**

	Total final year students	*Status in following year*			
		In post[2]	*Further training*[2]	*Not in NHS in Scotland*[3]	*Participation rate*[4] *(per cent.)*
Grampian	**143**	**108**	**4**	**31**	**78·3**
Greater Glasgow	**712**	**522**	**28**	**162**	**77·2**
Highland	**79**	**41**	**10**	**28**	**64·6**
Lanarkshire	**138**	**101**	**5**	**32**	**76·8**
Lothian	**418**	**300**	**8**	**110**	**73·7**
Orkney	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**—**
Shetland	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**—**
Tayside	**194**	**146**	**6**	**42**	**78·4**
Western Isles	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**—**
1988					
Scotland	**2,028**	**1,460**	**52**	**516**	**74·6**
Argyll and Clyde	**105**	**82**	**2**	**21**	**80·0**
Ayrshire and Arran	**66**	**58**	**0**	**8**	**87·9**
Borders	**26**	**26**	**0**	**0**	**100·0**
Dumfries and Galloway	**57**	**37**	**1**	**19**	**66·7**
Fife	**112**	**71**	**1**	**40**	**64·3**
Forth Valley	**98**	**71**	**2**	**75**	**74·5**
Grampian	**135**	**112**	**2**	**21**	**84·4**
Greater Glasgow	**709**	**502**	**16**	**191**	**73·1**
Highland	**92**	**61**	**6**	**25**	**72·8**
Lanarkshire	**161**	**130**	**5**	**26**	**83·9**
Lothian	**343**	**216**	**10**	**117**	**65·9**
Orkney	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**—**
Shetland	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**—**
Tayside	**124**	**94**	**7**	**23**	**81·5**
Western Isles	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**—**
1989					
Scotland	**2,174**	**1,411**	**54**	**709**	**67·4**
Argyll and Clyde	**107**	**72**	**1**	**34**	**68·2**
Ayrshire and Arran	**88**	**79**	**2**	**7**	**92·0**
Borders	**23**	**17**	**0**	**6**	**73·9**
Dumfries and Galloway	**58**	**40**	**3**	**15**	**74·1**
Fife	**113**	**64**	**1**	**48**	**57·5**
Forth Valley	**88**	**64**	**3**	**21**	**76·1**
Grampian	**183**	**132**	**4**	**47**	**74·3**
Greater Glasgow	**652**	**401**	**7**	**244**	**62·6**
Highland	**99**	**45**	**12**	**42**	**57·6**
Lanarkshire	**144**	**93**	**2**	**49**	**66·0**
Lothian	**381**	**229**	**13**	**139**	**63·5**
Orkney	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**—**
Shetland	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**—**
Tayside	**238**	**175**	**6**	**57**	**76·1**
Western Isles	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**—**
1990					
Scotland	**2,232**	**1,412**	**36**	**784**	**64·9**
Argyll and Clyde	**106**	**80**	**1**	**25**	**76·4**
Ayrshire and Arran	**86**	**77**	**0**	**9**	**89·5**
Borders	**26**	**22**	**0**	**4**	**84·6**
Dumfries and Galloway	**68**	**53**	**1**	**14**	**79·4**
Fife	**108**	**56**	**1**	**51**	**52·8**
Forth Valley	**131**	**88**	**6**	**37**	**71·8**
Grampian	**188**	**145**	**5**	**38**	**79·8**
Greater Glasgow	**669**	**345**	**9**	**315**	**52·9**
Highland	**88**	**56**	**3**	**29**	**67·0**
Lanarkshire	**160**	**107**	**1**	**52**	**67·5**
Lothian	**384**	**220**	**6**	**158**	**58·9**
Orkney	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**—**
Shetland	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0·0**
Tayside	**217**	**163**	**3**	**51**	**76·5**
Western Isles	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**—**

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[1] **This table excludes those who were still final year students one year later.**

[2] **Includes staff employed in another health board.**

[3] **May include agency or bank nurses and those who fail to qualify.**

[4] **Proportion working in NHS in Scotland or continuing with further training.**

Cumbernauld New Town

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs have been created and how many jobs have been lost in Cumbernauld new town in each of the last five years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* The figures shown in Cumbernauld development corporation's annual report for each of the last five years are as follows:

Year ended	*Jobs created*	*Jobs Lost*
31 March 1988	2,114	1,170
31 March 1989	2,307	1,293
31 March 1990	2,474	1,578
31 March 1991	2,740	2,057
31 March 1992	2,676	2,231

Fishing Closures

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to modify section 1 of the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984 in relation to *(a)* sea loch closures and *(b)* seasonal closures; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* A review of the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984 is presently taking place. A consultation paper was recently issued proposing some changes to the conservation régime including the provisions on sea loch and seasonal closures. The responses are at present being assessed and it is hoped to make an announcement on any changes before the end of the year.

WALES

Genetic Screening

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library details of the regional and sub-regional genetic screening service in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place in the Library of the House details of the genetic screening services offered by the regional medical genetics centre at the University hospital of Wales. Details of district and sub-regional services are not held centrally.

Cadw

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of Cadw's health and safety policy.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments under its chief executive, Mr. John Carr. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. A. J. Carr to Mr. John McAllion, dated 17 November 1992:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to the recent Parliamentary Question in which you asked if he would place a copy of Cadw's Health and Safety Policy in the Library of the House.

The framework document for the Agency delegates to me responsibility for ensuring the health and safety of its staff and the public who are affected by its work. We have not, however, adopted a policy separate from that of the Welsh Office's written statement setting out its approach to health and safety.

I enclose a copy of that statement.

Community Charge

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what is his estimate of the total amount of poll tax arrears in Wales; and if he will give the breakdown for each district authority at the latest convenient date.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) on 5 November 1992, at column 377.

Conwy Tunnel

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to undertake improvements to the landscape and highway hardware on and around the A55 approaches to the new Conwy tunnel.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Landscaping and other works at the Conwy tunnel approaches have been carried out in accordance with the planned proposals; no further works are currently anticipated other than regular maintenance.

Child Psychotherapists

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the number of child psychotherapists employed within the NHS in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: As at 30 September 1992 there were three—whole-time equivalent of 1·5—child psychotherapists employed within the NHS in Wales.

Teacher Training Colleges

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to reform teacher training colleges.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have already announced the changes to be made to the initial teacher training of teachers for secondary schools. The main thrust of these reforms is that schools should play a much larger part in initial teacher training as full partners of higher education institutions.

The target date for the reform of initial teacher training for primary teachers is 1 September 1994. Our aim is to make primary phase teacher training more school-based and more closely related to the needs of schools.

Educational Psychology Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the educational psychology service.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Educational psychology services are the responsibility of local education authorities. This will remain the case under the Education Bill. The Welsh Office makes grant available to LEAs for the initial training of educational psychologists. Expenditure of almost £200,000 is being supported in 1992-93.

Discretionary Awards

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on discretionary awards.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The responsibility for discretionary awards for students rests with individual local education authorities. Each LEA will determine its own policies and expenditure on discretionary awards in the light of local needs and priorities.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools in Wales have applied for grant-maintained status.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Three and six respectively.

Nursery Education

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will extend nursery education in Wales in the next financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There is no statutory requirement to provide children under the age of five with schooling. The provision of education in school for children under five years old is at the discretion of local education authorities.

Pensioners

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he will take to improve the quality of life of pensioners in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend's proposals for the improvement of the quality of life of pensioners in Wales are set out in chapter 11 of the White Paper "Caring for People—Community Care in the next Decade and Beyond", Cm 849, and in guidance issued subsequently to assist authorities in preparing for its full implementation. The social care plans for the implementation of community care for the elderly, drawn up by social services authorities in Wales, jointly with health and housing authorities and others, have the following key aims and objectives:

1. To do all that is practicable to enable elderly people to live in the home environment of their own choice.
2. To maintain and foster maximum independence, taking into account personal and coping skills.
3. To recognise the needs of family and other carers, and to provide them with necessary support.
4. To encourage participation in community life, by facilitating access to social, educational and leisure opportunities.
5. To provide information to enable individuals to make informed and realistic choices about services.
6. To promote opportunities for elderly people, and the carers of elderly people, to contribute to the design of services and to ensure that they are able to contribute to local policy and operational planning.
7. To respond to individuals' choice of service, while ensuring that good standards of care are maintained.
8. To stimulate the development of a wide and flexible range of services from a variety of providers, and to ensure cooperation and effective working by all concerned.
9. To increase public awareness of the needs and rights of elderly people.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many long-term unemployed there are in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* each of the travel-to-work areas in Clwyd and *(c)* Alyn and Deeside local authority areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The numbers of long-term unemployed in each of the areas requested are given in the table. The table shows unadjusted numbers of those unemployed for more than 52 weeks.

Long-term unemployed on 8 October 1992

	Number
WALES	43,197
Travel-to-work areas which are either wholly or partially within the county of Clwyd	
Conwy and Colwyn	1,112
Denbigh	254
Shotton, Flint and Rhyl	2,003
Wrexham	1,699
Local authority area	
Alyn and Deeside	722

Rent Arrears

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of rent arrears in each district in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Local authorities' own estimates of both current and former tenants' rent arrears at 31 March 1993 are given in the table:

Local authority	*Rent arrears (£'s)*
Aberconwy BC	55,000
Alyn and Deeside DC	210,000
Arfon BC	97,000
Blaenau Gwent BC	96,201
Brecknock BC	65,400
Cardiff CC	1,000,000
Carmarthen DC	172,000
Ceredigion DC	140,000
Colwyn BC	95,000
Cynon Valley BC	22,500
Delyn BC	137,000
Dinefwr BC	129,587
Dwyfor DC	33,320
Glyndwr DC	215,000
Islwyn BC	110,000
Llanelli BC	240,243
Lliw Valley BC	174,000
Meirionnydd DC	42,000
Merthyr Tydfil BC	75,000
Monmouth BC	185,000
Montgomeryshire DC	80,000
Neath BC	217,000
Newport BC	620,000
Ogwr BC	812,000
Port Talbot BC	130,000
Preseli Pembrokeshire DC	270,000
Radnorshire DC	26,000
Rhondda BC	281,000
Rhuddlan BC	95,000
Rhymney Valley DC	530,000
South Pembrokeshire DC	177,000
Swansea CC	1,299,915
Taff Ely BC	427,000

Local authority	*Rent arrears (£'s)*
Torfaen BC	408,000
Vale of Glamorgan BC	164,000
Wrexham Maelor BC	292,000
Ynys Mon BC	158,000

Live Music

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy on promoting live music.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In Wales, Government support for the arts is provided through the Welsh Arts Council and regional arts asssociations, with the aim of encouraging quality and innovation in all art forms. In the current financial year total Welsh Arts Council spending on live music will be almost £4 million. The regional arts associations and local authorities also fund live music.

BBC Wales Symphony Orchestra

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what have been the financial allocations to the BBC Wales symphony orchestra in 1982, 1988 and in the latest available year; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The BBC Wales symphony orchestra receives financial support from the Welsh Arts Council. Grants were £226,487 in 1982, £396,050 in 1988 and £517,500 in 1991.

Truancy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he has adopted to limit truancy in the primary and secondary schools in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Truancy is a serious matter. It undermines the educational process and contributes to the juvenile crime rate. Since August this year, maintained schools are required to publish their rates of unauthorised absence. This will enable us to establish the full extent of the problem and to consider what action the Department needs to take.

Small Firms

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many small firms have gone out of business in Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is not available. However, VAT registration and deregistration figures, which mainly comprise smaller businesses, are available for each of the years in question and show a net addition of 9,600 VAT registered businesses in Wales for the period 1987-91, bringing the total number of VAT registered businesses in Wales to 86,700.

The number of VAT registrations and deregistrations in Wales for each of the last five years, and the resulting change to the stock of businesses, is as follows:

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1987-91*
VAT Registrations	8,700	10,900	10,900	10,200	8,400	49,100
VAT Deregistrations	7,200	7,800	7,700	8,000	8,800	39,500
Change to stock of VAT-registered business	+1,500	+3,100	+3,200	+2,200	−400	+9,600

Hearing-impaired Pupils

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what policy initiatives he has taken for the hearing impaired in the schools in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is the responsibility of local education authorities to identify, assess and make appropriate provision for children with special educational needs including those with a hearing impairment. The Welsh Office makes grant available to LEAs for the training of teachers, including teachers of the deaf.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those schools in Wales that exist for the hearing impaired.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Maintained special schools which are approved specifically for children with hearing impairments are Bryn Glas School, Mold, Clwyd and Ashgrove School, Penarth, South Glamorgan. In addition, there are pupils with a number of difficulties, including hearing impairment, in other special schools and some ordinary maintained schools have units which cater for those with hearing difficulties but details are not available centrally.

Orimulsion

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those locations in Wales where orimulsion is burned.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Orimulsion is not burned on a commercial basis in Wales at the present time. National Power plc has put forward proposals for the use of the fuel at Pembroke power station and these are under consideration by the relevant authorities.

Point of Ayr

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to receive the report and recommendations of the inspector resulting from the inquiry into proposed development at Point of Ayr by Hamilton Oil.

Sir Wyn Roberts: As soon as possible.

North East Wales TEC

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to ensure that the North East Wales Training and Enterprise Council Ltd. does not receive any public money towards its proposal to build new offices for its managing director and staff.

Mr. David Hunt: North East Wales TEC, in collaboration with the Welsh Development Agency, will be establishing a business development centre in Clwyd. The contribution which the TEC will make towards the cost of this Centre comes from operating surpluses it has been able to generate from the provision of training and enterprise programmes since its inception.

The business development centre will provide an effective "one stop shop" of information, advice and assistance to local businesses and a range of facilities including a lecture theatre, fully equipped training rooms, video conferencing facilities and exhibition space. It will also provide office accommodation for both the TEC and the WDA.

This integrated approach will help to stimulate the growth of the north-east Wales economy, making it easier for large and small businesses to access the help they need to develop and grow and to compete in domestic and overseas markets.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial contribution will be made to local authorities for supplementation to private nursing homes for the year beginning 1 April 1993.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I announced on 2 October that £35·9 million would be made available to local authorities in Wales in 1993-94 in respect of all their community care responsibilities.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make available in the Library copies of the responses he has received to the proposals on local government reorganisation set out in his statement to the House on 3 March, at columns 171-72.

Mr. David Hunt: Yes. I am placing in the Library of the House copies of the formal response submitted to me by the Welsh local authority associations, individual authorities and others, together with the reports prepared by the structures group and its sub-groups. These latter reports were prepared as advice for the Welsh consultative Council on Local Government and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Welsh Office or the local authority associations.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the reasons for the different treatment of Wales from that of England and Scotland in the proposed central Government support for local authorities in table 11 of the public expenditure plans announced on 12 November.

Mr. David Hunt: The levels of central Government support for local authority spending in Wales, England and Scotland reflect the decisions taken by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Scotland and myself, taking account of local government functional changes for 1993-94.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Pipers Crossroads, Moneyrea

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made for the scheme to widen the road at Pipers crossroads at Moneyrea; whether the land has been acquired for the scheme; whether the design work has been completed; and when he expects work to commence on site.

Mr. Atkins: The vesting order to acquire the necessary land will become operative next month; design work is at an advanced stage; and work should commence towards the end of the current financial year, subject to the availability of finance.

EC Finance

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the total sums which are identifiable as having accrued to the Northern Ireland budget from EC sources in each year since 1973.

Mr. Mates: Northern Ireland's largest single source of funding from the European Community is the guarantee section of the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund. The bulk of such receipts are disbursed centrally by the Intervention Board executive agency (IBEA) and details of those receipts are not maintained on a regional basis.

The following amounts, however, have been identified as receipts from the European Community's three structural funds:

Year	*£ million*
1973-74	0
1974-75	4
1975-76	4
1976-77	16
1977-78	14
1978-79	19
1979-80	31
1980-81	44
1981-82	41
1982-83	53
1983-84	51
1984-85	58
1985-86	44
1986-87	77
1987-88	111
1988-89	96
1989-90	95
1990-91	110
1991-92	132

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial contribution will be made to local authorities for supplementation to private nursing homes for the year beginning 1 April 1993.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will be making an announcement shortly on the additional resources to be made available by way of transfer from the social security vote to the budgets of the health and social services boards. Any further additional funds secured in the current public expenditure round will be announced in due course.

Health and Social Services Trusts

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what is the outcome of the current application for HSS trust status in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend, the Earl of Arran, has decided to approve the applications for trust status from the following units:

Belfast City hospital
Craigavon area hospitals group
Ulster, North Down and Ards hospitals
Green Park unit
Eastern ambulance service
Down and Lisburn unit
North Down and Ards community unit
North and West Belfast community unit
South and East Belfast community unit

The application from the Mater Infirmorum hospital has been deferred to allow the future role of the hospital to be clarified in the light of the Eastern health and social services board's current review of acute services.

The approved HSS trusts will come into operation on 1 April 1993, apart from the last four—community-based units—whose establishment is dependent on the passage of amending legislation and cannot therefore be before 1 April 1994.

Housing

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list, for each district office of the Housing Executive, for each of the last six quarters, their waiting list broken down by category, the number of allocations by category, the longest period for which applicants had been A1 homeless and priority transfer and the average period spent in each of those categories by the respective applicants who were allocated houses.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 5 November 1992]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I am advised that the available information is as follows:

Waiting list by category

District	*at 30 September 1991*		*at 31 March 1992*		*at 30 September 1992*	
	As	*Bs*	*As*	*Bs*	*As*	*Bs*
Antrim	77	[illegible]76	82	609	72	586
Armagh	44	489	62	497	49	484
Ballycastle	26	160	21	167	23	157
Ballymena	88	565	99	601	96	651
Ballymoney	28	287	18	310	16	326
Banbridge	60	262	46	266	41	238
Bangor	113	901	120	889	138	824
Belfast 1	169	513	131	524	162	526
Belfast 2	177	822	165	834	131	771
Belfast 3	339	451	292	433	249	418
Belfast 4	243	604	217	656	223	586
Belfast 5	202	420	202	408	238	415
Belfast 6	132	483	128	501	138	492
Belfast 7	238	1,025	220	1,058	209	1,025
Carrickfergus	56	468	45	501	66	495
Castlereagh 1	35	248	28	245	35	207
Castlereagh 2	63	455	73	450	69	445
Coleraine	83	717	75	698	67	694
Cookstown	37	189	21	209	20	212
Craigavon	14	223	5	193	6	173
Downpatrick	134	597	100	620	157	667
Dungannon	28	358	42	378	26	394
Fermanagh	92	444	81	465	76	465
Larne	54	364	64	364	58	352
Limavady	61	288	54	367	55	340
Lisburn 1	132	512	129	539	135	495
Lisburn 2	38	285	57	320	54	287
Lisburn 3	85	326	57	322	66	321
Londonderry 1	198	422	199	432	202	440
Londonderry 2	91	339	100	369	122	394
Londonderry 3	98	258	85	249	125	257
Lurgan	74	428	57	462	49	429
Magherafelt	45	333	51	331	41	355
Newry 1	61	423	41	441	50	430
Newry 2	55	407	63	434	47	443
Newtownabbey 1	43	308	41	349	52	344
Newtownabbey 2	57	441	47	437	60	460
Newtownards 1	116	467	97	489	87	473
Newtownards 2	53	251	28	245	32	231
Omagh	42	476	59	485	58	439
Portadown	48	364	47	403	43	405
Strabane	71	299	67	347	67	317

Allocations by category
Six month period ending:—

District	*30 September 1991*		*31 March 1992*		*30 September 1992*	
	As	*Bs*	*As*	*Bs*	*As*	*Bs*
Antrim	82	166	69	152	92	111
Armagh	48	73	45	75	51	84
Ballycastle	15	7	16	7	21	2
Ballymena	103	143	96	166	81	118
Ballymoney	34	32	32	26	21	25
Banbridge	72	25	54	26	34	43
Bangor	106	34	107	49	104	34
Belfast 1	78	41	97	45	51	22
Belfast 2	123	102	108	79	135	76
Belfast 3	143	27	102	28	108	27
Belfast 4	52	87	39	62	35	91
Belfast 5	76	213	62	221	56	56
Belfast 6	51	124	58	92	80	112
Belfast 7	157	112	99	90	127	125
Carrickfergus	71	80	66	77	51	68
Castlereagh 1	35	248	71	117	60	134
Castlereagh 2	54	37	51	29	46	27
Coleraine	95	88	51	102	74	59
Cookstown	37	49	24	42	10	48
Craigavon	23	79	24	131	16	96
Downpatrick	95	58	114	61	76	31
Dungannon	41	58	45	95	59	63
Fermanagh	78	45	71	48	78	41
Larne	52	30	45	39	58	29
Limavady	57	24	44	14	45	16
Lisburn 1	127	73	131	78	133	76
Lisburn 2	46	35	40	39	48	47
Lisburn 3	52	1	116	11	140	7
Londonderry 1	80	9	48	7	93	5
Londonderry 2	91	65	88	64	100	41
Londonderry 3	120	5	113	1	73	0
Lurgan	41	56	47	33	48	49
Magherafelt	36	28	27	33	37	23
Newry 1	64	27	67	32	68	16
Newry 2	52	54	56	27	74	44
Newtownabbey 1	32	174	36	152	47	140
Newtownabbey 2	79	84	54	159	53	82
Newtownards 1	126	32	100	34	112	90
Newtownards 2	53	13	48	20	35	27
Omagh	65	63	78	31	69	34
Portadown	29	64	27	37	40	48
Strabane	32	49	31	58	33	63

Irish Languages

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will name the schools, public bodies and Government sponsored associations involved in the promotion of the Irish language; and how many individuals use these facilities.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* Details of the number of pupils studying Irish in individual schools are not available. However, on the basis of a 10 per cent. sample survey relating to those schools which offered Irish as a subject in the 1988-89 academic year, it has been estimated that 26,210 were studying Irish. Those schools are listed in the annex.

There are in addition two grant-aided primary schools which teach through the medium of Irish and an Irish medium unit in an English medium primary school with a total enrolment of 648 in September 1992.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland provides grants for relevant projects and activities involving the Irish language—for example, in the fields of drama and literature. No information is available centrally as to the numbers participating in these activities.

The Ultach trust was established with Government support in 1989 to widen appreciation of the contribution which the Irish language makes to the cultural heritage of Northern Ireland and to increase knowledge of the language throughout the community. In 1991-92 Ultach supported 64 projects. No information is available centrally as to the numbers participating in these projects.

The origins of placenames project began on 1 October 1987 and involves a team of 5 academics located in Queen's university. The Project was assigned the following task by the Department of the Environment:

"to research the origin of all names of settlements and physical features in Northern Ireland appearing on the Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale map; to indicate their meaning and to note any historical or other relevant information. The project will enable an authenticated Irish language version to be provided for most of these names."

Currently the Training and Employment Agency's action for community employment scheme assists employment in six projects which promote the Irish language. Information on the number of individuals using these facilities is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The British Broadcasting Corporation local radio provision includes Irish-medium and bilingual Irish-English magazine programmes and schools programmes which support Irish teaching in English-medium schools.

A bilingual series and several Irish-medium and bilingual feature programmes have been broadcast on television. Information on the number of individuals using these facilities is not available.

In the financial year 1991-92 93 prisoners used the educational and translation facilities provided by the prison service.

SCHOOLS OFFERING IRISH LANGUAGE—1988-89

School

Abbey Grammar School, Newry
Assumption Grammar School, Ballynahinch
Carnhill High School, Londonderry
Christian Brothers' Grammar, Omagh
Christian Brothers' Grammar School, Belfast
Christian Brothers' Secondary School, Glengormley
Christian Brothers' Secondary School, Belfast
Convent Grammar School, Enniskillen
Corpus Christi College, Belfast
Cross and Passion College, Ballycastle
Cross and Passion High School, Belfast
Dean Brian Maguire High School, Carrickmore
Dominican College, Portstewart
Dominican College, Belfast
Drumcree High School, Portadown
La Salle Boy's Secondary School, Belfast
Lismore Comprehensive School, Craigavon
Little Flower Girls' Secondary School, Belfast
Loreto College, Coleraine
Loreto Convent Grammar School, Omagh
Our Lady and St. Patrick's College, Knock
Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School, Strabane
Our Lady's High School, Cookstown
Our Lady's Girls' Grammar School
Convent of Mercy, Newry
Rathmore Grammar School, Finaghy
Sacred Heart Girl's Grammar School, Newry
St. Aiden's High School, Enniskillen
St. Aiden's High School, Glenavy
St. Aloysius Secondary School, Cushendall
St. Brechan's High School, Londonderry
St. Brigid's Boys' High School, Armagh
St. Catherine's College, Armagh
St. Cecelia's Secondary School, Londonderry
St. Ciaran's Secondary, Ballygawley
St. Colm's Secondary School, Draperstown
St. Colman's High School, Strabane
St. Colman's College, Newry
St. Colmoille's High School, Crossgar
St. Columb's College, Londonderry
St. Columba's High School, Portaferry
St. Columban's High School, Kilkeel
St. Columbanus's High School, Bangor
St. Comgall's High School, Larne
St. Comgall's Secondary School, Enniskillen
St. Dominic's High School, Belfast
St. Eugene's Secondary School, Castlederg
St. Eugene's Secondary School, Enniskillen
St. Gabriel's Secondary School, Belfast
St. Gemma's Secondary School, Belfast
St. Genevieve's High School, Belfast
St. John's Secondary School, Dromore
St. Joseph's Boys' Secondary School, Newry
St. Joseph's Grammar School, Donaghmore
St. Joseph's High School, Crossmaglen
St. Joseph's High School, Coalisland
St. Joseph's Secondary School, Londonderry
St. Joseph's Secondary School, Plumbridge
St. Louis Grammar School, Ballymena
St. Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel
St. Louise's Comprehensive College, Balfast
St. MacNissi's College, Carnlough
St. Malachy's College, Belfast
St. Malachy's High School, Castlewellan
St. Mary's Convent Grammar School, Magherafelt
St. Mary's Girl's High School, Downpatrick
St. Mary's High School, Limavady
St. Mary's Junior High School, Lurgan
St. Mary's Secondary School, Londonderry
St. Michael's Grammar School, Enniskillen
St. Michael's Senior High School, Lurgan
St. Olcan's Secondary School, Randalstown
St. Patrick's College, Maghera
St. Patrick's and St. Brigid's Secondary School, Claudy
St. Patrick's Boys' Academy, Dungannon
St. Patrick's Boys' Secondary School, Dungannon
St. Patrick's Boys' Secondary School, Omagh
St. Patrick's Girls' Academy, Dungannon
St. Patrick's Girls' Secondary School, Dungannon
St. Patrick's High School, Dungiven
St. Patrick's High School, Ballymena
St. Patrick's High School, Downpatrick
St. Patrick's High School, Banbridge
St. Patrick's High School, Cookstown
St. Patrick's High School, Keady
St. Paul's Junior High School, Lurgan
St. Paul's Secondary School, Kilrea
St. Paul's Secondary School, Bessbrook
St. Peter's Secondary School, Londonderry
St. Pius X Secondary School, Magherafelt
St. Joseph's Boys' Secondary School, Enniskillen
St. Patrick's Grammar, Armagh
Thornhill College Convent of Mercy, Londonderry

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep Dip

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when training courses will be available to farmers on the dangers of sheep dip to human beings.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

Training courses for farmers on sheep husbandry tasks are available from the Agricultural training board, various agricultural colleges and other training organisations. The hazards of sheep dip and the health and safety precautions to take during sheep dipping operations are included in these courses.

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Training

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of those leaving youth training in 1991 in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* Pendle have found full-time employment within six months.

Mr. McLoughlin: Of those leaving youth training training providers in Lancashire in 1991, 51 per cent. found full-time employment within six months. Figures for Pendle are not available.

Earnings

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the gap between the earnings of Britain's highest and lowest paid in *(a)* 1962 and *(b)* 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information nearest to that requested is contained in table 15 of part A of the "New Earning Survey" for the years 1980, 1990 and 1992. Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workers currently receive less than £207·13 a week.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information closest to that requested can be found in table 14 of part A of the "New Earnings Survey 1992", a copy of which is in the Library.

Redundancies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many redundancies in the textile industry have taken place in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* the north-west region for each year since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is available only from the confirmed redundancies series that was discontinued from summer 1992. The number of confirmed redundancies recorded in the textile industry in Lancashire and the north-west region in each of the years 1979 to 1991 are given in the following table. Since spring 1992 the main source of data on redundancies has been the quarterly "Labour Force Survey" which provides a more reliable measure of the number of redundancies than the discontinued series, but does not provide the type of detailed analyses requested.

Year	*Lancashire*	*North West Region*
1979	2,061	5,124
1980	8,976	19,164
1981	2,630	9,003
1982	1,729	4,803
1983	782	2,837
1984	199	1,490
1985	26	1,134
1986	48	1,318
1987	231	952
1988	184	1,400
1989	938	1,959
1990	391	2,764
1991	942	2,482

Unpaid Probation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals she has to prohibit employers from offering unemployed people a period of unpaid probation on the basis of continuing to receive unemployment benefit and meal and travel allowances.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have no such proposals. Under our successful job interview guarantee a person unemployed for six months or more can try out a job with an employer for up to three weeks, with a guaranteed interview at the end of that period. In 1993-94 we intend to expand the number of these work trials arranged by the employment service to 20,000.

Health and Safety

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what will be the cost of the market testing department in the Health and Safety Executive when it is fully staffed.

Mr. McLoughlin: The salary cost of the market testing section which the executive plans to have in place are expected to be around £180,000 in a full year at 1992 costs.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the cost of the consultant assisting the director general of the Health and Safety Executive in compiling his report on market testing; how he was appointed; and what was his previous occupation or employer.

Mr. McLoughlin: The consultant is a partner with Touche Ross and has extensive experience of market testing in the public sector, both in central and local government. He was appointed under HSE's normal procedures, following an invitation to tender and a personal interview. HSE followed the guidance on the ethics of conducting business with the private sector contained in the Treasury public competition and purchasing unit publication—CUP16 in appointing him. I regard his rate of remuneration as commercial in confidence.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the business case for the Health and Safety Executive FOCUS computer system will be placed in the Library and made public.

Mr. McLoughlin: The FOCUS business case is a working document prepared by the Health and Safety Executive for internal use to support the proposed introduction of the FOCUS computer system and not for publication.

Employment Training

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will raise the maximum age limit of the aim group for employment training.

Mr. McLoughlin: Employment training is open to unemployed people up to the age of 59 who meet the general eligibility conditions. However, those aged 50 and over do not fall within any of the categories of unemployed people who have priority for places. Under training for work, which is to replace employment training from April 1993, age will not be a factor in determining priority.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of the working population are on work-related Government training programmes in each region.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is shown in the following table:

Participants on work-related Government training programmes June 1992

Region	*Work-related Government training schemes*[1]	*Percentage of civilian work force in employment*
South East[2]	57,000	0·7
Greater London	29,000	0·8
East Anglia	8,000	0·9
South West	22,000	1·1
West Midlands	32,000	1·4
East Midlands	22,000	1·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	34,000	1·6
North West	46,000	1·7
North	32,000	2·6
Wales	20,000	1·7
Scotland	43,000	1·9

[1] Includes all participants on government training and employment programmes who are receiving some work experience on their placement but who do not have a contract of employment.

[2] Including Greater London.

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what use her Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if she will list the firms involved.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Employment Department group has not employed any private detectives in any of the last five years.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list for each training and enterprise council their total reserves at the end of the last financial year.

Mr. McLoughlin: All of the information requested has not yet been received from the training and enterprise councils and may not be received for some considerable time. I will write to my hon. Friend with the information as required.

Wages Councils

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* establishments and *(b)* employees were covered by wages councils in each standard region in (i) 1979, (ii) 1986, (iii) 1989 and (iv) 1991; and what percentage of the working population this represents in each region.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available estimates, which are for wages inspectorate divisions in 1989 and 1992, are given in the following table. I regret that data on a consistent basis are not available for 1979 and 1986.

(a) number of workers (000s)

Wages inspectorate division	*1989*	*1992*
Southern:		
London	367	330
South East	268	275
East	233	253
South West[1]	318	360
Midlands	380	411
North West[1]	335	345
Yorkshire and Humberside	214	225
North	133	140
Scotland	224	220

(b) number of establishments (000s)

Wages inspectorate division	*1989*	*1992*
Southern:		
London	56	51
South East	41	43
East	36	39
South West[1]	49	56
Midlands	58	64
North West[1]	51	54
Yorkshire and Humberside	33	35
North	20	22
Scotland	34	35

[1] North Wales is covered by the North West Division and South Wales by the South West Division.

There are no estimates of the percentage which these figures represent of the working population in each of the wages inspectorate's divisions but about 10 per cent. of the Great Britain work force are employed in industries covered by wages councils.

TRANSPORT

West Coast Main Line

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail on relaxation of the passengers charter with regard to the west coast main line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: New passengers charter performance standards for InterCity services, including those operating on the west coast main line, are at present being discussed by British Rail and the Department of Transport.

Rail Franchises

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many respondents to his consultation document on rail franchises expressed an interest in operating services.

Mr. Freeman: Thirty-five of those who have so far responded to the consultation document have expressed interest in operating services. In addition, several companies have told us that, although they were unable to meet the 12 November deadline, they would be registering an interest shortly.

Ports

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what *(a)* capital investment and *(b)* other measures he plans to improve transport links to Britain's ports.

Mr. Norris: Many programmed motorway and trunk road schemes will improve access to ports, in particular planned schemes on the A2, M2, M3, A12, A20, M20, A259, A27, A580, A1033, and the M1-A1 link.

Airports

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the figures for cross-subsidy to Stansted airport from Heathrow and Gatwick airports over the last two years.

Mr. Norris: The revenue and operating profit or loss for each of the British Aiports Authority's airports is contained in the annual published accounts of BAA plc. In addition, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission undertook in 1991 a detailed examination of Heathrow Airport Ltd., Gatwick Airport Ltd. and Stansted Airport Ltd. Its report was published by the Civil Aviation Authority in July 1991 and a copy placed in the Library.

Roads

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will postpone all further consideration of a second A38 road crossing of the River Tamar until such time as a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis has established the relative economic and environmental advantages of current and proposed improvements to the A30 and A39 Atlantic highway.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: All current and proposed improvement schemes in the road programme, including all those referred to in the question, are subjected to such analyses, and proceed only if they are justified.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made with *(a)* the Camelford bypass *(b)* Alliss to south Penlean, *(c)* the Stratton diversion, *(d)* the Kilkhampton bypass, *(e)* Clovelly cross to Seckington and *(f)* the Bucks cross improvement schemes for the A39 Atlantic highway; and what changes have taken place since his Department's south-west regional brief 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Progress on the preparation of these schemes has been made as resources have permitted. Compared with the position at October 1991 reported in the Department's south-west regional brief, current plans are:

Camelford bypass	Public consultation 1993
Allins to South Penlean improvement	Public consultation held 1992
Stratton diversion	Surveys under way for Public consultation 1994
Kilkhampton bypass	
Clover Cross to Seckington improvement	Public consultation 1994
Bucks Cross improvement	

M6

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest position in relation to the M6 widening proposals in the north of the Coventry, North-East constituency.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Preparation work is proceeding satisfactorily; we expect to be ready to consult the public on proposals for widening the length between the M1 and junction 4 towards the end of next year.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what targets or time scales he will apply to his Department under the citizens charter with respect to decisions on road construction projects.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The time taken to announce decisions on trunk road schemes after a public inquiry will depend on the complexity of the scheme and the weight and nature of the objections.

More generally, we are concerned about how long it takes to prepare major trunk road schemes. We have appointed consultants to review the statutory and administrative procedures involved and to recommend possible changes which might speed up the process.

Search and Rescue

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the civilian emergencies in each of the last six years attended by the search and rescue services.

Mr. Norris: From HM coastguard records, the numbers of incidents on the coast and at sea attended by the United Kingdom search and rescue services, including governmental and voluntary resources, for each of the last six years are as follows:

Year	*Number*
1986	5,300
1987	5,563
1988	6,261
1989	6,835
1990	7,076
1991	7,212

West Highland Railway Line

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total subsidy paid to British Rail in 1991-92 for the operation of services *(a)* on the West Highland line and *(b)* specifically on the line to Oban; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The public service obligation grant is not allocated on a line by line basis. The total grant paid to British Rail in 1991-92 was £892 million.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representationss he has had regarding the future of rail services on the West Highland line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: None.

Petroleum

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what safety regulations govern the transportation of petroleum by [illegible]; what plans there are to review the regulations; and [illegible] he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The regulations for transport of dangerous goods by road are made under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Those affecting the transport of petroleum are:

The Dangerous Substances (Carriage of Dangerous Substances in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1992;

The Classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations 1984;

The Road Traffic (Carriage of Dangerous Substances in Packages etc.) Regulations 1992;

The Road Traffic (Training of Drivers of Vehicles Carrying Dangerous Goods) Regulations 1992.

The Health and Safety Executive and the Department of Transport regularly review the regulations in the light of changes to international recommendations, developments in technology and practical experience.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents since 1982 involved the transportation of petroleum by road; if he will list the number of fatalities and injured; how many of those accidents occurred in residential areas; and if he will list the number of fatalities and injured in those areas.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The information is not available in the form requested. There have been three fatalities and few serious injuries resulting from the transport of petroleum by road since 1982. There were 440 reported incidents of overturning or other serious damage, release of product of fire involving road tankers carrying all types of dangerous substances from 1982 to 1991. Incidents occurring in residential areas cannot readily be separately identified.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents since 1982 involved the transportation of petroleum by rail; if he will list the number of fatalities and injured; how many of those accidents occurred in residential areas; and if he will list the number of fatalities and injured in those areas.

Mr. Freeman: The Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate has a record of all reported freight train accidents.

The inspectorate is aware of five serious accidents during this period involving petroleum trains, none of which gave rise to death or major injury.

Noise Insulation Grants

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in deciding whether schools should be eligible for noise insulation grants when they are in close proximity to airfields; and when he expects to make an announcement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A number of issues raised by the draft report of the sub-group of the land compensation working party have to be resolved. It is hoped that an announcement will be made shortly.

British Rail (Freight)

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made with the Government's plans for the sale of British Rail's freight businesses to the private sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The privatisation of British Rail's freight businesses requires primary legislation. Subject to enactment of that legislation, we intend that privatisation will commence in 1994. We are aiming to announce preferred options for the restructuring of the freight businesses prior to privatisation in the first part of next year.

Passenger Rail Services

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his Department has had with interested parties regarding the Government's plans for the franchising of passenger rail services in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Department is considering responses to the consultation document issued on 12 October, and will be having discussions with some of those respondents. I shall be visiting Scotland next month as part of my national programme of presentations on our proposals for privatising British Rail.

Road Accidents (Summer Time)

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has on the connection between the ending of British summer time and traffic accidents and casualties, with particular reference to children.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Detailed estimates, by the Transport Research Laboratory, of the casualty savings that would accrue from a change to the present summer time regime are contained in paragraphs 26 to 43 of the 1989 Home Office document "'Summer Time'"—A Consultation Document". Copies of this are available in the House Library.

The estimates of the casualty savings that would accrue from a single double summer time regime have been updated to take account of 1991 casualty data. This indicates a saving of 140 fatalities, 520 serious injuries and 1,200 slight injuries, many of which would be child casualties.

Chelmsford/A12 Bypass

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects the emergency telephones on the Chelmsford/A12 bypass to be erected and in operation.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 16 November 1992]*: The telephones are currently being installed and should be in service early next month.

Heavy Goods Vehicle Instructors

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to operate a scheme for registration of heavy goods vehicle instructors along the lines of his scheme for driving instructors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* I have no such plans. All large goods vehicle candidates must already have passed a car driving test and then face the very demanding LGV driving test. There is no clear road safety evidence to justify further regulation.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what qualifications he considers suitable for HGV instructors; how they differ from driving instructors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* My Department does not set qualifications for LGV driving instructors beyond requiring that they hold a full licence for driving the category of vehicle. The Driving Standards Agency is, however, preparing an official learner syllabus for LGV drivers which will help trainers and trainees alike.

School Buses

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, column *160*, when he completed the review of the Carrying Capacity Regulations 1984 and associated regulations regarding the permissibility of three children aged under 14 travelling on a double seat as referred to in his reply to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay), 25 June, *Official Report*, column *273*; and what are the reasons underlying the decision not to change the regulations.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* We are continuing to review these regulations. For the present, as I said in my reply of 3 November, I have no plans to amend the regulations.

Commuter Services

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to divert sufficient amounts of the proposed increased investment by British Rail to modernise commuter services to and from London, including the Fenchurch street line to Southend.

Mr. Freeman: It is for British Rail to set priorities for investment within the resources at its disposal.

BR is currently reviewing its priorities in the light of the autumn statement and I will write to my right hon. Friend in due course.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

India

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library the text of the extradition treaty with India he signed on behalf of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The extradition treaty between the United Kingdom and India was signed on 23 September 1992 and copies placed in the Libraries of both Houses on that date.

Baltic States

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Russian Government regarding its cancellation of troop withdrawals from the Baltic states.

Mr. Hogg: The Russian Government have suspended rather than cancelled withdrawals from the Baltic states. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister raised the matter with President Yeltsin during their talks in London on 9 November, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed it with the Russian Foreign Minister on 10 November.

Publicity Expenditure

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total spending in Britain by the European Commission and its agencies on information, public relations and publicity in 1980 and 1990.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Details of the information and publicity budgets of institutions are set out in the EC general budget. This is published in the *Official Journal*, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. The Commission and other EC institutions do not specify what proportion of their information budgets are spent in each member state.

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what use his Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Mr. Goodlad: None.

Kaliningrad

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on levels of military deployment within the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Republic.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Kaliningrad region of the Russian republic contains the headquarters of the Russian Baltic fleet. We understand that there are at least 30,000 ground forces, as well as significant numbers of aircraft of the Russian naval air force and the Russian air force based there. Kaliningrad is a significant staging-post for Russian ground troops withdrawn from Germany and Poland.

Hong Kong

Mr. Renton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the prospects for economic, political and democratic growth in Hong Kong as outlined in the Governor's speech last month to the Legislative Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The Government fully endorse the economic, social and political policies for Hong Kong set out in the Governor's address to the Legislative Council on 7 October.

The economic prospects of Hong Kong are very encouraging. Hong Kong's projected annual GDP growth between now and 1997 is expected to average 5 per cent. in real terms. The growing economic co-operation between the territory and southern China has enabled Hong Kong to benefit from the remarkable rates of growth in China in recent years.

The best way to protect Hong Kong's prosperity and stability in the years ahead is to maintain the territory's way of life. The Governor made a number of proposals in his speech aimed at making the administration of Hong Kong more effective and broadening the participation of Hong Kong people in running their own affairs. We consider that these proposals are consistent with the joint declaration and the basic law. The Governor has made clear that he is willing to consider alternative proposals if these meet the requirement of being open, fair and commanding widespread support in Hong Kong.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Hong Kong citizens have applied for United Kingdom passports; what is the likely proportion that will be granted passports; and how many dependants are likely to attach to each passport granted.

Mr. Goodlad: Some 66,511 Hong Kong residents have applied to date for British citizenship in the first phase of the British nationality scheme under the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990. About 39,418 of them are expected to be successful in their application.

Present indications are that the principal beneficiaries each have two dependants on average.

Iraq

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of the documents made available in the Matrix Churchill court case, he will make further inquiries into the circumstances of the death of journalist Jonathan Moyle in 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As I told the House on 21 January 1991, we have previously looked into media reports that Mr. Moyle may have come across information about Chilean arms sales to Iraq, but we have no evidence to substantiate this.

Mr. Jonathan Moyle's tragic death is still under investigation by the Chilean authorities, and the British Embassy in Santiago remains in touch with those authorities.

Bosnia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of any formal or informal agreement reached by EC ministers for EC member states to receive families from Bosnian detention camps this year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This question was discussed at the EC Foreign Affairs Council on 9 November but no agreement, formal or informal, was reached. We have offered to accept 150 (plus dependants) in the first instance and are looking at what more we can do. We understand that EC partners have made similar offers.

Public Works Contracts

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the dates on which regulations equivalent to the Public Works Contracts Regulations 1991 were enacted or came into force in each other EC member state.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The material requested is not held centrally and will need some time to be collected. I will provide as full a response as I can as soon as possible.

Wilton Park

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made on the appointment of a departmental board for the Wilton Park executive agency; and whether targets have been agreed for the current year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Wilton Park departmental board was appointed earlier this year and held its first meeting on 23 October. I have agreed the recommendation of the board that the following key targets be adopted for this financial year:

to increase income from £790,000 to £876,000;
to recover 72·5 per cent. of costs;
to increase the overall number of Wilton Park conference participants from 720 to 860;
to reduce the average cost to the FCO of each participant from £426 to £387.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 9 November.

Mr. Hurd: I chaired the Foreign Affairs Council on 9 November. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and, on trade issues including GATT, my hon. Friend the Minister of Trade represented the United Kingdom.

There was a discussion of guiding principles on subsidiarity on the basis of a draft presidency paper. It was agreed that COREPER would report to the next meeting of the Council. There was discussion on how to introduce greater openness into the work of the Community following the discussion at the European Council in Birmingham. COREPER will take this work forward too.

Progress in ratifying the Maastricht treaty was discussed informally. The Danish Foreign Minister explained the Danish proposals. We as presidency agreed to liaise closely with the Danes and our other partners to reach agreement on a framework for a solution at Edinburgh. I reiterated the Government's commitment to securing the passage of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill in order to permit the United Kingdom to ratify the Maastricht treaty.

There was a further discussion on the Community's finances, based on outline conclusions tabled by the presidency and on a presentation by the President of the Commission.

The Commission reported on recent negotiations with the United States on GATT and oilseeds. The Council urged the Commission to resume negotiations with the United States and warned that United States unilateral action could lead to a retaliatory spiral. The Council emphasised the vital importance of early action by both sides to avoid this.

The Council welcomed the Commission's opinion on Finland's application to join the Community. It was agreed that this should be considered as part of the preparations for enlargement negotiations with the EFTA countries.

The right hon. and noble Lord Owen briefed Ministers on recent developments in the former Yugoslavia. Ministers had a wide ranging discussion of the crisis, including the plight of released detainees. They agreed to continue work on tightening sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro.

An EC/Turkey Association Council took place in the margins of the Council. The Council agreed on a new political dialogue arrangements with Turkey, including meetings at the highest level and regular meetings at Foreign Minister level.

Korea

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent visit by their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales to the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Goodlad: Their Royal Highnesses were the guests of President Roh Tae Woo. The Korean Government and people gave them an extremely warm reception as a mark of the esteem in which they and Britain are held in Korea. Their Royal Highnesses undertook a very busy schedule which involved meeting many distinguished and influential Koreans. Their visit provided an excellent base from which to develop further the already good bilateral relations which exist. Their Royal Highnesses attended a number of major commercial promotions, several sponsored by the Department of Trade and Industry. Their presence provided a unique opportunity for British companies to demonstrate their commitment to the market, and to raise the profile of British business and technology in South Korea's growing economy.

PRIME MINISTER

Security Service

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what arrangements he intends to make for parliamentary scrutiny of the Security Service and the secret intelligence service.

The Prime Minister: As I explained to the hon. Member on 13 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *103*, the security and intelligence services are all subject to close ministerial oversight, and the Ministers are responsible to Parliament. There is now also a Commissioner for the Security Service who produces an annual report to Parliament, and a tribunal for those who have grievances. There will be an opportunity for Parliament to debate such matters when legislation is brought forward.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 17 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Cabinet Committees

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Prime Minister whether it is customary for decisions made in Cabinet Committee to be relayed to Members of the Cabinet who have not attended that meeting.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* Not in all cases. The procedures for Cabinet committees are set out in paragraph 4 of the "Questions of Procedure for Ministers," which is available in the Library.

EDUCATION

Governing Bodies

4. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a further statement on the corporate status of governing bodies of schools.

Mr. Forth: The Education Bill includes provision for the incorporation of governing bodies of LEA-maintained schools.

Teachers' Pay

11. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what factors he will take into account when considering the recommendations from the School Teachers' Pay Review Body.

Mr. Patten: I set out in my letters to the chairman of the school teachers' review body dated 24 July and 12 November the considerations which should inform their recommendations for teachers' pay and conditions of service in 1993-94. Copies are in the Library.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on teachers' pay.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has asked the school teachers' review body to make recommendations on teachers' pay and statutory conditions of service from April 1993. His letters to the chairman of the school teachers' review body dated 24 July and 12 November set out the matters on which he has asked for recommendations, and the considerations to which the review body is to have regard. Copies of both letters are in the Library.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received regarding performance-related pay for teachers and the scheme's proposed introduction.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received a small number of representations on the introduction of performance-related pay for school teachers. He has asked the school teachers' review body to recommend how the pay of all school teachers might be more closely related to their individual performance.

University Entrance (Cumbria)

13. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he has available to him as to the proportion of sixth formers in Cumbria going on to attend university.

Mr. Forman: More than 1,200 students from Cumbria entered universities in Great Britain and polytechnics and colleges in England in 1990-91. This represented nearly 20 per cent. of the young adult population in Cumbria, and was very similar to national participation rates for that year.

Schools (Surplus Places)

14. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the latest Government estimate of the number of surplus places in schools in England.

Mr. Patten: We estimate that there are currently up to 1·5 million surplus places in England.

Grant-maintained Schools

12. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what provisions he has made in relation to the auditing of the accounts of grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Forth: The governing body of a grant-maintained school is required to appoint qualified external auditors, which may include the Audit Commission, to audit the school's annual accounts. The Department has issued guidance on the form of an audit code for governors and auditors of grant-maintained schools. As for other Exchequer-funded bodies, grant-maintained schools are subject to the oversight of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

15. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of schools in England have had ballots on grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: Ballots have been held at 701 schools in England to date, that is around 3·5 per cent. of eligible schools. The sevenfold increase in ballots last month compared to October last year reflects the significant increase of interest following publication of the White Paper.

16. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from Blackburn about his proposals for grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received no representations from Blackburn about his proposals for grant-maintained schools.

19. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* secondary and *(b)* primary schools are now operating under grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: A total of 225 secondary schools and 53 primary schools are currently operating under grant-maintained status. A further 43 secondary schools and 21 primary schools have received approval.

24. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the contributions which can be made by grant-maintained schools in rural areas.

Mr. Forth: The advantages of grant-maintained status—for example, the ability of schools to manage their own affairs, their accountability to parents and the local community and not to a bureaucracy, and popularity with parents shown by the increased applications for places—apply equally to schools in rural as in other areas.

25. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recent representations he has received about the future funding of grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Forth: We have received a number of representations on the future funding of grant-maintained schools in the light of the White Paper. We aim to publish consultation papers on the arrangements for calculation of grant in 1993-94 and on the common funding formula before the end of the year.

26. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on changes in the resources for 1993-94 available for *(a)* grant-maintained schools and *(b)* local education authority schools.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend announced provision for grant-maintained schools for 1993-94 in his reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 12 November at columns *894-97.*

Details of the Government's assumptions about the level of local authority recurrent spending in 1993-94, including spending on education, will be announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment later this month, along with other details of next year's local authority finance settlement.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what capital funding arrangements he is making for newly appointed grant-maintained schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: All new and existing grant-maintained schools are invited to bid for grant funding for capital projects in an annual bidding round. All bids are judged strictly on their merits and in the light of the funds available. Decisions on the bids received from schools for 1993-94 projects will be announced in the new year.

Grant-maintained schools' annual maintenance grant includes an element for minor repair work. Schools also receive a formula allocation of capital grant for longer-term repairs and minor capital projects. In 1992-93 schools becoming grant-maintained in April received a full-year's formula allocation. Schools becoming grant-maintained in September received a proportion of their full-year allocation once incorporated. Schools can decide how to allocate this funding and are free to set their own priorities including the amount which they spend on repairs and maintenance.

17. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about the funding available in the next financial year to finance pre-school education.

Mr. Forth: Details of the Government's proposals for next year's funding settlement for local authorities will be announced later this month. Within the framework of the settlement, individual local authorities are free to determine their own policies and expenditure on under-fives provision.

Sixteen-year-olds

18. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will state the total number of 16-year-olds expected to enter the labour market during this year.

Mr. Forman: The total number of 16-year-olds in England in the current academic year is 551,000, of whom some 397,000 are expected to be in full-time education at a school or further education college. The balance of 154,000 represents the number of young people expected to enter the labour market. A significant proportion of these are expected to be undertaking part-time education or training at a further education institution or on Government-sponsored youth training. The Government guarantee a suitable place on youth training for all 16 and 17-year-olds who are not in further education or employment.

School Buildings

20. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about the funding available in the next financial year to repair school buildings.

Mr. Forth: We shall be allocating £660 million to support capital spending on school buildings in 1993-94. Local authorities will also benefit from the change my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced last week on the permitted use of capital receipts.

It will be for individual local education authorities to determine the level of their capital and recurrent spending on school buildings and their priorities.

Polytechnics and Colleges

21. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many of today's universities were polytechnics or colleges in 1979; and what this represents in student numbers.

Mr. Forman: Thirty-six institutions have received approval for university titles following the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. In 1990-91 about 342,000 students were studying at these institutions out of a total of about 1,150,000 higher education students in Great Britain. This represents nearly 30 per cent. of all higher education students in Britain.

Public Expenditure

22. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has had from teachers' unions on the Government's public expenditure plans for next year.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received a very small number of such representations.

Special Needs (Higher Education)

23. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about the funding available in the next financial year to finance special needs education in higher education.

Mr. Forman: The total funding for higher education in England next year was announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 12 November. It is for the Higher Education Funding Council to decide how to distribute its total grant between institutions, taking account of the interests of those with special needs and other factors.

Access Courses

27. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received on the level of funding next year for access courses.

Mr. Forman: No such representations have been received.

Further and Higher Education

28. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what new initiatives his Department is proposing concerning access to higher and further education.

Mr. Forman: The Government's public spending plans, announced in my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement to the House on 12 November, provide for a continuing increase in both higher and further education student numbers. In his initial letter to the Higher Education Funding Council for England, my right hon. Friend asked the Council to consider a range of access issues and we drew the Further Education Funding Council's attention to similar concerns in his launch letter to that council.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if students who entered universities recently converted from polytechnics will be classed as students entering universities or as students entering polytechnics, in official Department for Education figures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: The Department will continue to publish statistics on higher education students which adequately reflect the titles of the institutions those students attend. Discussions are currently in progress to establish statistical arrangements consistent with the new framework for higher education.

Law Students

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will introduce proposals to ensure that students following a law finals course receive a mandatory rather than a discretionary grant.

Mr. Forman: The Education Act 1962 restricts mandatory awards to full-time courses leding to a first degree or comparable qualification, or to the DipHE or HND, and to courses for the initial training of teachers. But the Act also allows for discretionary awards for most other courses, including the postgraduate law finals course. We have no present plans to move that boundary, which would require primary legislation.

Education, Support and Training Grants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much funding is available for the schools element of the grants for education support and training programme in 1992-93 and for 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: The grants for education support and training programme for 1992-93 supports some £377 million of expenditure in England, of which some £344 million will be for or associated with schools. The programme for 1993-94 will support some £320 million in England, of which some £314 million will be for or associated with schools. Grant is generally paid at 60 per cent. of expenditure.

Part-time Courses

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will bring forward proposals to ensure that courses of study at educational establishments of no more than 20 hours weekly are designated as part-time study; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: Decisions on the appropriate number of hours of study for individual courses, and on whether a course should be designated as full or part-time, are for individual institutions.

Harris City Technology College, London

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils at the Harris city technology college, south London, were in the year group taking GCSE in the summer of 1992; how many of them achieved a GCSE pass at either grade A or B in *(a)* technology, *(b)* mathematics, *(c)* French, *(d)* German, *(e)* history, *(f)* geography, *(g)* single science and *(h)* design and communication.

Mr. Forth: There were 117 pupils in the year group YG11 at Harris city technology college, London, taking GCSE in the summer of 1992. The number of pupils achieving a GCSE pass at grades A or B for these subjects are as follows:

> *(a)* technology, 0 *(b)* mathematics, 2 *(c)* French, 0 *(d)* German, 0 *(e)* history, 1 *(f)* geography, 1 *(g)* single science, 1 and *(h)* design and communication, 0.

In providing comparative information about examination results on a national and local basis GCSE results are to be banded to show passes at grades A to C and A to G. At Harris CTC, GCSE A-C grade passes in all subjects totalled 342, including 11 in single science and 147 in double science. Of schools in the London borough of Croydon, Harris has the second biggest improvement in the number of children getting five or more A to C passes at GCSEs in 1992, a 15 per cent. increase over last year. The pupils taking GCSE in 1992 were formerly pupils at the Sylvan high school on the same site. The average number of A to C passes this year was 2·92 per pupil compared with the best average at the Sylvan school of 1·54.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what *(a)* Government and *(b)* private sector financial support was received by Harris city technology college, south London, in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Forth: Recurrent funding for city technology colleges is provided by grant direct from the Department of Education. The amount of Government grant for Harris city technology college in the academic year 1990-91 was £2·939 million and in the academic year 1991-92 was £3·107 million. As for all other schools, any additional funding by private sector sponsors for recurrent expenditure purposes is a matter for the schools and sponsors concerned.

Schools (Opt-out Ballots)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* maintained and *(b)* voluntary-aided (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools there are in each local authority area; how many have balloted on the question of opting out; how many votes were in favour of opting out; and what is the percentage of pupils in the local authority area that that figure represents.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) on Friday 6 November, *Official Report*, columns *478-87*. The additional information requested could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what use his Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Mr. Forman: None.

Funding

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the level of the central funds provided for education to each *(a)* local education authority and *(b)* self-governing school per pupil in each age group in each year since 1989.

Mr. Forth: Central Government support for local authorities is virtually entirely through general grant, which is not hypothecated to particular services such as education. Local authorities are thus free to determine their own spending priorities.

Grant-maintained schools receive the bulk of their recurrent funding through annual maintenance grants, which are recouped in full from the former maintaining education authority. None of the special purpose and capital grants which grant maintained schools receive from central Government are allocated on the basis of pupil age ranges.

School Action Plans

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education from whom he intends to seek advice when monitoring action plans for schools and the progress of their implementations as proposed in the Education Bill.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend will seek the advice of Her Majesty's chief inspector.

Engineering Places

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many engineering places in advanced education have been available in each of the last five years; and how many were unfilled.

Mr. Forman: The Universities Funding Council—UFC—and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council—PCFC—have distributed recurrent funding on the basis of funded numbers or places. But these funded numbers do not necessarily reflect the total number of available places, as additional students may be recruited on a "fees-only" basis. Data on the total number of engineering places which institutions wish to make available each academic year are not collected by the Funding Councils.

Data which are available on funded places and enrolments—full-time equivalents—home and EC students—in engineering and technology are given in the table.

	Universities (GB) in UFC sector		*PCFC sector (England)*	
Academic year	*Funded places*	*Enrolments*	*Funded places*	*Enrolments*
1990-91	37,687	36,927	34,686	36,316
1991-92	36,715	39,816	34,839	42,028

Access Funds

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy that access funds should be available to students who do not already have student loans.

Mr. Forman: Access funds are intended to help students who face severe financial difficulties after availing themselves of all other public sources of support. We have given guidance to institutions that they should not make payments from the access funds to students who are eligible for a student loan but who have not taken one out, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Maintenance Grants

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what monitoring his Department carries out of delays by local authorities in issuing maintenance grant cheques to students.

Mr. Forman: The Department does not directly monitor the time taken by each of more than 100 individual local education authorities to assess and pay mandatory awards to well over half a million students in total. But we vigorously investigate any reports of delays by named authorities to ensure that they take whatever action is necessary to comply with their statutory duties and minimise hardship among students. We have given all authorities guidance on prompt grant payment, and the Audit Commssion has published proposals for future performance indicators in this field.

Funding Authorities

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will state the functions and duties that his proposed legislation *(a)* requires education funding authorities to perform and *(b)* which any Secretary of State may require them to perform; and on what basis payment of grant to them will be calculated.

Mr. Forth: Under the proposed legislation, as set out in the Education Bill introduced to Parliament on 30 October, the Funding Agency for Schools has the functions summarised below. Payments of grant by the DFE to the FAS will be calculated on the basis of forecasts of projected expenditure on both the grants that the funding agency must make to schools, and the agency's own running costs.

The Schools Funding Council for Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

FUNCTIONS OF THE FAS

A. Functions of the FAS where no order has been made conferring responsibility for providing sufficient school places:

1. The FAS is to be responsible for paying annual maintenance grant to the governing bodies of all GM schools in England, the amount of which is to be determined by the Agency in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State.

2. Regulations may provide for the payment by the FAS of capital and special purpose grants to the governing bodies of GM schools.

3. The FAS is to be responsible for paying grant to the new GM governing body of a school acquiring GM status in respect of any expenditure incurred by them up to the date of implementation of the proposals where it is incurred for the purpose of, or [illegible] connection with, the transition of the school to GM status.

4. The FAS is to have power to pay grants to the governing body of any GM school which is being discontinued where it is for the purpose of discharging any of the liabilities of the governing body or for meeting any of the costs of the winding up.

5. The FAS is to have similar grant paying functions to those referred to in paragraphs 1 to 4 above in relation to schools conducted by education associations.

6. The FAS is to be under a duty to provide the Secretary of State with such information or advice in connection with any of his functions relating to the provision of education as he may from time to time require. It is also to have the power to provide the Secretary of State with such information and advice as it thinks fit.

7. The FAS is to be under a duty to make such reports and returns, and to give such information, to any LEA as the authority may require for the purpose of its functions.

B. Functions of the Secretary of State in relation to the GM sector which he may transfer to the FAS.

8. The Secretary of State may by order transfer to the FAS (either generally or in specified circumstances) the following of his functions in relation to the GM sector—

(a) the making of new instruments of governments and their modification, and the making and variation of articles of government;

(b) the function of determining proposals by a governing body significantly to change the character or enlarge the premises of a GM school;

(c) the power to authorise the transfer of a GM school to a new site;

(d) the function of determining proposals by a governing body to discontinue a GM school;

(e) the power in certain circumstances to vary trust deeds relating to GM schools; and

(f) the power by order to make such provision as appropriate in connection with a school's transition to GM status.

C. Additional functions of the FAS where an order has been made conferring responsibility for providing sufficient school places.

9. Where at least 10 per cent. of pupils educated in maintained schools (other than special schools) are educated in the GM sector, the Secretary of State may make an order the effect of which is to place a duty on the FAS, as well as the LEA, to secure the provision of sufficient school places. The functions set out below are exercisable by the FAS where such an order has been made.

10. The FAS is to have the power to propose the establishment and discontinuance of GM schools, after consultation with such persons as appear to it to be appropriate. The Secretary of State must approve proposals to which objections have been made, or which he has "called in" or if the proposals name a sponsor of the school. The FAS is also to have the power to propose that a significant change in character, or significant enlargement of the premises, be made to a GM school.

11. The FAS is to have the power to direct that the approved admission number of a GM school be increased. The function of the Secretary of State in approving variations to the admission number proposed by the governing body of a GM school also transfers to the FAS.

12. The Secretary of State may make regulations requiring the FAS to provide him and LEAs with such information as may be prescribed relating to the provision of education in a LEA area for which they have responsibility. The FAS is to compile such information, and to make such provision for conducting, or assisting in the conduct of research, as is necessary for the purpose of providing the information required under the regulations.

13. Where at least 75 per cent. of pupils educated in maintained schools (other than special schools) are educated in the GM sector (or at least 10 per cent. of pupils are so educated and the LEA requests the order to be made), the Secretary of State may make an order the effect of which is to impose on the FAS the sole responsibility for securing sufficient school places in the LEA's area. Where such an order is made, as well as the functions referred to in paragraphs 10 to 12 above, the power of the LEA to direct a child's admission to a specific school also transfers to the FAS.

HEALTH

Treatment Purchases

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those health authorities which have decided to cease purchasing categories of treatment in total or for particular groups of patients; and if she will give details of the categories of treatment concerned.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally.

Family Planning Service

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to expand the domiciliary family planning service in order to meet the targets regarding the reduction of teenage pregnancies and the incidence of sexually transmitted disease and invasive cancer of the cervix set out in the White Paper. "The Health of the Nation";

(2) what guidance she will issue to health authorities and trusts regarding domiciliary family planning services in the light of the care in the community proposals.

Mr. Sackville: The day-to-day management and provision of family planning services is a matter for individual health authorities since they can best judge local circumstances and needs. New guidelines issued by the National Health Service Management Executive in January 1992 include advice on targeting services and the service accessibility. Attention is drawn, with reference to earlier advice—family planning memorandum of guidance (HSC(IS)32)—to the way in which domiciliary services can be used to improve take-up among those people with special needs.

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list those health authorities which provided domiciliary family planning services in each year since 1985;

(2) how many health authorities and national health service trusts in the United Kingdom currently provide domiciliary family planning services.

Mr. Sackville: The table lists those district health authorities that reported making at least one family planning domiciliary visit in one of the years 1988-89 to 1990-91. Figures for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Health authority	*Number of domiciliary visits* 1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
North Tees	—	—	[1]Y
South Tees	—	Y	—
North West Durham	Y	Y	Y
South West Durham	—	—	Y
Gateshead	Y	Y	Y
Newcastle	Y	Y	Y
Sunderland	Y	Y	Y
York	Y	Y	Y
Scarborough	Y	—	—
Bradford	Y	Y	Y
Airedale	Y	—	—
Calderdale	Y	Y	Y
Dewsbury	Y	—	—
Leicestershire	Y	Y	[2]—
Central Nottinghamshire	Y	Y	Y
Barnsley	Y	Y	Y
Rotherham	Y	Y	Y
Sheffield	Y	Y	Y
Cambridge	Y	Y	Y
West Suffolk	Y	Y	Y
East Suffolk	Y	Y	Y
Norwich	—	—	Y
Barnet	Y	Y	Y
Harrow	Y	—	Y
Hounslow and Spelthorne	Y	Y	Y
Ealing	Y	Y	Y
Parkside	Y	Y	Y
Basildon and Thurrock	Y	Y	—
Southend	Y	Y	—
City and Hackney	Y	—	—
Haringey	Y	Y	Y
Waltham Forest	Y	Y	Y
Canterbury and Thanet	Y	[2]—	Y
Medway	Y	[2]—	Y
Tunbridge Wells	—	[2]—	Y
Greenwich	—	Y	Y
Bromley	Y	[2]—	Y

Health authority	*Number of domiciliary visits*[1] *1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
West Lambeth	Y	[2]—	Y
Camberwell	Y	[2]—	Y
Lewisham and North Southwark	Y	[2]—	Y
Chichester	Y	Y	Y
Worthing	Y	Y	—
Croydon	Y	Y	Y
Kingston and Esher	Y	—	—
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	Y	Y	Y
Wandsworth	Y	Y	Y
Merton and Sutton	Y	Y	Y
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	Y	Y	Y
South West Hampshire and Southampton	Y	Y	Y
Winchester	Y	Y	Y
Salisbury	Y	—	—
Bath	—	—	Y
West Berkshire	Y	—	Y
Kettering	Y	Y	Y
Northampton	Y	Y	Y
Oxford	Y	Y	Y
Cornwall	—	—	Y
Bromsgrove and Redditch	Y	Y	Y
Herefordshire	Y	Y	Y
Shropshire	Y	Y	—
North Staffordshire	Y	Y	Y
East Birmingham	Y	Y	Y
North Birmingham	Y	Y	Y
West Birmingham	Y	Y	Y
Dudley	Y	—	Y
Sandwell	Y	Y	Y
Solihull	Y	Y	Y
Walsall	—	Y	—
Macclesfield	Y	Y	Y
Warrington	Y	Y	Y
Liverpool	Y	—	—
St. Helens and Knowsley	Y	Y	Y
Southport and Formby	Y	Y	Y
South Sefton	Y	Y	—
Wirral	Y	—	—
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	Y	Y	Y
Blackburn/Hyndburn/Ribble Valley	Y	Y	Y
Bolton	Y	Y	Y
South Manchester	Y	Y	Y
Stockport	Y	Y	Y
Tameside and Glossop	Y	Y	Y
Trafford	Y	Y	Y
Wigan	Y	Y	Y

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[1] Y At least one domiciliary visit recorded.

[2] —No return made.

Districts not listed showed no domiciliary visits during the period.

Psychiatric Beds

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many psychiatric beds were available in England and Wales for the most convenient date in *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1980, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1992; and what is her estimate of the number available for each of the next three years.

Mr. Yeo: In 1970 there were 123,219 beds allocated for use in the psychiatric specialties. The corresponding numbers for 1980 and 1990-91 were 87,396 and 55,239 respectively.

The number of psychiatric beds available in the next three years will depend on the volume of in-patient psychiatric services purchased by health authorities.

Information relating to Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* in-patients and *(b)* day patients were waiting for hospital treatment on 30 September in each region and, of these, how many had been waiting for (i) less than one year, (ii) between one year and two years and (iii) more than two years.

Mr. Sackville: Provisional waiting list figures for 30 September 1992 were published on 11 November in press release H92/381. A copy is available in the Library. More detailed waiting time information, including separate figures for in and day patients is given in "Hospital Waiting List, In-Patient and Day Cases", published every six months.

Repairs and Maintenance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated expenditure required to clear the backlog of repairs and maintenance in each district health authority and NHS trust in England.

Mr. Sackville: Tables showing the estimates for 1991, the latest available, have been placed in the Library.

Childhood Vaccination

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals her Department has further to promote the benefits of vaccination against each of the childhood killer diseases; and what initiatives exist better to target different groups of vaccine-refuser parents across the community.

Mr. Sackville: General practitioners, clinical doctors and nurses all play a major part in explaining to parents why immunisation is important. I am pleased to say that the most recent estimates from the public health laboratory service's "COVER" programme show 95 per cent. coverage of children aged 18 months for diphtheria, tetanus and polio immunisations, 91 per cent. at the same age for whooping cough, and 92 per cent. at 24 months for measles, mumps and rubella. In the White Paper "Health of the Nation" we have set a national target of 95 per cent. coverage by 1995 for all those immunisations. East Anglia region has already achieved that target for all diseases, and Oxford, South Western and Wessex regions have done so for all except whooping cough. The Department works closely with the Health Education Authority in providing full information on immunisation for health professionals and parents, and is funding specific research aimed at ascertaining why a very small number of parents do not have their children immunised, with a view to answering their questions and convincing them of the benefits of immunisation. The findings of that research should be available in the spring of 1993.

Health Authorities (Directors)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances pensions are paid to former members or non-executive directors of health authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: Members or non-executive directors of health authorities are appointed on a non-pensionable basis. They are therefore ineligible for membership of the national health service pension scheme.

Osteoporosis

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new initiatives have been taken by her Department in the preventive treatment of osteoporosis during the period 1985 to 1991; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Among many other measures we have emphasised the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle including a good diet, regular exercise throughout life, the avoidance of smoking and excessive alcohol consumption, for example in the booklet "Your Health: A Guide to Services for Women". We have reinforced these messages recently in the White Paper "The Health of the Nation". We have encouraged the use of hormone replacement therapy—HRT—when appropriate, because timely intervention can often prevent further deterioration. In 1990 we funded the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists to set up a study group of international experts to look at HRT and osteoporosis, the findings of which were published by the college. We have supported the work of charitable bodies such as the National Osteoporosis Society to produce literature for doctors and patients, and we are currently part funding the society's new handbook for GPs and practice nurses. We have sponsored research by Professor John Kanis of the department of human metabolism and clinical biochemistry at the university of Sheffield into screening for postmenopausal osteoporosis, and by Professor Martin Vessey of the department of public health and primary care at the university of Oxford into a cost-effective analysis of HRT.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances NHS trusts may use taxi services instead of ambulances for transporting in-patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 16 November.

South West Surrey Health Authority

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide details of the 1992-93 allocation per head of population made to South West Surrey health authority; and what additional funds have been made available to that authority since 1 April.

Mr. Sackville: Allocations to district health authorities are the responsibility of regional health authorities and the information about the funds allocated to them is not held centrally in this form. The hon. Member may wish to contact Professor Marion Hicks, the chairman of South West Thames regional health authority, for details.

Taxis

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will instruct NHS providers to contract taxi services only with those firms which operate a no-smoking policy.

Dr. Mawhinney: The model smoke-free policy set out in the joint Department of Health/Health Education Authority booklet "Creating Effective Smoking Policies in the NHS", indicates that smoking should not be permitted in NHS vehicles, including ambulances. The extension of this policy to non-NHS, contracted transport providers is a matter for local service purchasers.

Standards of Service

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health authorities and health service trusts have applied to the British Standards Institution with expressions of interest in the BS 5750 standard.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not collected centrally.

NHS Staff (Accommodation)

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes she is making to the arrangements for disposing of surplus national health service staff residential accommodation.

Mr. Sackville: We are enhancing the national health service scheme to bring it into closer alignment with the statutory right-to-buy scheme under the housing Acts, and to improve the terms of sale to tenants. In particular, in calculating the discount on the sale price we are allowing health service organisations to take into account previous occupation by the tenant of other public sector accommodation. The new arrangements are set out in a guidance note which we have placed in the Library.

District General Hospitals

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many district general hospitals there are in England.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no agreed definition of a district general hospital. Acute hospital services may be provided to a district from a single site or multiple site general hospital facilities which may also be supplemented by specialist or single specialty hospitals. In 1990-91 there were 327 hospitals in England with 100 or more acute beds.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide a list of those district general hospitals in England that do not have a specialist full-time accident and emergency consultant.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available in the form requested.

Tomlinson Report

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her latest estimate of the cost of closure and rationalisation of hospitals contained in the report by Sir Bernard Tomlinson excluding improvements in primary health care.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Bernard's report is advice to the Government. No decisions have yet been taken on the closure and/or rationalisation of hospitals in London.

West Midlands Ambulance Service

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the response times for the ambulance service responding to 999 calls in the west midlands for each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is given in the table for the years 1987-88 to 1991-92. The figures for 1991-92 are provisional.

Ambulance response to emergency calls for west midlands ambulance authority

Year	*Total emergency calls*	*Number with response within 7 minutes*	*Percentage where response within 7 minutes*	*Number with response within 14 minutes*	*Percentage where response within 14 minutes*
1987-88	115,081	44,698	38·8	109,788	95·4
1988-89	117,387	50,468	43·0	111,499	95·0
1989-90[1]	66,944	32,782	49·0	55,563	83·0
1990-91	117,191	60,822	51·9	103,245	88·1
1991-92[2]	120,258	[3]87,120	[3]72·4	110,944	92·3

[1] Due to the industrial action in this period the figures for 1989-90 do not reflect the total activity in the year.

[2] Figures are provisional.

[3] Figures are based on response times within 8 minutes.

Private Care Homes

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial contribution will be made to local authorities for supplementation to private nursing homes for the year beginning 1 April 1993.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 2 October that £539 million would be made available to local authorities in England in 1993-94 in respect of all their new community care responsibilities.

Ambulance Service

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the published response times of the ambulance service to 999 calls are calculated by her Department.

Mr. Sackville: Response times are not calculated by this Department but are recorded locally and then submitted to the Department on an annual basis. The ambulance authorities and NHS trusts supply the Department with figures for the total number of emergency calls, and the numbers of these responded to within the target times.

The emergency response time is measured as the time between the receipt of a 999 call by ambulance control staff to the time of arrival of a fully equipped emergency ambulance and qualified crew at the scene of the incident.

Dentists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many items of service were provided by contractual dentists in each year since 1989.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 16 November 1992]*: The information requested is given in the table:

General dental services (GDS)—England
Items of service

Year	*Under 18s*	*Adults*	*Total*
1988-89	20,968,540	58,119,870	79,088,410
1989-90	20,683,510	55,932,870	76,616,380
1990-91	19,114,484	70,460,387	89,574,871
1991-92	5,122,418	77,109,003	82,231,421

Note:

The data for each year are not comparable due to changes in the dental contract. Under the new GDS contract, introduced on 1 October 1990, most treatment for under-18s is undertaken under capitation and is no longer separately identified. For adults, the new fee scale subdivided many of the items of service.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place in the Library a copy of the health and safety policy of each of the agencies within his Department.

Mr. Burt: I am arranging for a copy of the Department of Social Security's health and safety policy statement to be placed in the Library. There are no separate policy statements for the Department's agencies.

Social Fund

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many social fund applications have been refused in the last 12-month period for which figures are available, for *(a)* community care grants, *(b)* budgeting loans and *(c)* crisis loans; how many of these claims were later successful on appeal; and if he will provide separate figures for each district office.

Mr. Scott: District refusal figures for the period April 1992 to September 1992 are in the table. Information for earlier periods is in the Library. The information requested on social fund reviews is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

	Community care grants	*Budgeting loans*	*Crisis loans*
Bankside	2,304	1,876	217
Barking and Havering	1,943	1,259	66
Barnet	1,506	930	471
Barnsley	2,302	1,569	152
Bedfordshire	2,618	1,630	51
Berkshire	2,709	1,629	509
Birmingham Chamberlain	3,629	1,970	192
Birmingham Heartlands	3,281	1,989	156
Birmingham North West	3,327	1,871	212
Birmingham South East	3,902	986	39
Birmingham South West	3,082	1,809	172
Blackburn and Accrington	2,338	1,568	861
Blackpool	1,563	962	257
Bolton	2,696	1,493	323
Bradford	3,967	2,994	538
Bristol Severnside	3,493	2,184	342
Brunel	2,352	1,523	207
Buckinghamshire	2,152	1,189	74
Burnley/Pendle/Rossendale	1,978	1,212	39
Cambridgeshire	3,023	2,040	229
Canterbury and Thanet	1,335	788	111
Central Derbyshire	2,389	1,742	394
Central Staffordshire	1,833	1,197	66
Channel	1,324	839	214
Cheshire East	1,366	816	53
Cheshire North West and Central	1,366	1,621	135
Chesterfield and Worksop	1,993	1,258	353
City East	2,021	1,147	464
Clyde Coast and Cowal	2,635	2,144	1,110
Clyde Valley	3,612	2,544	242
Coatbridge	3,446	3,042	911
Cornwall	2,530	1,632	1,478
Coventry	2,908	1,624	340
Cumbria North	1,619	1,370	27
Cynon Merthyr Rhymnney	3,141	3,181	262
Derbyshire South	1,744	1,060	87
Devonia	2,420	1,674	147
Doncaster	2,312	2,056	443
Dorset	2,246	1,336	1,690
Durham North	3,277	2,489	62
Durham South	2,502	1,872	44
Ealing	3,037	1,556	140
East Lowlands	3,241	2,586	646
East Nottinghamshire	2,279	1,545	188
East Sussex	1,190	607	53
Essex South West	2,281	1,239	207
Euston	4,103	2,693	426
Fife	3,242	2,625	455
Forth Valley	2,442	2,214	143
Fulham	4,448	2,757	175
Glamorgan South	4,658	3,553	514
Glasgow South West	3,336	2,225	1,330
Glasgow City	3,028	2,308	283
Glasgow East	5,990	4,262	1,874
Glasgow West	2,455	1,891	384
Gloucester	2,086	1,737	644
Grampian and Shetland	1,751	1,204	47
Gwent North and Brecon	1,898	1,556	126
Gwynoddigion	1,474	992	120
Hackney and Islington	3,709	2,125	311
Halifax	2,039	1,702	265
Hampshire North	1,433	1,081	252
Harrow and Hillingdon	1,422	704	9
Hereford and Worcester	1,791	1,123	333
Highlands and Islands	1,633	1,035	163
Hounslow and Kingston	1,796	1,040	116
Hull	4,977	3,894	440
Irvine	2,664	2,250	30
Kent North	2,847	2,238	123
Kirklees	2,529	1,931	329

	Community care grants	*Budgeting loans*	*Crisis loans*
Knowsley	3,073	2,181	586
Lancaster	2,126	1,315	348
Lauriston	4,017	3,086	827
Lea-Roding	2,840	1,800	241
Leaside	2,814	1,493	93
Leeds North	4,346	2,528	155
Leeds South	3,571	2,616	164
Leicestershire North	2,824	1,624	383
Lewisham and Brixton	4,294	3,159	956
Lincolnshire East	1,596	1,011	381
Liverpool Central	2,471	1,610	261
Liverpool North	2,519	1,833	227
Liverpool South	3,365	2,385	249
Lomond and Argyll	1,669	1,629	46
London Central	1,037	749	161
Lothian Central	2,437	1,846	733
Lothian West	2,847	2,093	833
Manchester Central	2,877	1,915	1,213
Manchester North	2,397	1,609	306
Mid-Wales and Maelor	1,627	1,328	153
Neasden	2,416	1,638	113
Newcastle upon Tyne	4,435	3,834	470
Newham	3,364	2,242	26
North and East Hertfordshire	1,258	811	24
North Essex	1,909	1,276	553
North Stafordshires	3,180	1,271	115
North Tyneside	1,661	1,289	284
North Wales Coast	2,082	1,432	369
North Yorkshire	1,304	863	39
Northamptonshire	4,610	2,594	467
Northumberland	1,649	1,311	51
Norwich	3,058	2,311	480
Nottinghamshire North	2,039	1,579	54
Nottinghamshire West	2,593	1,544	44
Ogwr Afan Nedd	2,023	1,814	105
Oldham	2,855	1,568	64
Oxfordshire	1,858	1,321	105
Preston	2,193	1,452	100
Renfrew	2,393	2,224	864
Rother and Dearne	2,755	1,857	515
South East Hampshire and Isle of Wight	3,213	1,259	110
Salford	2,358	1,416	45
Sandwell	3,133	1,702	38
Sefton	2,750	1,982	71
Sheffield East	3,678	2,650	350
Sheffield West	3,039	1,896	595
Shropshire	1,904	1,553	51
Solent and Forest	2,687	1,887	56
Somerset	1,554	849	250
South Cheshire	2,648	2,128	118
South Devon	3,617	2,709	1,376
South Downs	2,138	1,367	1,101
South East Essex	1,833	1,277	333
South Gwent and Islwyn	2,054	1,488	526
South Leicestershire	2,563	1,340	214
South Manchester	3,860	2,536	616
South West Lancashire	2,375	1,723	40
South West Scotland	2,737	2,142	480
South West Thames	3,435	2,052	599
Springburn and Cumbernauld	3,620	2,739	1,237
South Humberside	2,765	2,008	179
Stockport	1,596	1,046	55
Suffolk	3,227	1,854	430
Surrey Downs	1,245	672	118
Surrey North	2,655	1,760	407
Swansea	2,262	1,374	225
Taff Rhondda	1,569	1,152	75
Tameside	2,290	1,603	422
Tayside	3,607	2,789	542
Tees North	3,820	3,257	361
Tees South	4,488	3,101	109
Thameside	2,749	1,602	491
Tyneside South	4,252	3,345	396
Wakefield	2,819	1,907	144
Wales West	1,964	1,480	267
Walsall	2,275	1,748	16
Warwickshire	2,043	1,384	105

	Community care grants	*Budgeting loans*	*Crisis loans*
Wearside	4,304	3,372	60
West Hertfordshire	1,244	720	23
West Kent	1,159	753	51
West Lincolnshire	2,814	1,732	88
West Pennine	3,122	2,137	257
West Sussex	1,555	999	660
Wigan and Leigh	1,946	1,162	124
Wiltshire	2,461	1,655	143
Wirral	3,926	2,872	389
Wolverhampton	2,914	1,713	30
Worcestershire North	2,227	1,288	197
Yorkshire East	1,157	753	889

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people on low incomes in each region, for the last 12 months for which figures are available have applied to the social fund for help with essential food items; how many have *(a)* been refused and *(b)* been awarded either a grant or loan; and what measures his Department is taking to support claimants who have fallen into debt as a result of repaying loans for essential food items.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for social fund payments have been made in the local offices in Greenock and Port Glasgow in each of the months of the past year; and how many were *(a)* granted community care grants, *(b)* offered a crisis loan and *(c)* refused by the adjudication officers.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Dr. Norman A. Godman, dated 16 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about Social Fund applications in the local offices of Greenock and Port Glasgow.

From the inception of the Benefits Agency in April 1991, the former DSS offices of Greenock and Port Glasgow became Clyde Coast and Cowal District.

Applications to the discretionary part of the Fund, that is, for loans and grants, are decided by Social Fund Officers, rather than Adjudication Officers. Details of discretionary applications, grant awards, crisis loan offers and refusals for discretionary payments at Clyde Coast and Cowal District are provided in the Annex. I have given details for the past 12 months to September 1992, as these are the latest figures available.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Social Fund Information—Clyde Coast and Cowal District October 1991 to September 1992

	Applications	*Grant awards*	*Crisis Loan offers*	*Refusals*
October 1991	2,168	185	310	1,153
November 1991	2,255	180	295	1,162
December 1991	1,510	126	216	1,008
January 1992	1,738	150	264	991
February 1992	1,793	165	237	1,015
March 1992	2,036	123	258	1,182
April 1992	1,651	143	205	880
May 1992	1,681	185	236	995
June 1992	1,781	148	234	928
July 1992	1,777	157	310	1,010
August 1992	1,720	154	261	958
September 1992	1,880	142	271	1,088

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of applications for social fund community care grants in the North Tees district in 1991-92; what is the projected number of applications for 1992-93; and if he will ensure that sufficient funding is available to meet any extra demand.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Peter Mandelson, dated 16 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about Social Fund community care grants in the North Tees District.

The North Tees District received 8,436 applications for community care grants in 1991-92. Information for 1992-93 is not available as forecasts are not made at a district level. The community care grant national budget currently stands at £91 million, an increase of more than 35 per cent. since April 1991.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Diet

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his Department's assessment of the weekly cost, in real cash terms, of maintaining a healthy diet; how many *(a)* families on low income with children under five years and *(b)* pensioners on low incomes, fall below deficiency levels for essential nutrients; and if he will subdivide these figures by region.

Mr. Burt: There is no single cost of a healthy diet. Diets can be constructed in a variety of ways and individual preferences vary. Information about nutrient deficiency in specific population groups is not available, but the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food national food survey does indicate that in general the diets of people in all income groups contain adequate levels of most nutrients but rather more fat and less fibre than the latest dietary recommendations. The welfare foods scheme continues to provide a nutritional safeguard for children under five in families with income support.

Wages Councils

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment his Department has made of the likely effects on his budget from the proposed abolition of the wages councils.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on 11 November at column *817*.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those agencies in his Department which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Miss Widdecombe: Privatisation and contractorisation of the Department's agencies are considered as part of each agency's three-year review. Where appropriate, an announcement will be made.

National Insurance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the increase in income to the Treasury would be in 1993-94 as a consequence of raising employees' national insurance contributions from 9 per cent. to 10·4 per cent.

Miss Widdecombe: The national insurance fund would receive about an extra £2·3 billion in 1993-94.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much per week an increase in employees' national insurance contributions from 9 to 10·4 per cent. would cost families with incomes of *(a)* £5,000, *(b)* £7,000, *(c)* £9,000, *(d)* £10,000, *(e)* £15,000, *(f)* £25,000, *(g)* £40,000 and *(h)* £100,000 in 1993-94.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is set out in the table:

Annual earnings £	*Weekly increase in contributions* £
5,000	56 pence
7,000	1·10
9,000	1·64
10,000	1·91
15,000	3·25
25,000	5·10
40,000	5·10
100,000	5·10

Notes:

1. The table assumes one employee in each family working in one employment in 1993-94.
2. NI contributions are not paid by employees on earnings above the proposed annual upper earnings limit of £21,840.

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total amount of *(a)* employers' and *(b)* employees' national insurance contributions collected for each of the last 10 fiscal years expressed (i) in cash terms, (ii) at June 1992 prices and (iii) as a percentage of total Exchequer income.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is given in the table.

	(£ billion) Contribution income[1]		*June 1992 price*[3]		*Percentage of Exchequer income*	
	Employers NICS	*Employees*[2] *NICs*	*Employers' NICs*	*Employees' NICs*	*Employers' NICs*	*Employees' NICs*
1982-83	12·02	9·20	20·39	15·61	9·77	7·48
1983-84	12·45	10·53	20·19	17·07	9·84	8·32
1984-85	12·20	11·29	18·83	17·42	8·87	8·20
1985-86	12·53	12·11	18·34	17·72	8·38	8·10
1986-87	13·82	12·79	19·59	18·13	8·69	8·04
1987-88	15·33	14·13	20·60	18·99	9·03	8·32
1988-89	17·28	15·65	21·65	19·61	9·22	8·35
1989-90	18·50	14·74	21·77	17·34	9·06	8·22
1990-91	20·55	14·86	22·77	16·47	9·50	6·87
1991-92[4]	21·66	15·33	22·46	15·89	9·88	6·99

[1] Includes national insurance surcharge in the period to 1984-85.

[2] Includes national insurance contributions by self-employed for which separate data are only available from 1986-87.

[3] Treasury estimate of GDP deflator in the second quarter of 1992 used to convert current price to constant June 1992 prices.

[4] Estimate.

Back Pain

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many days of work were lost through back pain in each year since 1979.

Mr. Scott: This information is not available.

Newspaper Articles

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security under what circumstances staff at his Department's offices are permitted to include newspaper articles in clients' files.

Mr. Burt: Current instructions provide that newspaper articles should be drawn to the attention of staff who have had dealings with that customer, although such articles should not be kept in customers' files. However, the Department is in the process of devolving responsibilities to its executive agencies in line with the Government's next step programmes. It will be for the chief executives of the agencies to decide whether they consider it appropriate or necessary to provide central guidance on such matters as the retention of newspaper articles in customers' files.

HIV

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to whom his Department circulated the statement concerning the agreement that compensation made from the Department of Health to fund non-haemophiliacs infected with HIV through blood or tissue transfers would not affect the entitlement of those individuals to benefits.

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary announced in the House on 18 February this year that the payments would be fully disregarded in the income-related benefits. All prospective applicants for a payment were sent a copy of the document describing the scheme which made specific mention of the social security provisions. A letter explaining these provisions in detail was issued to all recipients of a payment.

Old People's Homes

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the cost of supplementation of the cost of elderly people in old people's homes and nursing homes for each year from 1980 to 1991 and the latest estimate for 1992.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is as follows:

Payment of Income Support (Supplementary Benefit prior to 1988) to Residents in Residential Care and Nursing Homes

Nearest £ million

	Annual equivalent
December 1980	18
December 1981	23
December 1982	39
December 1983	104
December 1984	200
December 1985	348
February 1986	459
May 1987	671
May 1988	878
May 1989	1,105
May 1990	1,270
May 1991	1,870
Estimate 1992	2,530

We are committed under the Department's bilingual policy to produce further bilingual leaflets and forms. Indeed, we are striving to ensure that all new leaflets and forms will be produced in this way.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will be placed in the Library.

Heating Costs

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he intends to ensure that pensioners on small incomes are assisted with heating costs during the winter months.

Mr. Scott: The Government's policy targets the available resources on those groups considered most vulnerable and least able to meet extra heating costs as a result of very cold weather. Cold weather payments are already issued automatically to all pensioners who get income support pensioner premium.

Students

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of students undertaking further education for no more than 20 hours' per week who have been denied income support on the basis that their 20 hours' study is designated as full-time education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: This information is not available. Students following a full-time course of education, irrespective of the number of hours they attend each week, should look to the educational maintenance system for the necessary financial support.

Whether a course is designated as full time or part time is a matter for the individual educational establishment. Unemployed income support claimants who take advantage of part-time education courses for up to 21 hours a week benefit from a valuable concession in the income support scheme. They are treated as available for work, but have to satisfy all other relevant provisions whilst continuing their search for work.

Welsh Language

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will ensure that the instructions accompanying all documents relating to claims and appeals within his Department are available in Welsh.

Mr. Burt: The provision of instructions which accompany documents relating to claims and appeals is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Gareth Wardell, dated 16 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about instructions accompanying all documents relating to claims and appeals being available in Welsh.

In May 1990 the Department of Social Security published its bilingual policy for Wales. In line with this the Benefits Agency set up a Welsh Language Unit with responsibility for implementing the policy.

One of the elements of the policy is that bilingual forms and leaflets will be produced, given time. Substantial progress has been made. Many of the most widely used leaflets are now available in a bilingual form, and some of the most widely used claim forms are available in Welsh.

We are committed under the Department's bilingual policy to produce further bilingual leaflets and forms. Indeed, we are striving to ensure that all future leaflets and forms will be produced in this way.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Britannia Royal Naval College

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress he intends to make to release the land known as Norton playing fields used by the Britannia Royal Naval college, Dartmouth, for sale.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have reviewed our need for the land and have concluded that it should be possible to release most of it. No date for disposal can yet be given, but, work is in hand with the object of bringing a sale forward as soon as possible.

Support Command

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* Tornados, *(b)* Jaguars, *(c)* Phantoms, *(d)* Harriers and *(e)* Buccaneers are assigned to Support Command.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: RAF Support Command's main functions are to provide maintenance, training and support services to the RAF. The command has no operational flying commitment and does not therefore have assigned to it aircraft of the types specified.

Artillery Regiments

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reduction in the number of artillery pieces will result from the planned reduction in the number of artillery regiments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The reduction in the number of artillery pieces deployed in the field Army as a result of the planned reduction in the number of artillery regiments is expected to be 68.

Falklands and Belize

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to annex C of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1992", how many Phantoms are in the flight assigned to the Falklands; when they are due to be replaced by Tornado F3s; and how many Harriers are in the flight assigned to Belize.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Phantoms assigned to the Falklands were replaced by Tornados at the end of July. For operational reasons, we do not release details of the number of aircraft in these theatres.

Tanks

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reductions in tank numbers will result from the planned reduction in armoured regiments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The reduction in the number of tanks deployed in the field Army as a result of the planned reduction in the number of armoured regiments is expected to be 299.

Armoured Combat Vehicles

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reductions in armoured combat vehicles and armoured combat vehicle lookalikes are envisaged as a result of the planned reduction in the size of the Army.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The exact quantities of armoured combat vehicles and armoured vehicle lookalikes to be deployed when the planned reductions in the Army have been completed are still under review.

Accommodation

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many families of British forces personnel have been evicted from his Department's accommodation in each of the last five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The numbers of families of personnel currently or formerly serving in the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force who have been evicted from Ministry of Defence accommodation over the last five years are set out in the table, by calendar year. The Army has been keeping figures centrally only since April 1992 and these are provided in the table. It would require disproportionate effort and cost to collect the earlier figures.

Year	*Royal Navy*	*Army*	*RAF*
1988	3	—	1
1989	[1]8	—	12
1990	14	—	1
1991	13	—	5
1992	[2]13	[3]7	[3]2

[1] Includes one physical eviction.

[2] To 13 November 1992.

[3] Period 1 April to 30 September 1992.

Note:

No evictions overseas by Royal Navy and RAF. Number of evictions overseas by Army are unavailable.

Battalion Complements

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what effect "Options for Change" has had on the normal complement of a battalion in the Army; and what is that complement now.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Following the implementation of "Options for Change" there will be a small increase in the typical establishment of a battalion in the Army; that establishment depends upon the type and role of the battalion and currently ranges between 628 and 927.

Iraq

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if the inquiry by Lord Justice Scott into Ministers' handling of arms sales to Iraq will have access to papers and officials dealing with equipment sales to Chile during the relevant period;

(2) if he will release to the inquiry being conducted by Lord Justice Scott on sales to Iraq the studies undertaken under the auspices of his Department into the Iraqi military procurement network in the United Kingdom and the activities of Matrix Churchill.

Mr. Aitken: Lord Justice Scott will have access to all relevant Government papers.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what ammunition supplied by British companies was revealed by the analysis of ammunition captured following the end of the Gulf war; and how much of this ammunition was originally shipped to Jordan.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has not carried out an extensive analysis of the origins of all ammunition captured during the Gulf conflict. However, the analysis that has been carried out has produced no evidence to suggest that Iraqi forces used any ammunition of British manufacture.

British Aerospace

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what oversight Her Majesty's Government exercised during the period 1985 to 1988 of British Aerospace's role in Arab-British dynamics; and what representations were made to the company about this role.

Mr. Aitken: My Department and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had a number of discussions with British Aerospace on the subject of Arab-British Dynamics over the period in question.

Activity Bulletins

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to place regular bulletins on developments and activities in *(a)* Bosnia and *(b)* the Gulf, which affect the troops deployed there, in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind *[pursuant to his reply, 27 October 1992, c. 616]:* I intend to place a note summarising the activities of British forces in former Yugoslavia and the Gulf at intervals in the Library of each House. Such notes will be placed once a week, on a Thursday, and more often if circumstances require it. The arrangement will begin on 19 November.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 18 November 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Access to Neighbouring Land Act 1992

Mr. Janner: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will now set an early date to bring into force the Access to Neighbouring Land Act 1992.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor hopes to be in a position to bring the Act into force by 1 February 1993.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the health and safety policy of the Land Registry and the Public Record Office.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have done so today.

Primary Legislation

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, what proportion of primary legislation is readily available *(a)* to hon. Members and *(b)* to the general public in its current amended form.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The proportion of primary legislation readily available, in its current amended form, to both hon. Members and to the general public is around 30 per cent.

Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct intends to publish its annual report.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct has today published its first annual report, and copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Electoral Registration Officers

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what reports he has received from electoral registration officers about physical attacks on staff during the recent registration process; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have received no reports from electoral registration officers about physical attacks on staff during the year's electoral registration canvass.

Gambling

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the most recent annual figures for gross consumer expenditure on gambling, on on-course and off-course betting, gaming machines, casinos, bingo, football pools and small lotteries.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Estimated figures for gross consumer expenditure on gambling—amount staked—in the financial year 1991-92 are tabulated. Those for off-course betting, pool betting and bingo are based on returns to Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. Those for casinos and lotteries are based on returns to the Gaming Board for Great Britain, although the latter includes only those lotteries registered with the board.

The estimates for on-course betting and gaming machines cannot be calculated directly and should be treated with extreme caution.

Estimated gross consumer expenditure 1991-92

	£ million
Off-course betting	6,026
On-course betting	764
Gaming machines	3,092
Casinos	14,680
Bingo	913
Pools	823
Lotteries	56

These figures should be read with those for net consumer spend—amount staked less winnings—given in reply to an earlier question from the hon. Member on 9 November, *Official Report*, columns *632-33*, which provide a more reliable indicator of gambling expenditure.

Wolds Prison

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all the disturbances that have taken place at the Wolds private prison since it opened in April.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: For disturbances up to and including 27 June 1992, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 6 July 1992, at column *38*. Since that time, there have been two disturbances at Wolds remand prison.

On 13 July at about 2200 hours some 50 prisoners on B wing refused to return to their cells. Within a short time, all but 11 prisoners had returned to their cells. It was decided at 0310 hours on 14 July to enter the unit with control and restraint teams. By this time, two further prisoners had locked themselves away. By 0325 hours the remaining nine had been removed to the segregation unit without injury to staff or prisoners. No damage was caused to property and buildings. The Home Office controller was present throughout the incident. The removals to the segregation unit were observed by a member of the board of visitors and the prison doctor was present.

On 17 October, 31 prisoners on F unit refused to go to their cells at 10 pm. They barricaded themselves into a television room to watch a boxing match involving Frank Bruno. At the end of the fight 20 minutes later the prisoners returned to their cells. No force was used as the incident was of short duration and peaceful at all times.

Private Detectives

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what guidelines exist for the engagement of private detective agencies by the Government for the purpose of investigating the activities of British citizens;

(2) on how many occasions since 1979 his Department has engaged private detective agencies to investigate the activities of British citizens; and if he will list the date and purpose of each investigation.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what use his Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The engagement of private detectives is a matter for individual Departments and no central guidance has been issued. My Department has made no such engagements.

Voting

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many different types of electoral registration form are currently available in England and Wales; and what proposals he has to standardise them.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Electoral registration officers may choose whether to conduct a postal or personal canvass and so different versions of the electoral registration form, form A, are available. An English and Welsh bilingual version is also available. Some electoral registration officers produce their own forms, adapted to suit local requirements. However, the content of all these forms is broadly the same. Information on the number of locally produced registration forms is not held centrally. Separate forms are used for the registration of service electors, overseas electors and voluntary mental patients. A working group will be looking at electoral registration forms as part of the post-election review.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward proposals to increase the time scale for returning completed postal or proxy voting forms for elections.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 29 October, at column *768*.

Debt Collectors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce proposals to amend the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 to require the disclosure of previous convictions by persons seeking work in the debt-collecting industry.

Mr. Jack: We have no present plans to amend the Act. But, as I explained on 10 November in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) at column *697*, we intend to re-examine the number and range of exceptions to the Act as part of the review of the arrangements for the disclosure of information from criminal records which will be undertaken in advance of the computerisation of the national collection of criminal records.

Riot Duty

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which police authorities have substantially reduced the number of officers trained for riot duty; why such action was taken in each case; and if he will make it his policy that no officer will be required to undertake riot duties untrained and inadequately equipped.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Training within individual police forces is a matter for the chief officer concerned. I understand that all officers engaged in policing public disorder are now trained to common minimum standards.

Market Testing

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff have so far been seconded to work in the market-testing unit in his Department; and how many more secondments are planned.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There are presently 27 members of staff in the Home Office market-testing unit and three in the prison service market-testing section. It is planned to increase staff numbers to 54·5 in the market-testing unit and seven in the prison service.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which of his Department's operations will be subjected to market testing during financial years 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Market testing within the Home Office will be taking place in the following areas with a view to a decision by September 1993:

Accommodation and office services
Computer services
Internal audit
Pay services
Police National Computer (Hendon datacentre)

Prison service:

College, training and facilities management
Computing services
Court escorts
Dog service
Education
Prison establishments
Warehousing, distribution and fleet management

The future programme is under consideration.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the budget for the market-testing unit in his Department for the financial years 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The budget for the Home Office market-testing unit is £1,143,000 in 1992-93 and £1,260,000 in 1993-94. That for the prison service market testing section is £70,000 in 1992-93 and £190,000 in 1993-94.

Female Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the female remand and sentenced population in England and Wales for the latest date available; and what is his best estimate of the number of these prisoners who have dependent children.

Mr. Jack: On 30 September 1992, the latest date for which information is readily available, 383 untried or convicted unsentenced and 1,244 sentenced females were held in prison service establishments or police cells in England and Wales. Our best estimate is that 47 per cent. of the females interviewed[1] said they had children or step-children under the age of 18 living with them at the time they came into prison.

Remand Prisoners (Psychiatric Reports)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many remand prisoners in England and Wales were referred for psychiatric reports in 1991 and for the first six months of 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information available centrally is based on annual returns by prison medical officers and relates to financial years. In the year ended 31 March 1992, 4,732 psychiatric reports were prepared at the request of courts on persons remanded in custody.

Muslim Organisations

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what meetings he has had with representatives of Muslim organisations in the United Kingdom; if he will list the organisations which have been invited to attend such meetings; what matters were discussed; if it is his intention that meetings attended by Ministers or officials will be convened on a regular basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has had no such meetings, but he met a number of representatives from Muslim organisations when they attended a reception given by him for members of the ethnic minority communities at the Home Office on 21 October. Among those invited were representatives from the United Kingdom action committee on Islamic affairs, the Union of Muslim Organisations, the Bradford Council of Mosques, Regents Park Mosque, Brixton Mosque and the Islamic Forum of Europe. I have visited the Golden Hillock Language Job Club, run by Dar-Ul-Uloom Islamia in Small Heath, Birmingham on 17 September. I have also met representatives from the Union of Muslim organisations on 29 October to discuss a range of issues and will be attending their dinner party on 19 November to celebrate the Prophet's birthday. Such meetings reflect the high frequency of contacts at ministerial and official level.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from *(a)* organisations representing Muslims in the United Kingdom and *(b)* others about difficulties concerning the investigation of deaths by coroners where a doctor's certificate cannot be given at weekends or otherwise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No recent representations have been received from Muslim organisations or individuals about difficulties over the investigation of deaths by coroners. From time to time we receive correspondence from or on behalf of Muslims about coroners post-mortem examinations; the most recent letter was received in March.

Miscarriages of Justice

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received this year on miscarriages of justice; and what plans he has to speed up his Department's investigations into such cases.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 17 November 1992]*: The Home Office regularly receives a large number of letters which raise the general subject of miscarriages of justice; but no count is kept of this correspondence. Departmental workload statistics show that between 1 January and 30 September 1992, 589 pieces of correspondence were received alleging wrongful conviction in particular cases. This figure may include some further representations by the same correspondent about the same case. This figure does not include representations received about individual cases which have become the subject of concerted campaigns. All representations are considered carefully and as quickly as their complexity and available resources will allow. The number of staff allocated to this work has been increased this year from 16 to 20—an increase of 25 per cent. Staffing is kept under regular review.

Crimes Against Women

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women were victims of *(a)* sexual assault, *(b)* domestic violence and *(c)* murder from 1979 to the latest date where figures are available; and what proportion were ethnic minority women.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 9 November 1992]*: The regular annual statistics of notifiable offences recorded by the police are not routinely broken down by gender or ethnic grouping of victims, or by relationship of victim to offender. The annual publications "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" contain figures for 1979 to 1990 for rape, indecent assault on a female, and unlawful intercourse with a female—chapter 2—and for homicide with a female victim—chapter 4. Corresponding figures for sexual offences in 1991 are published in Home Office "Statistical Bulletin" 14/92. Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

ENVIRONMENT

Council Tax

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue guidance to local authorities for the collection of the council tax for households where the liable person or persons are in receipt of income support, but where other members of that household are wage earners.

Mr. Robin Squire: In the case described by the hon. Member, council tax benefit will meet the full council tax liability except for a deduction in respect of any of the wage earners who are classed as non-dependents. This has been made clear to local authorities in guidance issued to them by my Department and the Department of Social Security. I have sent a copy to the hon. Member.

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to announce the transitional relief arrangements for the council tax; and if he will make a statement.

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[1] National prison survey. Information collected in January and February 1991.

Mr. Robin Squire: We will be announcing the details of the council tax transitional reduction scheme as part of the local government finance settlement proposals later this month.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for the recovery of *(a)* community charge arrears and *(b)* council tax arrears following the introduction of the council tax from people who are (1) unemployed, (2) in receipt of sickness benefit or (3) in receipt of income support.

Mr. Robin Squire: The existing range of enforcement methods, including deductions from income support and distress, will be available to enable authorities to recover community charge and council tax owed to them. It is open to authorities to come to voluntary arrangements with debtors to pay off their arrears.

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish details of the relief available in each band under the council tax regulations for disabled persons.

Mr. Robin Squire: The intention of the scheme of council tax reductions for people with disabilities is that no-one should be required to pay more council tax as a result of extra accommodation required because of a disability. Accordingly, where a dwelling in bands B to H includes a qualifying feature the council tax bill will be reduced to that for the valuation band immediately below that to which the dwelling was allocated in the valuation list. If a dwelling is in band A, any additional accommodation cannot have resulted in a higher council tax banding, and so no reduction is appropriate.

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he has issued to local authorities in respect of the disregard of certain persons for the purposes of council tax liability assessment.

Mr. Robin Squire: Extensive guidance on this matter was included in council tax practice note No. 2, "Liability, Discounts and Exemptions", which has been sent to all local authorities. I have sent a copy of the practice note to the hon. Member.

Community Charge Arrears

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he has issued to local authorities following the decision in R *v.* Wolverhampton Justices ex parte Mould concerning the deduction from income support for the payment of community charge arrears; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: It is clearly sensible that authorities should consider all methods of recovery, including deductions from income support, before applying for a committal warrant. Community charge practice note 15 on enforcement of the community charge, (which was sent to all charging authorities, advises authorities to consider other available recovery options before seeking a warrant of commitment.

Self-government Charter

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to sign the European charter of local self-government.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Government do not intend to sign the charter. The Government support the broad principles underlying the charter, but do not consider local government to be a suitable subject for regulation by an international convention.

Rents

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the requirement imposed on housing associations to maximise rents, as awarded by rent officers and rent assessment committees, in order to enable them to receive a Government grant.

Mr. Baldry: There are a number of grant-related regimes that are affected by the level of housing associations' rents and I am afraid that it is not clear which of these the hon. Member has in mind. If she would care to write to me with further particulars, I shall gladly look into the matter.

Water Disconnections

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the number of disconnections of domestic water supply during the current year broken down into *(a)* standard region, *(b)* utility region and *(c)* local authority district.

Mr. Maclean: The Director General of Water Services published on 16 November, data on disconnections for the six-month period from 1 April to 30 September 1992. The table shows domestic disconnections broken down by reference to OFWAT customer service committee regions, which correspond to the areas of the water and sewerage undertakers, and by water company area. Data on disconnections by local authority district are not available.

(a) Disconnections by CSC area (Domestic)

Region	
Central	1,397
Eastern	453
North West	354
Northumbria	219
South West	180
Southern	2,252
Thames	1,217
Wales	1,072
Wessex	135
Yorkshire	1,005

(b) Disconnections by Water Company area (Domestic)

Company	
Anglian	87
Bournemouth and West Hampshire	23
Bristol	16
Cambridge	153
Chester	71
Cholderton	0
Dwr Cymru	995
East Surrey	40
East Worcestershire	3
Essex	115
Folkestone and Dover	92
Hartlepools	37
Mid Kent	0
Mid Southern	56
North East	2
North Surrey	2
North West	354

Company	
Northumbrian	180
Portsmouth	85
Severn Trent	567
South East	120
South Staffordshire	827
South West	180
Southern	1,955
Suffolk	36
Sutton	26
Tendring Hundred	62
Thames	423
Three Valleys	670
Wessex	96
Wrexham and East Denbighshire	6
York	62
Yorkshire	943
All Companies	8,284

Source: OFWAT News Release 31/92.

Housing

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals for a housing programme that is affordable for low-income tenants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities already own and manage more than 3·8 million dwellings. The Government's focus for the provision of new affordable housing is housing associations. The Government plan to allocate around £6 billion to the Housing Corporation over the three years from 1992-93. We have recently announced that an extra £600 million will be spent this year to enable housing associations to purchase new, empty and repossessed properties for rent and to allow housing association tenants to buy homes in the private sector. Over the three years from 1992-93 housing associations will be able to provide considerably more than the 153,000 new social homes forecast in the Government's election manifesto.

We have increased funds for the Housing Corporation from £936 million in 1989-90 to £2·3 billion this year. In total, £7·5 billion is being made available by the Government to support the corporation's capital expenditure over the four years from 1992-93. The Government hope to be able to increase the private finance levered in by these public funds in order to attract a further £3 billion from the private sector over the period to support the provision of new social housing.

Ministers have also encouraged local authorities to work with others to assist the provision of social housing in their areas, for example through the use of their planning powers and other enabling functions.

Opencast Mining

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many hectares of land were approved for opencast coal mining through planning decisions in 1991-92, both in volume terms and as a percentage of the land applied for; and what was the percentage for land approved in relation to land applied for each year since 1983-84.

Mr. Baldry: According to statistics published by the County Planning Officers' Society, the volume of land approved for opencast coal mining through planning decisions in 1991-92 was 2,333 hectares which was 71·26 per cent. of the land applied for. The percentage figures for each year since 1983-84 are as follows:

	per cent.
1983-84	75·40
1984-85	42·10
1985-86	48·98
1986-87	69·14
1987-88	42·06
1988-89	57·87
1989-90	63·33
1990-91	47·64

Green Issues

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who in his Department has been appointed to oversee and develop green issues; how many civil servants have been allocated new or additional responsibilities to deal with the management and development of green issues; and what additional allocation of resources has been made to support programmes related to green issues in his Department.

Mr. Howard: I take the lead in overseeing and developing green issues in my Department and my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Environment and Countryside has day-to-day responsibility. Staff and expenditure programmes throughout the Department are concerned with environmental issues. In the specific areas of environmental protection, countryside and water, staff posts will have increased by 12 during the current financial year—figures for next year have yet to be determined—and public expenditure provision for 1993-94 is £21 million higher than that for 1992-93.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish a regional Ordnance Survey office in Wales.

Mr. Maclean: No.

Office of Water Regulation

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of the Office of Water Regulation in 1991-92; and how many staff were employed.

Mr. Maclean: Details of the running costs and staffing of the Office of Water Services during 1991-92 are contained in the director general's "Annual Report 1991", a copy of which is in the Library. The report records that running costs for 1991-92 were £5·44 million and that at 31 March 1992 the Office of Water Services employed 132 staff.

Inner Cities Religious Council

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Inner Cities Religious Council was established; what is the relationship between the council and his Department; what organisations have been invited to be represented on the council, to date; how many meetings of the council have been convened; which

Ministers and or officials are represented on the council; what matters have been discussed at meetings with the council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), on 1 July, *Official Report*, column *560*. The Government have set up the Inner Cities Religious Council as part of its "Action for Cities" initiative; I chair the council, and Rev. Chris Beales has been seconded to my Department from the Church of England, to act as its secretary.

The council first met on July 20, and will do so again on December 8. The main items discussed at the first meeting were:

the Government's Action for Cities programmes;
the future work of the Inner Cities Religious Council;
the Council's Terms of Reference;
Proposals for a regional Multi-Faith Conference on Inner Cities. (This was held on 27 October 1992, at Kirklees).

The director of the Inter-Faith Network attends meetings as an observer, and officials from my Department and the Home Office are also in attendance. Ministers or officials from other "Action for Cities" departments will attend as necessary.

Membership of the council is currently as follows:

Dr. Mughram Al-Ghamdi	Director, Islamic Cultural Centre, Regent's Park Mosque. (MUSLIM)
Rt. Reverend Tom Butler	Bishop of Leicester. Chair of the 'Faith in the City' Advisory Group (1986-90). (CHURCH OF ENGLAND)
His Hon. Israel Finestein QC	President, Board of Deputies of British Jews. (JEWISH)
Ms. Anne Forbes	Project Leader, "Faith in Elderly People", Leeds; Member of Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference Committee for Community Affairs. (ROMAN CATHOLIC)
Reverend Alan Greenbat	Consultant, Office of the Chief Rabbi. (JEWISH)
Mr. Surjit Singh Kalra	Former teacher and co-ordinator, South Asian languages. (SIKH)
Mr. Deepak Naik	Public Relations Officer for the National Council of Hindu Temples UK. (HINDU)
Reverend Bryan Rippin	Chairman, Sheffield District of the Methodist Church. (FREE CHURCH FEDERAL COUNCIL)
Mr. Iqbal Sacranie	Joint Convenor of UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs. Member of the Home Secretary's Advisory Council on Race Relations. (MUSLIM)
Mr. Om Parkash Sharma	President, National Council of Hindu Temples. (HINDU)
Mr. Indarjit Singh, JP	Chairman, Sikh Council for Inter-Faith Relations. Member of Home Secretary's Advisory Committee on Race Relations. (SIKH)
Rt. Reverend Ossie Williams	Director of Ministerial Leadership Development, Church of God of Prophecy. Until October 1992, National Overseer. (BLACK-LED CHURCHES)

Bathing Water

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will announce the results of this year's bathing water quality monitoring; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Results of the monitoring during the 1992 bathing session show that 79 per cent. of the 455 identified bathing waters in the United Kingdom met the mandatory coliform bacteria standards of the EC bathing water directive. This compares with 76 per cent. in 1991, and 77 per cent. in 1990.

Most waters now consistently meet the required standards and it is encouraging to note that of 18,000 samples taken this season 96 per cent. were satisfactory. Schemes in the £2 billion clean-up programme coming into operation in the next few years are designed to bring the minority of non-compliant bathing waters up to standard.

The main results for the United Kingdom are summarised in the table. A report with detailed results will be placed in the Library in due course.

Bathing Waters survey—1992 results for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland—(Compliance with Bathing Water Directive (76/160/EEC): Coliform Standards)

	Pass	*Fail*	*Total*
England and Wales			
NRA Regions			
Northumbrian	20(21)	14(12)	34(33)
Yorkshire	20(19)	2(3)	22(22)
Anglian	31(29)	2(4)	33(33)
Thames	3(2)	0(1)	3(3)
Southern	51(45)	16(22)	67(67)
Wessex	36(36)	3(3)	39(39)
South West	117(105)	17(28)	134(133)
North West	11(10)	22(23)	33(33)
Welsh	39(45)	12(6)	51(51)
Total	328(312)	88(102)	416(414)
Scotland	15(15)	8(8)	23(23)
Northern Ireland	15(16)	1(0)	16(16)
Grand Total	358(343)	97(110)	455(453)

Note: Results for 1991 are in brackets.

Voluntary Transfers

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the consultation paper setting out his proposals for possible changes to the arrangements for large-scale voluntary transfers.

Sir George Young: I am issuing the consultation today and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the House Library. The paper contains, among other things, proposals to limit the number of properties transferred in a single batch and for redressing the financial imbalance between central and local government which has arisen in the past as a result of the housing benefit costs to the Exchequer of transfers. These proposals will facilitate a continuing programme of transfers consistent with our manifesto commitment.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will also be issuing a consultation paper shortly.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites of special scientific interest have been damaged or destroyed in each of the last three years and to date in the current year.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 11 November 1992]*: The latest available information on damage to SSSIs is contained in the 17th and final report of the former Nature Conservancy Council, a copy of which is in the Library. Information in respect of the year ending 31 March 1992 is currently being gathered by English Nature and will be published in its first anniversary report to be presented to Parliament later in the year.

Homelessness

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further proposals he has to deal with the problem of street homelessness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 13 November 1992]*: Under the Government's rough sleepers initiative, we have made £96 million available over three years to provide 850 new places in hostels for people sleeping rough in central London, and to provide a total of 2,900 places in more permanent accommodation for people in hostels to move on to.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced on 12 November that further resources of £86 million would be made available over the next three years to build on the success of the rough sleepers initiative in assisting people who sleep rough in central London. My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning will announce details shortly.

Nationally, my Department makes grants under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 to support the national homelessness advice service and some 150 projects run by voluntary organisations throughout the country that provide direct, practical help to homeless people. Resources in 1993-94 will be increased to £6·5 million from £6·1 million this year.

Urban Priority Areas

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government in respect of sustaining in real terms the value of funding for urban priority areas in England.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 16 November 1992]*: Urban priority areas benefit from a range of programmes within my Department's urban group including city challenge, and also derelict land grant and city grant which will transfer to the Urban Regeneration Agency. My right hon. and learned Friend announced last week an increase of £93 million in the resources planned for the urban group in 1993-94. Urban priority areas will also benefit from their new freedom to spend capital receipts, augmented by the new urban partnership fund which we have established as part of capital partnership.

Old Foleshill Gas Works, Coventry

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce a decision on the application for derelict land grant for the development of the Old Foleshill gas works site in the Coventry, North-East constituency.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 17 November 1992]*: No application has been made for derelict land grant or for city grant for this project. The developers have presented what they have called a preliminary application for city grant, but are still working up their ideas. I understand that they may soon be in a position to put firm proposals to the Department.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the mid-1991 population figures from the 1991 census will be used in setting the standard spending assessments for 1993-94 for local authorities.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 17 November 1992]*: My right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State for the Environment will be announcing his detailed proposals for standard spending assessments for 1993-94 shortly.

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total revenue expenditure, excluding revenue support grant to local authorities, by his Department in each of the English regions for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Robin Squire: The following table shows a breakdown of the main areas of spending which are allocated on a regional basis.

£ million

	Programme		
	Housing revenue account subsidy[1]	*Urban programme*	*Administration expenditure*
Northern			
1990-91	261·4	10·1	3·2
1991-92	253·3	10·3	3·7
North West			
1990-91	383·4	14·6	5·5
1991-92	404·7	9·5	6·4
Merseyside			
1990-91	155·0	7·3	3·7
1991-92	152·6	8·4	2·1
West Midland			
1990-91	346·0	11·3	3·4
1991-92	343·6	12·4	4·0
East Midland			
1990-91	190·1	4·2	2·9
1991-92	191·4	3·5	3·3
Yorkshire/Humberside			
1990-91	320·7	9·1	3·6
1991-92	328·4	7·8	4·4
London			
1990-91	1,440·0	11·3	3·9
1991-92	1,499·0	11·6	4·2

		Programme	
	Housing revenue account subsidy[1]	*Urban programme*	*Administration expenditure*
Eastern			
1990-91	177·1	—	2·2
1991-92	177·0	—	2·6
South East			
1990-91	232·5	—	2·9
1991-92	243·2	—	3·3
South West			
1990-91	155·0	1·0	2·1
1991-92	156·9	1·0	2·5

[1] Figures show sums actually paid (including former housing subsidy). Due to the subsidy mechanism they will not equate to entitlement in year.

Local Government Staff

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his proposals for limiting pay rises for local government staff.

Mr. Robin Squire: Local government is responsible for determining the pay of its own APT and C—white collar —chief executive and chief officer, manual and crafts staff. Ministers have no power to limit pay settlements for these groups. I expect local government to conclude settlements within the 0 to 1·5 per cent. range announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement and the chairmen of the local authority associations have undertaken to do their very best to produce settlements within this range.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what impact has been made on the environment figures in the tables annexed to the "Autumn Statement" from the transfer of energy efficiency responsibility from the former Department of Energy to his own Department.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* The baseline provision for the programmes operated by the Energy Efficiency Office—EEO—was transferred to the Department of the Environment following the general election in April 1992. The revised provision for the EEO for the three years covered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement is as follows, to the nearest £ million:

	£ million
1993-94	69
1994-95	71
1995-96	71

The expenditure is included within the Department's "other environmental services" block.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the various schemes under which his Department supports the introduction of energy conservation measures in domestic homes, whether owned or tenanted: and if he will indicate the amounts spent by his Department or the former Department of Energy in each of the last three years in each category, and the amounts projected to be spent in the current year and in the next two financial years.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* Estimates based on information reported by local authorities on the HIP2 form submitted with their 1990 and 1991 housing investment programme bids show capital spending on improved insulation and other energy conservation measures of:

			£ million
	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Local authorities own housing stock	280	230	210
Non local authority dwellings	10	30	30

The figures for local authorities' own housing stock include expenditure under estate action and the general maintenance and improvement programme for local authority housing stock and, in the case of 1991-92, the green house programme in its first year of operation. Expenditure under the latter was £10·4 million in that year. Those for non local authority dwellings cover house renovation grants and minor works assistance. Estimates of expenditure for estate action and the general maintenance and improvement programmes for the current year will not be available until the HIP2 forms for 1992 have been processed. No forecasts for the energy efficiency elements of those programmes are available for future years. In addition to those programmes, separate provision is available for the green house programme of £45 million this year, and £5 million in 1993-94.

There is also expenditure on energy efficiency by the Housing Corporation under its programmes for the refurbishment of housing associations' stock, but this is not separately identified.

The home energy efficiency scheme—HEES—came into operation on 1 January 1991. In the three months to the end of the financial year, some £1·3 million was paid out in grants under the scheme. In 1991-92 the figure was some £23 million. The amount available for grant in the current financial year is some £35 million and it is likely that a similar amount will be available next year. No forecast is available for future years.

Prior to the introduction of HEES, expenditure on grants for draughtproofing materials under the energy grant scheme operated under the employment training programme, was £10·8 million in 1989-90 and £9·31 million in 1990-91.

My Department also supports the introduction of energy efficiency measures in domestic properties through information programmes such as "Helping the Earth Begins at Home".

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Green Issues

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who in his Department has been appointed to oversee and develop green issues; how many civil servants have been allocated new or additional responsibilities to deal with the management and development of green issues; and what additional allocation of resources has been made to support programmes related to green issues in his Department.

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State oversees FCO involvement in developing international environmental policies and instigating policies for energy saving on the FCO estates. The FCO does not have major spending programmes, but some £160,000 has been allocated to 26 environmental projects throughout the world in financial year 1992-93. Within the FCO, green issues are primarily the responsibility of the Environment, science and energy department, where 10 officials work on these issues—one DS Grade 4, one DS5s, one DS5, one DS6, two DS7s, two DS9s, and two DS10s.

During the run up to the Earth summit in Rio in June, 5 additional staff were attached to the Department. At overseas posts, staff resources from economic and science sections are deployed on green issues, responding flexibly to changing needs, so it is not possible to identify the precise resource cost.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave him on 11 November, at column *213*, relating to the similar question he asked about the Overseas Development Administration.

Pakistan

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Pakistan Government in respect of the death sentence passed on Mr. Gul Pervaiz Masih.

Mr. Goodlad: We have been carefully monitoring the case of Mr. Gul Masih in consultation with EC partners and other like-minded countries. We are taking suitable opportunities to express our concern to the Pakistani authorities. We understand that the case has now gone to appeal.

Third World

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals the Government have for halting missile proliferation in the third world.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom was a founder member, in 1987, of the missile technology control regime and has taken a leading role in promoting a wider membership and in the recent decision to extend controls to missiles capable of delivering chemical and biological, as well as nuclear, weapons. We also regularly raise our proliferation concerns with those countries which either seek to procure missile systems or are major suppliers, to urge them not to go ahead with such transactions.

Kurdish People

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the Turkish involvement in the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq; and if he will make representations to the Turkish Government to withdraw.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We ackowledge the difficult situation faced by the Turkish Government in dealing with terrorism by the PKK. The Turkish Government have given assurances that their operations in northern Iraq were temporary and are aimed solely at destroying PKK capability to mount attacks against Turkey from northern Iraq, and that they do not intend to hold on to Iraqi territory. We look to Turkey to complete its withdrawal as soon as possible.

Private Detectives

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions since 1979 his Department has engaged private detective agencies to investigate the activities of British citizens; and if he will list the date and purpose of each investigation.

Mr. Goodlad: None.

Iraq

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Iraq has been complying with United Nations resolution 688; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The imposition of "no-fly zones" and patrols by coalition aircraft have helped to deter attacks by Iraqi forces on Iraqi civilians in both northern and southern Iraq. But the Iraqi regime continues to maintain an economic blockade of northern Iraq and we remain concerned about reports of military action by Iraqi ground forces in the marshes of southern Iraq.

Iraq refuses to implement Security Council resolutions 706 and 712 which provide for limited exports of Iraqi oil to pay for humanitarian operations. On 22 October Iraq and the United Nations signed a memorandum of understanding which provides for a programme of humanitarian relief and the deployment of United Nations guards in Iraq until 31 March 1993. We look to the Iraqi Government to allow the United Nations and relief agencies to operate throughout Iraq.

PRIME MINISTER

"Britain in Europe"

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister what are his reasons for omitting from the booklet "Britain in Europe" a reference to the provisions contained in article K.3 of the treaty on European union on qualified majority voting on certain decisions relating to foreign policy on security.

The Prime Minister: Article J.3 provides for the use of qualified majority voting for certain implementing decisions in areas of the common foreign and security policy subject to joint action. Majority voting would, however, apply only where member states have explicitly and unanimously so decided. It is not possible to cover all the provisions of the treaty in a 24-page booklet.

British-German Meeting

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Prime Minister what were the costs to the Exchequer of the bilateral British-German meeting at Ditchley park on Wednesday 11 November.

The Prime Minister: The estimated cost to the Exchequer is £57,000.

Iraq

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Prime Minister when Her Majesty's Government were informed that Iraq's military capabilities were potentially directed against a country or countries other than Iran.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* Prior to the invasion of Kuwait, the assessment made by the United Kingdom, and other countries, including Iraq's neighbours was that Iraq would use her military strength to bolster her position as a dominant power in the region, but that she would not risk world hostility by aggressive action. That assessment changed when Iraq started to make threats against Kuwait, but it was still thought that Iraq would use the threats to extract concessions from Kuwait, not launch an invasion.

Special Advisers

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish the current list of special advisers attached to Ministers stating the Minister they work for and their previous occupations.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* There are currently 37 special advisers attached to Ministers. The names of the advisers, the Ministers they work for and their previous occupations before the last general election are as follows:

Name	*Minister(s) served*	*Previous Occupation*
K. Adams	Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	Special Adviser
E. Bickham	Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs	Special Adviser
Sir R. Braithwaite	Prime Minister	British Ambassador, Moscow
T. Burke	Secretary of State for the Environment	Special Adviser
J. Caine	Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	Special Adviser
D. Cameron	Financial Secretary to the Treasury	Conservative Central Office
Dr. E. Cottrell	Secretary of State for Employment	Conservative Central Office
Sir C. Foster	Secretary of State for Transport	Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte
M. Fraser	Minister of State for Overseas Development	Special Adviser
C. Grantham	Secretary of State for Education	Special Adviser
J. Gray	Jointly to the Ministers for Local Government and Inner Cities; Environment and Countryside; and Housing and Planning	GNI Ltd.
D. Green	Prime Minister	Journalist
Professor P. Hall	Secretary of State for the Environment	Special Adviser
Ms. S. Hole	Chief Whip	Special Adviser
Mrs. S. Hogg	Prime Minister	Special Adviser
A. Kemp	President of the Board of Trade	Special Adviser
Mrs. T. Keswick	Home Secretary	Special Adviser
Mrs. E. Laing	Secretary of State for Transport	Special Adviser
G. Mackay	Secretary of State for Scotland	Special Adviser
R. Marsh	Secretary of State for Health	Special Adviser
J. Mayhew	Secretary of State for Social Security	Special Adviser
Miss S. McEwen	Chief Whip (House of Lords)	Special Adviser
M. McManus	Secretary of State for Wales	Conservative Central Office
P. Miller	Secretary of State for Defence	Special Adviser
Dr. J. Nicholson	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	John Nicholson Associates
Sir I. Pearce	Secretary of State for Transport	Richard Ellis and English Estates
D. Poole	Prime Minister	James Capel
Mrs. K. Ramsey	Prime Minister	Special Adviser
Dr. W. Robinson	Chancellor of the Exchequer	Special Adviser
P. Rock	Secretary of State for the Environment	Conservative Central Office
A. Rosling	Prime Minister	Special Adviser
D. Ruffley	Jointly to the three Ministers of State and the Under Secretary of State in the Home Office	Special Adviser
I. Stewart	Lord President	Special Adviser
Lady Strathnaver	President of the Board of Trade	Special Adviser
N. True	Prime Minister	Special Adviser
I. Wilton	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Special Adviser
A. Young	Secretary of State for Scotland	Special Adviser

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister if he will arrange for the papers supplied to defence counsel in the Matrix Churchill case to be placed in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 17 November 1992]*: No. The papers were supplied to the defence for the purposes of the trial. Lord Justice Scott will have access to them.

EDUCATION

Inspectors' Reports

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what person or body he proposes to appoint to examine inspectors' reports on a school to determine whether any weaknesses in aspects of teaching are such as to cause him to require the governing body of that school to draw up an action plan under the proposals in the Education Bill.

Mr. Forth: The Education (Schools) Act 1992 requires all schools to draw up action plans following inspections under section 9 of that Act.

The proposals in the Education Bill relate to the particular circumstnaces where an inspection identifies a school as failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

Trainee Teachers

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what decisions have been taken regarding the time primary school trainee teachers should spend in the classroom.

Mr. Forth: We are determined that the training of primary school teachers should be more school-based and more closely related to the needs of schools and to the requirements of the national curriculum. We wish however to take into account the advice we shall be receiving from the National Curriculum Council and the Office for Standards in Education about primary education more generally. We have therefore set September 1994 as the date for the introduction of new criteria for primary phase initial teacher training.

Private Detectives

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on how many occasions since 1979 his Department has engaged private detective agencies to investigate the activities of British citizens; and if he will list the date and purpose of each investigation.

Mr. Forman: The Department has not engaged any private detective agencies.

Examination Results

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will place in the Library copies of the comparative tables of GCSE and A/AS level performance in 1992.

Mr. Patten: I have today placed copies of all 108 tables in the Library. Copies of their local tables are being sent to all parents now choosing secondary schools for their children, and all tables are also freely available on request. As promised in the parents charter, we are opening up information about schools to the widest possible audience, and helping parents to make fully informed choices about their children's education.

WALES

Adult Illiteracy

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to combat adult illiteracy in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: During the last four financial years, the Department has approved expenditure by local education authorities of £668,800 under the grants for education support and training arrangements for the provision of open learning centres for adults with literacy and numeracy problems. In the same period, the Department has contributed approximately £733,000 to the adult literacy and basic skills unit for its basic skills work with adults.

Training and enterprise councils are able to help those adults whose literacy needs seriously impair their ability to compete in the labour market. For example, normal entry conditions to employment training are waived. Training programmes can be individually designed to give adults with literacy needs the support and help they require to progress towards general and vocational competencies.

From 1 April 1993, the Further Education Funding Council for Wales will become responsible for courses of basic literacy in English, literacy in Welsh and communication skills for people with learning difficulties so as to prepare them for further education.

European Youth Initiative

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide a funding contribution towards the European youth initiative.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The possibility of funding a youth conference in Wales as part of the Marco Polo Cathay challenge initiative has been discussed with the promoter who has been asked to provide further information.

Photovoltaic Solar Energy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will develop a demonstration project involving the development of photovoltaic solar energy in up to 1,000 houses in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The question of pilot projects would be for consideration in the light of the current programme of assessment studies which the Department of Trade and Industry has commissioned.

Green Issues

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how the Departmental Green Minister has promoted protection of the ozone layer with specific policy measures; which possible measures have been considered and rejected; and on what grounds.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government's policy on, and associated measures for the protection of the ozone layer are set out in the environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance", Cm 1200. Details of progress to date and of further action planned are given in the first and second progress reports, Cm. 1655 and 2068. Copies of all three publications are held in the Library of the House.

As the Green Minister for the Welsh Office, I have played an active part in the formulation of this policy. Within the Welsh Office, as part of the Department's purchasing policy, environmental concerns are factors taken into account in all purchasing decisions. In addition a "green housekeeping" strategy for the Department is being prepared which will cover the use of ozone-depleting substances as well as other relevant environmental issues.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many projects were selected to qualify for the portion of the non-fossil fuel obligation granted to renewables in Wales in 1990 and 1991; how many such projects were *(a)* new, *(b)* involved with landfill gas generation and *(c)* wind projects; and how many of each of those categories of project (i) still await planning permission, (ii) have been withdrawn and (iii) are on line.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Twenty-two projects in Wales qualified under the non-fossil fuel obligation granted to renewable energy schemes in 1990 and 1991.

Of these 22 projects:
(a) 16 are new projects
(b) There are no landfill gas projects
(c) 14 are wind projects
Of these categories:
(a) New Projects
    (i) Four are awaiting planning permission
    (ii) One project has been withdrawn
    (iii) Three are on line
(b) Not applicable
(c) Wind Projects[1]
    (i) Four are awaiting planning permission
    (ii) One has been withdrawn
    (iii) Two are on line

[1] In addition seven wind farms have planning permission; six of these are under construction.

Opencast Mines

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the opencast sites within the south Wales coalfield area that are currently monitored for coal dust levels in the atmosphere.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not held by the Department. The main responsibility for monitoring air pollution around opencast sites rests with the environmental health departments of local authorities

Family Planning Services

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those health authorities which provided domiciliary family planning services in each year since 1985.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: District health authorities that reported making at least one family planning domiciliary visit in each of the years requested is listed as follows. It is possible that authorities not listed make provision for a service, but it is not taken up.

1985	Gwent and Mid Glamorgan
1986	Gwent, Mid Glamorgan and West Glamorgan
1987	Gwent and West Glamorgan
1988	Gwent
1989-90	Mid Glamorgan and South Glamorgan
1990-91	Mid Glamorgan and South Glamorgan
1991-92	Mid Glamorgan and South Glamorgan

Wind Energy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to develop an offshore wind power generation demonstration project.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Family Health Services Authorities

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to change the functions of family health services authorities in Wales to make them into bodies with no providing role, but exclusively into purchasers.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are no such plans.

Child Psychotherapists

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funds his Department makes available to enable child psychotherapists to undertake the required four-year postgraduate training.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None. Postgraduate training for child psychotherapists and other staff groups is a matter for employers.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will delay the requirement on local authorities to draw up contaminated land registers until his Department has issued guidance to those local authorities.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There is no requirement on local authorities to draw up such registers until Parliament approves regulations under section 143 of the Environmental Protection Act, 1990. Some guidance has already been made available to local authorities via consultation papers issued by the Government on this subject and a final version will be provided when regulations come to be made.

A465

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if construction of the A465 between Aberdulais and Glynneath will now proceed, following capital allocations in the autumn statement; and if he will announce a start date.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Nearly £3 million is being spent on this scheme in 1992-93. My right hon. Friend will shortly decide the allocation of resources to individual programmes for future years under the normal block arrangements.

Royal Armament Depot, Trecwn

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will respond to the fifth report of the Welsh Affairs Committee, Session 1991-92, House of Commons paper No. 316, on the social and economic consequences of the closure of the royal armament depot, Trecwn.

Mr. David Hunt: I am pleased to announce that the response has been published today as Command Paper 2093.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library a copy of the health and safety policy of each of the agencies within his Department.

Mr. Mates: Yes. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Teachers Pay

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assurances have been given by the Department of Education to the education and library boards that the funding of the 1992 teachers pay award would be fully met by DENI.

Mr. Hanley: When initial financial allocations for 1992-93 were made by DENI to education and library boards, they were informed that their budgets assumed an increase of 5 per cent. in teachers costs from 1 April 1992. Boards were also advised that should the pay settlement be greater than 5 per cent. the Department would seek to ensure that the increase would be covered by additional resources, but no guarantee could be given at that stage.

Curriculum Council

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the staff costs for running the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council; and how much the council spends on research.

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the remuneration of the chair of the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council.

Mr. Hanley: The accounts of the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council for the 1990-91 and 1991-92 financial years show the following figures:

	1990-91 £	*1991-92* £
Staff Costs	730,130	962,574
Research and Development Projects	46,809	160,198

The 1991-92 figures are unaudited.

The chairman of the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council is paid an honorarium which is currently £6,448 per annum.

Further Education

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of setting up the computer information system for the management of further education in Northern Ireland; and how much the Government are spending maintaining this system.

Mr. Hanley: The total cost of the project, which was completed on 30 September 1992, was £3,704,000. The Department of Education is making available £125,000 during the period 1 October 1992 to 31 March 1993 for ongoing support for the project, including hardware and software maintenance costs. From 1 April 1993, support costs amounting to some £250,000 per annum will be met by the education and library boards.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Employment Contracts

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many right hon. and hon. Members have deposited contracts of employment for staff paid via the Fees Office.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 5 November 1992]*: Six hundred and forty right hon. and hon. Members have authorised payment of their staff salaries direct by the Fees Office and are therefore required to lodge a statement of the main terms and conditions of employment of such staff. To date, 573 Members have lodged statements relating to 1,052 members of staff.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what use his Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Mr. Newton: The Privy Council Office has not used any private detectives.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Plutonium

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will make representations to the Government of Japan to ensure that all sea shipments of plutonium between the United Kingdom and Japan meet the requirements recommended in the applicable provisions of the international maritime dangerous goods code and the International Atomic Energy Agency transport guidelines;

(2) if he will make representations to the Government of Japan to ensure that all casks involved in the shipment of plutonium between the United Kingdom and Japan have been adequately tested as withstanding fire, collision and immersion conditions associated with maximum credible accidents; and what representations he has made to Japan on the security of the casks;

(3) if he will make representations to the Government of Japan to ensure that emergency port of call arrangements are fully agreed prior to the commencement of the shipment of plutonium between the United Kingdom and Japan.

Mr. Eggar: No such representations are necessary. The detailed arrangements are a matter for the Japanese authorities. The carriage of plutonium is only allowed subject to compliance with stringent international standards which meet in full the applicable provisions of the international maritime dangerous goods code and the International Atomic Energy Agency transport guidelines, to both of which Japan subscribes. In accordance with these reqirements, plutonium is transported in extremely robust special containers which are subject to rigorous fire, impact and immersion conditions. Appropriate measures are taken to ensure the security of these movements.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide in separate tabulated form figures for the total annual amount of *(a)* civil separated plutonium exported, *(b)* civil separated plutonium imported, *(c)* civil plutonium in spent fuel exported, *(d)* civil plutonium in spent fuel imported, *(e)* civil plutonium in fresh nuclear fuel pins imported and *(f)* civil plutonium in fresh nuclear fuel pins exported, since April 1988.

Mr. Eggar *(holding answer 26 October 1992)*: Details of the United Kingdom's imports and exports of civil plutonium from April 1988 to March 1991 were given in the annual plutonium figures published by the former Department of Energy and placed in the Library of the House. The corresponding figures for 1991-92 are being compiled and will be published by my Department shortly.

Furniture Regulations

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those organisations and other bodies which will be subject to the regulations relating to foam and second-hand furniture.

Mr. Leigh: The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, as amended in 1989, apply to all persons who supply domestic upholstered furniture in the course of business within the meaning of section 46 of the Consumer Protection Act 1987. In this context supply includes the provision of goods by sale, hiring out, loan or gift.

The regulations require that from 1 March 1990 new furniture must meet all the fire resistance requirements, and that from 1 March 1993 second-hand furniture—except furniture which was made before 1950—must also meet those requirements.

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what advice he has given to county councils trading standards officers concerning the recycling of furniture which does not comply with the foam regulations relating to second-hand furniture.

Mr. Leigh: No advice has been given by my Department to local authority trading standards officers about the application of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988—as amended in 1989—to organisations which recycle or redistribute second-hand furniture.

Consumer Advice

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will amend the Consumer Credit Act 1974 to introduce a statutory duty for the provision of consumer advice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: No. The Consumer Credit Act 1974 regulates the way that credit is offered to consumers and requires those giving credit or hire facilities or debt advice to be licensed by the Director General of Fair Trading. There are no plans for the provision of consumer advice to be made a statutory duty.

Burn Injuries (Garments)

Mr. Miller: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many incidents of burning have been reported in respect of garments carrying the "keep away from fire" label in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Leigh: My Department's home, including leisure, accident surveillance system statistics for 1990 record 43 accidents in which persons required hospital treatment for burn injuries as a result of any garment being worn catching fire.

The records do not show whether or not the garments carried a "keep away from fire" label.

Mr. Miller: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps are being taken to strengthen the Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985.

Mr. Leigh: There are no present plans to revise the Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985.

Mr. Miller: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the causes of reported accidents resulting from the burning of nightwear worn by children in the last year.

Mr. Leigh: In 1990, the latest year for which statistics are available my Department's home accident surveillance system (HASS) data on home accidents records three accidents resulting from the burning of nightwear worn by children under 14 years. The details given are:

Item	*Subject*	*Source of Fire*
Nightshirt	Boy aged 12 years	Gas fire
Nightdress	Girl aged three years	Matches
Nightdress	Girl aged seven years	Unknown

Small Businesses

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many small firms have gone out of business in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Leigh: The number of businesses registered and deregistered for VAT in the past 10 years is given in the table.

Registrations and deregistrations: 1981-1991

Year	*Registrations 000's*	*Deregistrations 000's*
1981	152	120
1982	166	145
1983	180	145
1984	182	152
1985	183	163
1986	192	165
1987	210	169
1988	240	172
1989	256	176
1990	239	184
1991	206	203

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what new proposals his Department has to help small businesses collect outstanding debts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* Late payment debt is an issue which we are actively addressing. Following from the 1992 Budget, the President of the Board of Trade is, with colleagues:

(a) introducing new contracting terms requiring companies awarded Government contracts to pay their subcontractors promptly, normally within 30 days;

(b) consulting on proposals to require large companies to state in their reports and accounts how quickly they pay;

(c) Promoting improvements to court procedures for debt recovery.

Furthermore, the Department of Trade and Industry is providing financial support for three trade associations to operate pilot prompt payment initiatives. Many training and enterprise councils and other bodies also provide training for businesses on credit management and debt collection.

My noble Friend Baroness Denton of Wakefield, as Under-Secretary of State for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms, has given her personal commitment to help small firms experiencing late payment by large companies of public bodies and supports the initiative of the CBI and other bodies in relation to prompt payment.

Postal Services

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received concerning the EC paper on the development of a single market for postal services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: I have received a wide range of written and oral representations from users of the postal services, private sector competitors, Post Office employees, the Post Office itself and other interested parties both individual and corporate. I expect to receive additional representations over the coming weeks. All these representations will be carefully analysed and taken fully into account by the Government before we prepare our formal response to the European Commission towards the end of this year.

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what representations he has received concerning the possible privatisation of the Post Office;

(2) which organisations, which sources and which individuals are being consulted in connection with the Government's review of the structure and organisation of the Post Office;

(3) with which companies he has had meetings to discuss the possible privatisation of the Post Office.

Mr. Leigh: I have received a number of representations from interested parties and the general public concerning the Post Office review.

I have held meetings, or am due to hold meetings, with the following in connection with the review of the structure and organisation of the Post Office: the Post Office, the Post Office Users National Council, Union of Communication Workers, National Communications Union, Communications Managers Association, National Union of Civil and Public Servants, Post Office Unions Council, the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters, the Association of International Courier and Express Services, TNT Express (UK), DHL International (UK) Ltd, Securicor Omega Express, Britdoc, Mail Users Association, Direct Marketing Association, Periodical Publishers' Association, British Printing Industries Federation, European Mail and Express Services Users Association.

In addition, my officials and the consultants appointed to advise the Government have met Business Post, Electronic Equipment Association, Mail Order Traders Association, BT, Girobank and other Government Departments.

A variety of published sources have been used as well as information provided by the Post Office and the Government.

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to publish the results of the review of the structure and organisation of the Post Office.

Mr. Leigh: The review is not yet complete. We will announce its conclusions in due course.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the limit he has announced on public sector pay increases for the current year is applicable to employees of *(a)* Parcelforce, *(b)* the Royal Mail and *(c)* Post Office Counters; and what account will be taken of offers already made to representatives of staff.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* The pay policy announced by my right hon. Friend will apply to all public sector pay settlements over the next 12 months including those employed by public corporations such as the Post Office.

The recent formal pay offer made to Royal Mail employees with effect from 1 October this year will be honoured since negotiatiions have already been completed, but their October 1993 pay settlement will be constrained by the pay policy.

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what financial benefit accrued to Post Office

Letters, Post Office Counters and Parcelforce as a result of their holiday from paying contributions as employer to the superannuation funds of their respective employees during each year since 1987.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* The financial benefits accruing from reductions in the employer's contribution to the Post Office staff superannuation scheme for each year since 1987 are as follows:

£ million

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Royal Mail	Nil	13	29	106	105
Post Office Counters	Nil	2	5	16	15
Parcelforce	Nil	1	2	9	8

There have been no reductions during this period to the employer's contribution to the Post Office pension scheme.

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what financial subventions other than a contributions holiday Post Office letters, Post Office Counters and Parcelforce have received from the superannuation funds of their respective employees.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* None.

Refuse-to-energy Incinerator, Belvedere

Mr. Evennett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to receive the inspector's report from the public inquiry into the proposed refuse-to-energy incinerator in Belvedere.

Mr. Eggar: The inquiry is still sitting. The timing of his report is a matter for the inquiry inspector.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Robathan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made towards achieving the Government's objective of working towards a figure of 1000 MW of electricity generating capacity from renewable energy sources by the year 2000; whether he expects that target to be met; and what impact the non-fossil fuel obligation will have on its achievement.

Mr. Eggar: Contracts in England and Wales for more than 500 MW of new renewables-based generation capacity were signed in the first two rounds of the non-fossil fuel obligation, of which 185 MW should be operational by the end of the current financial year, with a further 350 MW scheduled for further years. Seven MW of that NFFO capacity have been withdrawn. Some 6 MW of new capacity were also contracted in Scotland under transitional arrangements. Further new NFFO capacity in England and Wales, capacity which might be expected under NFFO-type arangements in Scotland and in Northern Ireland, and some non-grid-connected capacity, will help the United Kingdom in working towards 1000 MW of new renewables-based capacity in the United Kingdom by the year 2000, as specified in the 1990 White Paper on the environment.

Mr. Robathan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects the renewable energy advisory group to submit its report; and whether he will publish it.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 2 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *60*.

Mr. Robathan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made of the availability beyond 1998 in other EC member states of financial support equivalent to the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Mr. Eggar: The energy technology support unit, on behalf of the DTI, will be conducting a detailed assessment in the coming year of arrangements in other EC member states for the development of the market for electricity from renewable sources of energy. The assessment, which will cover any termination date for such support, will be published when completed.

Mr. Robathan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will consider decoupling incentives for renewable energy sources from support given to nuclear energy.

Mr. Eggar: Proceeds from the levy on almost all sales of electricity to final customers in England and Wales are used to fund the supply of electricity from both nuclear and renewable sources. However, this support for nuclear is not given at the expense of that for renewables. My Department is in discussion with the European Commission about support for renewables after 1998.

Environmental Auditing

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to prepare British enterprises for the introduction of EC environmental auditing standards.

Mr. Eggar: A proposal for an EC regulation which would introduce a voluntary environmental management and auditing scheme is presently under discussion by the EC Environment Council. The proposal, which has been the subject of extensive consultation with United Kingdom business, would permit appropriate industry standards for environmental management to be used as a basis for the scheme.

In the United Kingdom, the British Standards Institution is currently piloting such a standard, BS7750, among some 150 businesses including a number of small firms. My Department has also initiated or participated in a number of seminars to alert businesses to the provisions of the EC scheme and the existence of BS7750.

Disconnections

Ms. Gordon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the number of disconnections of domestic *(a)* gas and *(b)* electricity supply during 1991 broken down into (i) standard region, (ii) utility region and (iii) local authority district.

Mr. Eggar: Disconnection figures are kept by the Office of Gas Supply, the Gas Consumers Council and the office of Electricity Regulation. However, I can confirm that 18,631 gas and 38,720 electricity customers were disconnected during 1991.

Opencast Coal

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the annual level of production of opencast coal in England, Wales and Scotland in each year since 1983-84.

Mr. Eggar: The annual production of opencast coal in England, Wales and Scotland between 1983-84 and 1991-92 was as follows:

Thousand tonnes

Year	*England*	*Wales*	*Scotland*	*Total production*
1983-84	10,221	1,547	3,031	14,799
1984-85	10,127	1,738	2,640	14,550
1985-86	10,009	2,174	3,081	15,264
1986-87	10,093	1,523	2,970	14,586
1987-88	11,352	1,677	3,347	16,376
1988-89	12,104	1,748	4,151	18,003
1989-90	12,413	2,088	4,115	18,616
1990-91	12,034	1,865	4,372	18,271
1991-92	11,605	2,402	5,012	19,019

Department of Energy Staff

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what reduction in former Department of Energy personnel *(a)* has taken place and *(b)* is envisaged as a consequence of the incorporation of the former Department of Energy into his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The merger enabled the Department to reduce immediately the overhead costs of common functions and services and further rationalisations and savings continue to be made. These savings have been used to strengthen the Department's sponsorship of British industry through the creation of a number of sectoral divisions. No staff have been made redundant, although many are now doing different jobs within the Department and in response to the new priorities which Ministers have set.

Property Misdescriptions Act 1991

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to implement the Property Misdescriptions Act 1991.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms has laid before Parliament today an order which will give effect to the Property Misdescriptions Act 1991.

Finding the right property is never easy, and people need to be able to rely on what they are told about property offered for sale. Nobody wants to waste time travelling to view properties which, had the particulars been accurate, he or she would have ruled out as unsuitable.

The Property Misdescriptions (Specified Matters) Order 1992 lists those characteristics of property which it will be an offence to misdescribe. These "specified matters" cover most characteristics of property commonly included in estate agents' particulars of sale.

The Act does not require information to be supplied in respect of these matters, but if an agent chooses to provide information then it must not be false or misleading.

Offences under the Act will attract a maximum fine of £5,000 on conviction before a magistrates court and an unlimited fine on conviction before a Crown court. The Act will be enforced by local authority trading standards officers—in Northern Ireland, by officers of the Department of Economic Development trading standards branch.

My hon. and noble Friend has also laid before Parliament today a further order under the Estate Agents Act 1979.

The Estate Agents (Specified Offences) (No. 2) (Amendment) Order 1992 adds offences under the Property Misdescriptions Act 1991 to those offences which can give rise to the issue of prohibition or warning notices against estate agents by the Director General of Fair Trading.

Both orders will come into force on 4 April 1993.

Cosmetics (Animal Tests)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the United Kingdom Government's position on proposals put forward by the European Parliament and Commission to phase out the use of animals to test cosmetics by 1 January 1998 when they were discussed by COREPER—the Committee of Permanent Representatives in September.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* The United Kingdom position at the COREPER meeting on 16 September to discuss the proposed sixth council amendment to the directive on cosmetics was that tests on live animals for testing the safety of cosmetic ingredients should be phased out as soon as there are suitable validated alternatives. The Council has now reached a political agreement on a common position which includes a ban on the use of ingredients tested on animals after 1 January 1998, with a provision for the Commission to propose the postponement of the ban, in respect of the continuing need for particular tests, if alternative testing methods are not available by then.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many of the representations he received to his consultation paper on assisted areas advocated *(a)* the creation of further development areas, *(b)* the creation of intermediate areas, *(c)* the maintenance of the status quo, *(d)* the reduction of development areas and *(e)* the reduction of intermediate areas.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* My ministerial colleagues and I have received a number of representations relating to particular areas. All have advocated either development or intermediate area status for their respective areas; which may involve upgrading from non-assisted area status, upgrading of existing assisted areas status, or the maintenance of the status quo. No representations have advocated reduced coverage.

British Coal

Mr. Churchill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish details of the current level of public subsidy to British Coal, together with a schedule of payments made in each of the last 12 months, specifying on which vote these payments are borne.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* The current provision for assistance to the coal industry is contained in class V, vote 1 of the Supply estimates 1992-93. Section B of this vote provides for grant payments to British Coal in 1992-93 of £571·8 million. Grant payments since October 1991 have been as follows:

	£ million
October 1991	33·6
November 1991	42·8
December 1991	39·2
January 1992	51·3
February 1992	35·8
March 1992	133·2
April 1992	203·2
May 1992	95·9
June 1992	14·2
July 1992	30·9
August 1992	46·4
September 1992	53·2

In addition to Government financial support, British Coal has been benefiting from the high margins, over and above world market prices, that the electricity generators pay for their coal supplies from the corporation. Under present contracts, which have been operating since April 1990, this assistance amounts to about £1 billion annually.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep Dip

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of adverse human reactions to organophosphorus sheep dip have been reported in the last two years.

Mr. Soames: During 1991, a total of 135 reports involving suspected human adverse reactions to organophosphorus sheep dips were received. For 1992, a total of 121 reports have been received up to 9 November. A significant proportion of the reports received since 1990 are historical cases where a suspected adverse reaction had occurred more than one year previously.

Diet

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the figures of consumption of essential foods for a healthy diet, for families with children under five years in *(a)* the richest income groups and *(b)* the poorest income groups; and if he will subdivide these figures by region.

Mr. Soames: All foods can be components of a healthy diet. No single food is essential. It is the overall balance of foods—and so of nutrients—which is important. The Ministry's national food survey does not separate families with children under five from families with older children, but the results do indicate that in general the diets of families in all income groups and regions contain adequate levels of minerals and vitamins, but rather more fat and less fibre than that recommended by the Chief Medical Officer's Committee on the Medical Aspects of Food Policy in its report on dietary reference values published in 1991. As part of a separate study, the Government are currently measuring the diets and health status of children under five years in all regions and income groups. It is planned to publish the results from this in 1994.

Pesticides

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he gives on the use of chemicals to control aphis gossypii; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The melon and cotton aphid—Aphis gossypii—has become a significant problem in some edible and ornamental glasshouse crops because of its ability to develop resistance to certain chemical pesticides. The Agricultural Development Advisory Service advises growers that effective chemical control is possible by the approved use of nicotine aphicides. Non-chemical controls, such as the controlled use of predatory and parasitic organisms, have also proved to be effective for some crops. The Ministry and the Horticultural Development Council are currently funding a number of research projects aimed at improving and developing such biological controls.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make representations to the pesticide industry to ensure that compensation is paid to victims of drinking water contaminated with atrazine and simazine.

Mr. Soames: The independent Advisory Committee on Pesticides concluded in May that levels of atrazine and simazine found in water do not endanger the health of consumers at the concentrations found in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the chief inspector of the drinking water inspectorate, in his report for 1991, concluded that the amounts of pesticides ingested in drinking water were far smaller than the amounts which are known to be harmful or likely to cause harm. There is, therefore, no justification for representations of the kind suggested.

Foxes

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many complaints his Department has received in each of the last five years on fox predation.

Mr. Soames: There is no requirement to notify the Department of instances of fox predation. Those suffering losses of livestock, poultry of game, are free to exercise control as long as they do not use a prohibited method.

Abattoirs

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to offer grant aid to abattoirs to meet latest EC standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Department has no plans to offer grant aid to abattoirs which need to upgrade to meet the new EC standards.

Compliance with statutory requirements has never brought with it any guarantee of help to defray the costs involved. The provision of grant aid would be quite unfair on those who have already made the commitment of their own funds to come up to standard.

Private Detectives

Mr. Denham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions since 1979 his Department has engaged private detective agencies to investigate the activities of British citizens; and if he will list the date and purpose of each investigation.

Mr. Curry: None. The only use of such agencies by the Department since 1979 has been for the purpose of tracing debtors. Such use ceased in 1987. Information as to the dates and cases is not available centrally and its extraction from the files would be disproportionate in time and resources.

Agriculture Council

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Agriculture Council held on 16 and 17 November.

Mr. Gummer: I chaired this meeting of the Council at which my hon. Friend the Minister of State in my Department represented the United Kingdom.

The Council discussed the general agreement on tariffs and trade Uruguay round and the EC/US oilseeds dispute in the light of well-publicised, negative comments from some parts of the Community. Following a vigorous discussion, I was able to record unanimous agreement in the Council that the Commissioner should negotiate with the United States consistently within the conclusions of the recent Birmingham summit. These provide for the Commission to be instructed actively to pursue a settlement. I understand negotiations will in fact resume later today.

The Council agreed a 7 per cent. devaluation of the green pound to take effect immediately. This is a necessary step since charges on intra-community trade, like monetary compensatory amounts, will not be possible in the single market from 1 January 1993, and the knowledge that green and market rates will be aligned by that date was acting as an incentive to speculation. The move will be widely welcomed by British farmers; when fully worked through it will add less than 1 per cent. to the food price index.

The Council also agreed the principal regulation on the control of payments under the reformed common agricultural policy. This is a major step toward combating the possibility of fraud in the new system.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Exchange Rate

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what details he has of the exchange controls in force in other EC countries.

Mr. Nelson: The 1988 capital liberalisation directive (88/361/EEC) prohibits exchange controls between member states, except in certain limited circumstances. However, four member states—Ireland, Greece, Portugal and Spain—enjoy a derogation which allows them to retain certain restrictions. In the case of Ireland and Spain, the remaining restrictions are due to be lifted by the end of this year. In the case of Portugal and Greece, the restrictions may be retained up to the end of 1995 if the Council agrees an extension to their derogations.

Deputy Secretaries

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many officials at deputy secretary level in the Treasury *(a)* have a degree in economics *(b)* were educated at state schools and *(c)* went to Oxbridge, as a percentage of all deputy secretaries in the Treasury.

Mr. Nelson: Of the Treasury officials at grade 2—deputy secretary—level, 50 per cent. have a degree in economics, 50 per cent. were educated at state schools and 33 per cent. went to Oxbridge.

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what use his Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Mr. Nelson: None.

Bank of England

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the job specification of the Governor of the Bank of England; and if he will make a statement of his previous experience and professional qualifications.

Mr. Nelson: The Bank of England Act 1946 and the Bank's charter provide for the office of Governor. The charter requires the Governor to render his exclusive services to the bank.

The present Governor is a qualified lawyer and has served as a director and chairman of a number of industrial, commercial and financial companies.

VAT

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the amount of value added tax which will be paid in respect of community care.

Sir John Cope: No such estimate has been made, but no change in the tax on domiciliary care is anticipated as a result of the transfer of resourcing from DSS to local authorities.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much VAT was collected in 1991-92 on domiciliary care charges.

Sir John Cope: No estimates have been made of the VAT collected on domiciliary care charges.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the criteria for exemption from VAT.

Sir John Cope: VAT is a wide-ranging tax on consumer expenditure with strictly limited reliefs. Exemptions from VAT are provided for under schedule 6 to the Value Added Tax Act 1983. They refelct the United Kingdom's obligations under article 13 of the EC sixth VAT directive, subject to the transitional derogations in article 28. Article 13 specifies two categories:

A. Exemptions for certain activities in the public interest, for example health, education, postal services.

B. Other exemptions.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will seek an amendment to the EC sixth directive in order to remove all domiciliary care costs from VAT.

Sir John Cope: My right hon. Friend has no plans to seek such an amendment.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what research has been done to identify and quantify the effect on the level of VAT and excise revenue resulting from the introduction of the single market on 1 January 1993.

Sir John Cope: The Cecchini report assessed the benefits of introducing a single European market. It did not specifically address the impact on VAT and excise revenues. It estimated that, in the medium-term, the single market could boost gross domestic product growth across the European Community by an average of 4·5 per cent. Growth of this order would provide a significant boost to VAT and excise receipts.

The introduction of the single market may give rise to some revenue loss in the United Kingdom. We estimate that the increase in cross-border shopping resulting from the abolition of intra-EC travellers' allowances will give rise to a revenue loss of around £250 million.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans Customs and Excise have to issue a VAT payers charter setting out standards of service to VAT payers.

Sir John Cope: The taxpayers charter, which was launched jointly by Customs and Excise and Inland Revenue, initially in 1986, and updated in 1991, sets out standards that taxpayers, including payers of VAT, can expect. In addition, Customs and Excise launched its VAT charter standard document on 22 September 1992. It sets out in more detail service standards for VAT.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many additional VAT inspectors' posts were identified by the Customs and Excise 1991-92 management plan as being necessary to deal with increased potential for VAT fraud under the single market; how many will actually be appointed; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how far Customs and Excise will be able to give extra attention to those businesses involved in intra-EC trade without reducing the number of visits and controls to those traders not involved in inter-EC trade.

Sir John Cope: The 1991-92 management plan did not quantify the additional posts to be allocated for reinforcing controls on intra-Community traders. Some 200 new posts will be created for control visiting in 1993-94. It will be for local managers to determine how best to deploy these relative to all revenue risks, whether flowing from the single market or not. Overall, Customs and Excise expects that control of the new arrangements for intra-EC trade, together with closer attention to the interpretation of VAT liability law, will increase the move towards longer and more thorough visits, and reduce to some extent the coverage of less risky traders.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action is being taken to ensure that companies do not supply false information to the new VAT information exchange system, in collusion with trading partners in Europe in order to evade VAT.

Sir John Cope: The information supplied to the VAT information exchange system will be tested on visits to traders. Collusion frauds will be combated through greater use of mutual assistance arrangements between member states and the development of Community-wide intelligence systems.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how far the risk analysis system used by Customs and Excise for VAT control visiting is restricted to determining the relative risk of different traders rather than the overall risk to the revenue.

Sir John Cope: In deploying the resources available for control visiting, Customs and Excise analyses the relative risk to the revenue presented by different traders. This includes allocating resources to those traders with the greatest tax throughput to protect the overall risk to the revenue.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 2 November, *Official Report*, column 38, what assessment was made of the effect of a 40 per cent. cut in the number of planned VAT inspections on deterrence, tax compliance and overall tax yield in the longer term before departing from the 1991-92 management plan.

Sir John Cope: In reducing to about 300,000 the planned number of control visits for 1993-94, Customs and Excise estimated that there could be a drop in the additional liability readily identifiable on visits, but that the move towards longer and more thorough visits would have a strong preventive effect and provide good protection of the overall tax yield.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the targets applied by Customs and Excise in the last five financial years for the length of time after registration for all traders to be visited.

Sir John Cope: In 1988-89 and 1989-90 Customs and Excise's target was to visit each trader within 15 to 18 months of VAT registration. In 1990-91 the Department improved the target to 12 to 15 months for high-risk traders while relaxing the deadline for the remainder to 21 to 24 months. In 1991-92 it introduced more fine-tuning into the risk analysis of the newly registered trader population, and now visits traders at three intervals of no more than 12 to 15, 21 to 24 and 33 to 36 months.

Illicit Trade

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Customs and Excise officers are to be trained to act as verification officers to deal with illicit trade in duty free and duty paid goods after 1 January 1993.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise staff currently employed on excise control work are already experienced in detecting illicit trade in excise goods. This sector is being reinforced, initially by 120 staff, who have been specially selected for further specific training in countering the new revenue risks following completion of the single market. The ongoing training programme, which will be made available to further selected staff as necessary, will also be continuously reviewed and adapted in the light of developments.

Private Detectives

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions since 1979 his Department has engaged private detective agencies to investigate the activities of British citizens; and if he will list the date and purpose of each investigation.

Mr. Nelson: None.

Home Income Plans

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the oral statement of the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, of 8 July, *Official Report*, column 367, what progress has been made in paying compensation to those who suffered loss through the purchase of home income plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 17 November 1992]*: Ten members of the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association who were involved in marketing home income plans have been declared in default by the investors compensation scheme. The ICS has made firm offers to some 250 investors in home income plans and in a further 400 cases has confirmed to investors that they are eligible for compensation. In addition, payments have been made to some 800 investors by members of the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation.

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* company directors and *(b)* employees were prosecuted, and what was the average fine imposed on those convicted in each case, under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, in each year since 1974.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is not possible to specify the number of prosecutions against company directors alone. However, section 37 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 permits the prosecution of any director, manager, secretary or other corporate official for offences committed by the company. Section 7 of the 1974 Act provides for prosecutions of employees. Tables showing the number of prosecutions since 1 January 1981 under these two sections follow. The information requested is not readily available for the years before 1981.

Information Laid by HSE's Factory and Agricultural Inspectorates, 1981 to 1990-91

Section 37 of HSW Act

Year (a)	*Number of Informations Laid*	*Number of Convictions*	*Average fine per Conviction (£)*
1981	7	7	179
1982	16	11	293
1983	7	6	221
1984	9	6	208
1985	15	11	218
1986-87	45	5	400
1987-88	6	4	188
1988-89	8	6	617
1989-90	23	18	1,731
1990-91(b)	6	4	250

Section 7 of HSW Act

Year (a)	*Number of Informations Laid*	*Number of Convictions*	*Average fine per Conviction (£)*
1981	24	19	81
1982	23	21	112
1983	38	29	104
1984	30	24	116
1985	34	30	209
1986-87	32	21	132
1987-88	35	27	183
1988-89	32	28	156
1989-90	46	38	148
1990-91(b)	26	19	291

(a) 1975 to 1985 calendar years commencing 1st January 1986-87 to1990-91 financial years commencing 1st April.

(b) Includes informations laid by HSE's Quarries Inspectorate.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the capital cost estimate for the FOCUS installation in the Health and Safety Executive; and how many fewer people will be employed as a result of this installation.

Mr. McLoughlin: The capital cost estimate for the FOCUS installation is £2·62 million.

The Health and Safety Executive has no current plans to employ fewer people as a result of the introduction of FOCUS.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will deposit copies of the Health and Safety Commission's advisory committee on toxic substances' and working group on the assessment of toxic chemicals minutes for each year since 1974 in the Library.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. For reasons of commercial confidentiality and for other reasons such minutes may not be suitable for disclosure and members of these bodies participate in discussions on that understanding. However, the Health and Safety Executive, which provides the secretariat for both bodies, publishes their forward work programme and related issues in the "Toxic Substances Bulletin" consultation papers on proposals for occupational exposure limits and synopses of the data used. From January 1993 the executive will publish the full scientific data used for the substance reviews carried out by the working group.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff in the Health and Safety Executive currently in the executive officer and higher executive officer grades have not been through a formal promotion board for that grade as in other parts of the Department of Employment group.

Mr. McLoughlin: Four administrative officers were substantively promoted in 1991 to executive officer in the ADP specialism without appearing before an Employment Department group promotions panel. These arrangements were made under the provisions of Treasury circular GEN 89/23.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the Health and Safety Executive staff are planned to be surplus to requirements in fiscal year 1994-95 in area offices as a result of the introduction of the FOCUS computer system.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has no plans to consider any staff as surplus to requirements in the fiscal year 1994-95 in HSE area offices as a result of the introduction of the FOCUS computer system.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the lease expires on the Health and Safety Executive London headquarters at Baynards House, London and what discussions the executive has had on the relocation of the headquarters to *(a)* London Docklands or *(b)* Bootle.

Mr. McLoughlin: The lease on Baynards house expires on 24 March 1994. The executive has had a number of discussions to consider the options for the housing of its London headquartes after March 1994. These include London docklands but not Bootle.

Mr. Galbriath: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many offences, and how many *(a)* custodial and *(b)* suspended sentences for offences, were recorded under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, in each year since 1974.

Mr. McLoughlin: The following table shows the number of convictions obtained by the enforcing authorities for breaches of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated legislation for each year since 1 January 1975, when the Act came into force.

In 1985, a director received a suspended custodial sentence for a health and safety offence. The same penalty was imposed on another director in 1987.

Enforcement action by all enforcing authorities taken under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated legislation

Year	Convictions
1975	[1]2,732
1976	[1]2,010
1977	[1]2,546
1978	[1]2,364
1979	[2]2,227
1980	[2]2,416
1981	[3]2,100
1982	[3]2,467
1983	2,362
1984	2,469
1985	2,332
1986-87	2,301
1987-88	2,682
1988-89	2,687
1989-90	2,953
1990-91	2,542

[1] Convictions obtained following proceedings by HSE's Factory Inspectorate only.

[2] Convictions obtained following proceedings by HSE's Factory and Agricultural Inspectorates only.

[3] Convictions obtained following proceedings by HSE's Factory, Agricultural, Mines and Quarries Inspectorates and by local authorities only.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* fines and *(b)* fines on indictment were imposed under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 in each year since 1974; and what was the average amount of fine in each case.

Mr. McLoughlin: Although most convictions for a health and safety offence result in a fine, it is not possible to identify the precise number. However, in calculating the average it has been assumed that all convictions result in a fine. A following table shows the average fine imposed by all courts for health and safety offences following proceedings by Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspectorates for each year since 1975. Information about fines imposed as a result of proceedings brought by local authorities is not available. However, the number of convictions obtained by all enforcing authorities is available and I refer the hon. Member to my earlier reply to him.

A further table provides details of average fines on indictment since April 1988. It is not possible to provide a reliable analysis of proceedings in the higher courts for earlier years.

Average fine in all courts for health and safety offences following proceedings by HSE inspectorates

Year[1]	Average fine per conviction £
1975[2]	81
1976[2]	94
1977[2]	105
1978[2]	134
1979[3]	184
1980[3]	180
1981[4]	189
1982[4]	233
1983	252
1984	313
1985	436
1986-87	410
1987-88	[5]792
1988-89	541
1989-90	[6]783
1990-91	[7]903

Notes:

[1] 1975—1985 calendar years commencing 1 January
1986-87—1990-91 financial years commencing 1 April

[2] Proceedings by HSE's Factory Inspectorate only.

[3] Proceedings by HSE's Factory and Agricultural Inspectorates only.

[4] Proceedings by HSE's Factory, Agricultural, Mines and Quarries Inspectorates only.

[5] Includes fines totalling £750,000 imposed against BP> If these convictions are excluded the average fine for 1987-88 would be £427.

[6] Includes a fine of £100,000 imposed against Nobels Explosives. If this conviction were excluded the average fine for 1989-90 would be £739.

[7] Includes fines of £250,000 against Nobels Explosives and £100,000 against Tate and Lyle. If these convictions were excluded the average fine for 1990-91 would be £728.

Proceedings instituted at higher courts[1] by HSE's Factory, Agricultural and Quarry Inspectorates, 1988-89—1990-91

Year[2]	Informations laid	Convictions	Average fine per Conviction (£)
1988-89[3]	69	62	1,965
1989-90[3]	87	77	5,387
1990-91	106	77	[4]5,125

Notes:

[1] Higher courts refers to Crown Courts and solemn proceedings in Sheriff's Courts in Scotland.

[2] Years commencing 1 April.

[3] Factory and Agricultural Inspectorates only.

[4] Includes a fine of £100,000 imposed on Tate and Lyle. If this fine were excluded the average fine for 1990-91 would be £3,877.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* fines, *(b)* prohibition notices and *(c)* improvement notices were issued under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 in each year since 1974.

Mr. McLoughlin: The following table shows the number of improvement and prohibition notices issued under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated legislation since 1 January 1975 when the 1974 Act came into force. The Health and Safety Executive is not responsible for the penalties imposed by the courts. For the information concerning fines I refer the hon. Member to my earlier reply to him today.

Prohibition and improvement notices issued by all enforcing authorities under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated legislation

Year[1]	*Prohibition notices*	*Improvement notices*
1975	2,450	5,149
1976	2,534	7,499
1977	3,130	9,253
1978	3,434	12,217
1979	3,674	13,517
1980	3,238	12,625
1981	3,187	12,315
1982	3,266	13,030
1983	3,805	12,265
1984	3,738	12,238
1985	3,478	11,051
1986-87	4,263	13,317
1987-88	6,490	14,191
1988-89	6,633	14,983
1989-90	6,572	15,790
1990-91	6,689	19,079

[1] 1975-1985 calendar years commencing 1st January 1986-87—1990-91 financial years commencing 1st April.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the staff, and at what grades, are in receipt of performance pay in the Health and Safety Executive; and what is the cost of these payments.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of staff in the Health and Safety Executive in receipt of performance pay is shown in the following table. The information is not readily available in the form requested. The cost of performance pay points vary slightly, an average cost, by grade, is shown.

Grade (listed according to scheme)	*Number of staff in receipt of performance pay*	*Cost (pa) £s*[1]
CPSA Performance Pay Scheme		
Administrative Assistant	16	5,088
Administrative Officer	214	80,678
Chief Typing Manager	1	648
Personal Secretary	95	37,050
Senior Personal Secretary	9	4,446
Typing Manager	8	4,088
Typist	109	34,662
NUCPS Performance Pay Scheme		
Executive Officer	116	72,616
Higher Executive Officer	116	90,828
Senior Executive Officer	32	30,688
IPMS Performance Pay Scheme		
Agricultural Inspector	45	48,735
Assistant Librarian	2	1,286
Employment Nursing Adviser	9	8,667
Graphics Officer	1	690
Higher Graphics Officer	1	807
Higher Photographic Officer	1	807
Higher Professional and Technology Officer	2	1,614
Higher Scientific Officer	16	12,416
Inspector 1B	77	83,391
Inspector of Quarries	1	1,083
Librarian	2	1,552
Photographic Officer	3	1,980
Professional and Technology Officer	1	690
Scientific Officer	12	7,716
Senior Professional and Technology Officer	3	3,003
Senior Scientific Officer	35	33,705
Specialist Inspector	10	11,040
Senior Information Officer	4	3,852
Grades 4–7 Performance Pay Scheme		
Deputy Chief Inspector of Agriculture	2	3,468
Deputy Chief Inspector of Factories	3	5,400
Deputy Director of Medical Services	1	1,870
Deputy Superintending Inspector (Factories)	23	37,858
Deputy Superintending Inspector of Agriculture	1	1,646
Employment Medical Adviser	9	15,444
Grade 4	1	2,052
Grade 5	18	31,608
Grade 6	17	28,696
Grade 7	59	83,898
Inspector 1A	110	162,690
Principal Agricultural Inspector	27	38,394
Principal Inspecting Officer	2	3,066
Principal Specialist Inspector	65	99,645
Senior Area Director	5	8,780
Senior Employment Medical Adviser	15	26,340
Superintending Inspector of Factories	13	22,542
Superintending Specialist Inspector B	6	10,404
Superintending Specialist Inspector C	5	8,440
Offshore Safety Specialists Performance Pay Scheme		
Petroleum Specialist I	1	1,042
Petroleum Specialist II	4	3,852
Petroleum Specialist III	6	5,100
Petroleum Specialist IV	7	5,992
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist III	1	962

[1] Average cost of performance pay point multiplied by the number of staff in receipt.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many redundancies are expected arising from the market testing privatisation of the electrical equipment certification service at Buxton, the graphics messenger, catering, security and any other internal services currently carried out at the Bootle or Baynards house headquarters of the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) catering services in Bootle and London are already contracted out.

No decision has been taken on the future status of HSE's electrical equipment certification service nor have planned market tests in any of the other areas of work mentioned progressed so far as to make it possible to assess whether redundancies might result.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give *(a)* the total number, *(b)* the subject area, *(c)* the reference number and *(d)* the results of the cases taken to an industrial tribunal under the Safety Representative and Safety Committee Regulations 1977 for each year since 1974.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 came into force on

1 October 1978. Central statistics are available only for applications registered, and before 1983 these were not broken down by subject. The following table dealing with industrial tribunal cases in England, Scotland and Wales under these regulations gives information on the outcome of applications which is readily available.

Year[1]	*Applications registered*		*Applications dealt with*[2]	*Outcomes and case numbers*[2]
	Failure to permit time off	*Failure to pay for time off*		
1978[3]	2		0	
1979	30		5	2 upheld (18410/79, other ref. no. unknown) 3 dismissed (4328/79, S/2134/79, 2206/79)
1980	12		5	3 upheld (30764/79, 24773/79, 2821/80), 2 dismissed (34330/79, 1812/80)
1981	7		4	1 dismissed (22636/80) 3 withdrawn (18211-3/80)
1982	28		11	10 upheld (38773/81, 1101-9/82), 1 dismissed (5218/82)
1983	7	13	6	5 upheld but overturned[4] (16511-5/83) 1 withdrawn (24705/83)
1984	6	4	8	1 upheld (27568/83), 1 dismissed (4476/84) 6 withdrawn (2503/84, 12362/84, 17036/84, 13902/84, 3955/84, 21797/84)
1985	4	3	6	3 dismissed (972/85, 9250-1/85), 3 withdrawn (8984/85, 13947-8/85)
1986	4	1	1	agreement reached (1398/86)
1987	3	1	4	1 upheld (13805/87), 1 no award (36051/86), 2 withdrawn (205/87, 18960/87)
1988	4	2	3	withdrawn (17958/88, 18177/88, 17090/88)
1989	9	3	14	4 upheld (3901/89, 8887/89, 13301/89, 16897/89), 2 dismissed (732-3/89) 6 withdrawn (24688/88, 22896/88, 5513/89, S/1551/89, 4126/89, 7167/89), 2 agreement reached (1847/88, 15877/89)
1990	5	6	5	3 dismissed (23523/89, 10462/90, 21213/90), 2 withdrawn (1190/90, 8398/90)
1991	7	7	4	2 withdrawn (33497/90, 17831/91), 1 agreement reached (26692/90), 1 dismissed (26784/91)
1992[5]	4	1	4	withdrawn (43283/91, 48365/91, 34584/91, 34593/91)

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will establish an inquiry into the recruitment and promotion activities within the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Employment, has no plans to establish an inquiry into the recruitment and promotion activities within the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will place in the Library copies of the Health and Safety Executive's field operations division plan of work for 1993-94 and beyond.

Mr. McLoughlin: Divisional plans of work are internal documents which are discussed with the executive and are used to prepare the Health and Safety Commission's plan of work.

The commission's plan of work for 1993-94 will be submitted to the Secretary of State for approval and published in spring. A copy will as usual be placed in the Library.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to allow the TECs more flexibility within their training budgets so that they can pay higher unit placement rates to the providers of quality engineering training.

Mr. McLoughlin: TECs have the flexibility to allocate funds to their training providers in the light of local labour market conditions and needs. A TEC is free to take into consideration the differing costs of training in the various occupational categories when determining the payment arrangements for each of its training providers.

Private Detectives

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on how many occasions since 1979 her Department has engaged private detective agencies to investigate the activities of British citizens; and if she will list the date and purpose of each investigation.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Employment Department group has not engaged private detective agencies since 1979.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Citizens Charter

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to publish new citizens charters; and if he will list the areas to be covered.

Mr. Waldegrave: The citizens charter is a programme of continuous improvement. As targets are set and met, they will be reviewed and improved upon. We will also look to extend service standards into new areas of public service. We plan in the next year to publish a courts charter for England and Wales; a further and higher education charter; a revised parents charter, including improved standards of service; a revised Customs and Excise travellers charter; and heritage charters, to be issued by Cadw, Welsh Historic Monuments and Historic Scotland.

The patients charter will be extended to cover primary health care.

In addition, the following charters will be published in Northern Ireland: a bus passengers charter; Royal Ulster Constabulary charter; and a Northern Ireland courts service charter.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all those public bodies that have published charters as part of the citizens charter initiative.

Mr. Waldegrave: The following public bodies have published charters as part of the citizens charter initiative:

British Rail	Passengers charter
Her Majesty's Customs and Excise	Taxpayers charter Travellers charter
Department for Education	Parents charter
Employment Department	Redundancy payments service charter
Employment Service	Jobseekers charter
Department of the Environment	Tenants charter
Department of Health	Patients charter
Inland Revenue	Taxpayers charter
London Underground	London Underground customers charter
Social Security Benefits Agency	Benefits Agency customer charter
Social Security Contributions Agency	Contributors charter Employers charter
Northern Ireland	
Department of Finance and Personnel, Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland charter
Department of Education for Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland parents charter
Department of Health and Social Services, Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland charter for patients and clients
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	Northern Ireland tenants charter
Northern Ireland Railways	Northern Ireland railways passengers charter
Northern Ireland Social Security Agency	Northern Ireland charter for Social Security Agency clients
Training and Employment Agency Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland Training and Employment Agency customers charter
Scotland	
Scottish Office	Justice charter for Scotland Parents charter for Scotland Patients charter for Scotland Tenants charter for Scotland
Wales	
Welsh Office	Parents charter for Wales Patients charter for Wales Tenants charter for Wales

Charter Marks

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what account is taken of whether local authorities have had their community charge capped in deciding on their eligibility to apply for a charter mark award.

Mr. Waldegrave: The charter mark scheme is open to public sector organisations. The only criteria for eligibility are that the organisation provides a direct service to the public, and is managerially and financially autonomous.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government in respect of requiring there to be an in-house bid against which private sector bids will have to compete in any market test of central Government functions or services.

Mr. Waldegrave: In-house staff are encouraged to put forward bids for market tested functions on the same basis and in the same time scale as private sector contractors. Managers are given as much flexibility as possible to propose value for money improvements in service delivery. Internal and external bids are assessed against the same criteria.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list those agencies in his Department which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Agencies

174. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, if he will place in the Library a copy of the health and safety policy of each of the agencies within his Department.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The chief executives of the Central Office of Information, the Civil Service College, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, the Occupational Health Service and the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency are responsible for health and safety policy within their agencies.

I am placing in the Library copies of the health and safety policies applying in the Central Office of Information and Her Majesty's Stationery Office. I am also placing in the Library a copy of volumn IV of the Cabinet Office staff handbook, which contains the Cabinet Office's health and safety policy. This will continue to apply in the Civil Service College, the Occupational Health Service and the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency until separate health and safety policies have been developed and put in place.

Mr. Robert Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on 17 November *Official Report*, column *104*. The procedures I outlined there will apply to the five executive agencies for which I am responsible—the Central Office of Information, the Civil Service College, HMSO, the Occupational Health Service and Recruitment and Assessment Services. An announcement about the future status of each agency will be made at the appropriate time.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list those executive agencies that have amended their original framework documents since their establishment.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 19 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *685*. While this is primarily a matter for departmental Ministers and chief executives of the agencies for which they are responsible, I understand that the following agencies have had their original framework documents amended: Companies House; the Patent Office; the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre; and the Vehicle Inspectorate.

DEFENCE

Chemical Weapons Convention

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the function of the Porton Down chemical defence establishment once the chemical weapons convention has been signed and ratified; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: After ratification of the chemical weapons convention the chemical and biological defence establishment, Porton Down will still need to carry out research and development in order to provide effective protection measures for the United Kingdom armed forces against the threat of chemical or biological weapons. This defensive capability will complement the deterrent effect of the convention. In this field as well as in its continuing activities in support of chemical and biological arms control, the establishment will contribute to our security in a period when large quantities of chemical weapons will be awaiting destruction and some countries of concern may still be outside the regime.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which facility will be chosen as the United Kingdom's single small-scale facility under the terms of the chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We expect this to be a specialist laboratory and associated storage buildings at the chemical and biological defence establishment at Porton Down.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which chemicals or chemical precursors that are subject to export controls exercised by the Australia Group are not covered by the present text of the chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The text of the chemical weapons convention prohibits chemical weapons. This includes all toxic chemicals and their precursors unless intended, and in appropriate types and quantities, for permitted purposes. The convention therefore covers all the toxic chemical precursors subject to Australia group controls, although 18 of these chemicals are not subject to the declaration requirements and monitoring regime of the chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the entire site of the United Kingdom's chosen single small-scale facility will be subject to safeguards under the terms of the chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This is a matter delegated to the chemical and biological defence establishment under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from Dr. Graham S. Pearson to Mr. Calum Macdonald, dated 18 November 1992:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking if the entire site of the United Kingdom's chosen single small-scale facility will be subject to safeguards under the terms of the Chemical Weapons Convention (Question 20, Order Paper 10 November 1992) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The single small-scale facility to be declared under the Chemical Weapons Convention is likely to be a small area within the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment in which small quantities of Schedule 1 chemicals are prepared and stored. These small amounts of Schedule 1 chemicals are required to enable the United Kingdom to carry out its programme to provide effective protective measure for members of the United Kingdom Armed Forces against the threat that they may be exposed to chemical or biological weapons.

3. The area within the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment declared as the United Kingdom's small-scale facility will be subject to inspection and monitoring in accordance with the terms of the Chemical Weapons Convention concerning such small-scale facilities.

4. The remainder of the site of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, as for any other site within the United Kingdom, will be liable to inspection under other provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Royal Naval Reserve

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the future viability of the Royal Naval Reserve;

(2) if he will make it his policy that the Royal Naval Reserve will continue to have a seagoing role.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) on 13 November 1992 at column *1007-08*.

Reserve Forces

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of his Department's tri-service study of the reserves which was completed in February.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The main conclusions and proposals of the Regular/Reserve Force mix study were published in March 1992 in the open government document "The Future of Britain's Reserve Forces", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Only those elements of the study that are classified on security grounds were not included in the open government document.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the health and safety policy of each of the agencies within his Department.

Mr. Aitken: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Gentleman.

RAF Welford

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what proportion of the munitions currently stored at RAF Welford are now unstable;

(2) what studies have been undertaken regarding the safe disposal of unstable munitions at RAF Welford.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no unstable munitions at RAF Welford. The need for studies into their safe disposal does not therefore arise.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future use of RAF Welford.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United States Department of Defense has already announced plans for the partial return of RAF Welford to MOD control in December 1992. The MOD is considering whether there is a continuing defence requirement for that part of the site which is being returned. No decisions have yet been taken.

RNSD Eaglescliffe

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will set out the differences between budget and outturn figures in each of the last five years for MEE and MES expenditure mentioned in annex A, paragraph 17, page A2 of the consultation paper on the future of RNSD Eaglescliffe;

(2) if he will specify the tasks to be undertaken by the 15 additional managerial staff grade liaison posts mentioned in annex A, paragraph 16, page A4 of the consultation document on the future of RNSD Eaglescliffe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Bosnia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British helicopter gunships have been deployed to protect United Kingdom forces escorting those supplying humanitarian relief, by road or air, in Bosnia; and how many British fighter aircraft have been deployed to Bosnia to monitor air exclusion zones and other duties.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No helicopter gunships or fighter aircraft have been deployed to Bosnia in support of the United Kingdom contingent or any other element of the UN protection force. The United Kingdom is taking part in surveillance and monitoring activity by the NATO airborne early warning force which is supporting the naval monitoring operation in the Adriatic and is monitoring compliance with Security Council resolution 781.

Iraq

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the information available to him from aircraft surveillance about the deployment and operations of Iraqi ground forces in southern Iraq.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: RAF Tornado operations, in association with those of our coalition partners, confirm that the Iraqi army is deployed in considerable strength in southern Iraq. There is some indication of small-scale activity around the periphery of the marshlands but no evidence of any renewal of major offensive operations.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost to the United Kingdom so far of monitoring Iraqi compliance with United Nations resolution 688; and whether the United Kingdom will receive any financial assistance to cover the costs of monitoring Iraqi compliance with United Nations resolution 688.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: So far the United Kingdom has committed additional expenditure of some £11 million on operations to ensure Iraqi compliance with United Nations resolution 688. At present the United Kingdom has not received any financial assistance with these costs.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if there have been any occasions when Iraqi anti-aircraft radar has locked on to RAF flights operating over southern Iraq under United Nations resolutions.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to release operational details of this sort.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the source of the technology used by the Iraqi defence industry to manufacture artillery shells.

Mr. Aitken: On the evidence available over 20 countries, including the United Kingdom, provided Iraq with dual-use technology which could have been used in the manufacture of artillery or other weapons systems.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many sorties have been flown by RAF *(a)* Tornado GR1, *(b)* Tornado GR1a and *(c)* VC-10 aircraft monitoring Iraqi compliance with United Nations resolution 688 since 27 August.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Between 27 August 1992 and 16 November 1992 the RAF has flown the following numbers of sorties in respect of the no-fly zone over Iraq south of 32 degrees:

	Sorties
(a) Tornado GR1	87
(b) Tornado GR1a	47
(c) VC-10	85

Matrix Churchill

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessments have been made by his Department of the effect that the activities of the Matrix Churchill company have had on the development of the Iraqi defence industry.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has studied the Iraqi defence industry and its military procurement activity. No specific study, however, has been undertaken on the effect of the activities of individual United Kingdom companies on the development of the Iraqi defence industry.

Helicopters

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *510*, if he expects to place further orders for *(a)* EH101, *(b)* Lynx and *(c)* Sea King helicopters; when he expects those orders to be placed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The EH101 is being considered as an option for the support helicopter role, though we will not be in a position to take a procurement decision for some time. We have no plans to place further orders for Lynx. I announced the award of a contract for six new Sea King SAR helicopters on 28 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *710*. The delivery date for these is 1995. There are no current plans for further Sea King orders.

Overseas Operations

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answers of 28 October, *Official Report*, columns *711-12*, if he will explain the circumstances under which the Foreign Office subsequently refunds the costs of overseas operations incurred by his Department; and how this related to the costs of Operation Granby.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In accordance with established inter-departmental arrangements, MOD seeks the reimbursement of costs from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for overseas military operations which support United Nations peacekeeping activities. Where operational assistance is provided to friendly countries, as in the case of Operation Granby, the cost falls to MOD.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what use his Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department uses one firm of process servers, who are also private detectives, but only in connection with the serving of legal documents. These documents are statutory demands and bankruptcy petitions for unpaid national insurance contributions and overpayments of benefit. The name of the firm used is being withheld for reasons of commercial confidence. Such information as is available is in the table.

	Times used	*Cost £*
1991	2,289	111,837·69
1990	1,555	68,002·97
1989	920	45,115·24

Domiciliary Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will uprate benefits made available to purchase domiciliary care, to take VAT into account.

Mr. Burt: There are no benefits that are specifically to cover the cost of domiciliary care: it is up to the individual to decide how best to spend any benefit he receives. However, attendance allowance and the care components of disability living allowance are available to people who need personal care. Similarly, the severe disability premium in income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit is available to severely disabled people who live alone and who are, therefore, likely to need to buy in care. These benefits are uprated regularly and the indices used reflect the movement in prices, inclusive of VAT.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the cost of *(a)* raising the level of invalid care allowance to that of (i) retirement pension, (ii) unemployment benefit and (iii) two thirds national average earnings, *(b)*(i) increasing the earnings limit for invalid care allowance to the lower earnings limit for paying national insurance contributions and (ii) abolishing the earnings limit for invalid care allowance altogether and *(c)* continuing payment of invalid care allowance to carers for a period of (i) eight weeks and (ii) six months after they have finished caring.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the tables.

	£ million
a. The estimated cost of raising the level of invalid care allowance in 1992-93 to that of	
i. Retirement pension	156
ii. Unemployment benefit	79
iii. two thirds national average earnings	1,284
c. The estimated cost of paying invalid care allowance after caring ceases for	
i. eight weeks	8·2
ii. six months	26·5

Note: Data are not available on the number of potential claimants with earnings above the current earnings limit.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the cost of *(a)* extending entitlement to the carer premium in income support to carers over 65 years who could establish underlying entitlement to invalid care allowance, *(b)* extending entitlement to invalid care allowance to those caring for a person who receives the lower rate care component of the disability living allowance and *(c)* restoring credits for short-term national insurance benefits through invalid care allowance.

Mr. Scott: Entitlement to the carer premium in income support depends upon entitlement to invalid care allowance which cannot be established after age 65. Data are not available to estimate the cost of extending the carer premium in this way.

The estimated cost of extending entitlement to invalid care allowance to those caring for a person who receives the lower rate component of disability living allowance would depend on the number of such beneficiaries who receive at least 35 hours care per week. The estimated maximum cost of this measure would be around £130 million in 1992-93.

Depending on eligibility criteria, credits already available to invalid care allowance recipients enable them to qualify for certain short-term national insurance benefits.

War Pensions

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when, following the judgment on 10 July in Regina *v* Secretary of State ex parte Edwards, he will revise the entitlement of those qualified by virtue of a diagnosis similar to or the same as in that case; how many claimants will be entitled to arrears of pension as a result of this revision and at what total cost; what steps his Department will take to inform claimants or potential claimants of their revised entitlement; and how soon arrears will be paid to those entitled to receive them.

Miss Widdecombe: A letter is to be sent to members of the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions asking them to advise ex-service men and women that arrears may be payable to those awarded a war pension as a result of schizophrenia. Cases will be reviewed and any arrears paid once the War Pensions Directorate is made aware of appropriate cases. Information on the number of claimants who will benefit is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Private Detectives

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on how many occasions since 1979 his Department has engaged private detective agencies to investigate the activities of British citizens; and if he will list the date and purpose of each investigation.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department has not since 1979 engaged any private detective agencies to investigate the activities of British citizens.

Benefits Agency, Lancashire

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to re-establish a Benefits Agency service in Darwen, Lancashire.

Mr. Burt: The provision of service outlets is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Ms. Janet Anderson, dated 17 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security concerning plans to re-establish a Benefits Agency service in Darwen, Lancashire.

Surveys show that, increasingly, many of our customers prefer not to visit offices for advice or information but to telephone or write instead. However, a significant number of customers still feel happier conducting their business in person. In Districts covering large geographical areas travelling to the relevant main office may be difficult. For this reason some Districts offer limited caller facilities at outstations, giving customers in more remote parts easier access to face to face advice and information.

Darwen falls in the area covered by the Benefits Agency's Blackburn and Accrington District. I should explain that a DHSS (as it then was) caller outstation existed in Darwen up to 1985, when lack of demand for the facility led to its closure.

Recent planning exercises by the Blackburn and Accrington District, which involved consulting customers and other interested parties, showed that customer service could be improved by the re-establishment of an outstation in Darwen. Proposals for this have now been incorporated in the District's strategic plan for the next three years. There are, as you will appreciate, competing calls on a limited capital expenditure budget, and regrettably there can be no guarantee that the proposal will come to fruition in the next year or two. An alternative may be to use space in the Employment Services' office in Darwen, and this option is being looked at.

What I can say is that management and staff within the District are fully committed to the Agency's core value of Customer Service, and are determined to provide the service their customers want wherever possible. I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Community Care

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, columns *815-16*, how much community care grant aid for child support remains available at *(a)* Sheffield West and *(b)* Sheffield East local offices at the latest available date.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mrs. Helen Jackson, dated 17 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about community care grant (CCG) funds in Sheffield West and Sheffield East Districts.

CCGs are available to people who are receiving Income Support and people who are likely to receive Income Support on discharge from care, to help promote care in the community. This can include help for people to remain in the community rather than to enter institutional or residential care, help for people leaving such care and entering the community, and for families under exceptional pressure.

Allocations are made annually to each District for CCGs. District allocations are not divided between different categories of applicant. Details of allocations outstanding at the end of each month, for each Benefit Agency District, are placed in the Library.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report. Copies of this letter are also being placed in the Library.

SCOTLAND

Electricity Generation

17. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the electricity generating regime for Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The electricity industry in Scotland has access to electricity generated from diverse sources—coal, nuclear, oil, gas and hydro. In terms of the nuclear energy agreement, Scottish Power and Scottish Hydro-Electric purchase for 15 years all the output from Scottish Nuclear Ltd., which remains in the public sector.

Radioactive Waste

18. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the long-term storage of waste radioactive material from sites in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: There is no long-term storage of radioactive waste material in Scotland from sites in Scotland. Some Scottish generated radioactive waste is transported to England for interim storage and final disposal. Quantities of such waste are also stored at various Scottish nuclear sites on an interim basis pending ultimate disposal.

Water

19. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to consult the general public with regard to water privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the statement on the future of the water and sewerage services in Scotland I made yesterday.

30. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his reasons for considering water privatisation in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made yesterday.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the most recent estimate of the total level of capital investment required to meet the EC municipal waste water treatment directive by each water authority.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* The estimated cost of capital investment required to meet the EC urban waste water treatment directive in each regional and islands council area is given in the table:

Authority	*Estimated expenditure*[1] *(£ thousand)*
Borders	31,410
Central	13,299
Dumfries and Galloway	52,140
Fife	102,872
Grampian	219,330
Highland	81,053
Lothian	153,748
Strathclyde	421,704
Tayside	211,566
Orkney	17,550
Shetland	7,771
Western Isles	12,000
Scotland Total	1,324,443

[1] Figures based on authorities' estimates, August 1992.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of capital expenditure on *(a)* water supply, *(b)* sewerage and sewerage treatment and *(c)* total water and sewerage at (i) current prices and (ii) constant 1991-92 prices—using the GDP deflator—for each year since 1980-81 by each water authority and in total for Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* Capital expenditure for water and sewerage services by regional councils for the period 1980-81 to 1991-92 is given in the tables. Separate water and sewerage figures by authority prior to 1985-86 are not available.

(a) Capital expenditure on water supply

£ thousand

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
BORDERS						
Cash prices	1,147	1,285	879	966	1,618	2,089
1991-92 prices	1,653	1,792	1,163	1,192	1,873	2,235
CENTRAL						
Cash prices	2,335	2,531	1,902	2,347	3,307	2,377
1991-92 prices	3,364	3,531	2,516	2,896	3,828	2,543
DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY						
Cash prices	1,477	2,167	1,896	1,662	3,426	3,612
1991-92 prices	2,128	3,023	2,508	2,051	3,966	3,865
FIFE						
Cash prices	3,067	2,803	3,286	3,417	3,266	3,449
1991-92 prices	4,419	3,910	4,347	4,216	3,781	3,690
GRAMPIAN						
Cash prices	6,754	6,651	6,643	8,974	8,393	11,528
1991-92 prices	9,731	9,278	8,789	11,072	12,335	
HIGHLAND						
Cash prices	1,896	1,515	2,657	3,364	2,880	3,633
1991-92 prices	2,732	2,113	3,515	4,151	3,334	3,887
LOTHIAN						
Cash prices	5,246	6,079	7,205	7,722	7,269	6,656
1991-92 prices	7,558	8,480	9,532	9,528	8,415	7,122

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
STRATHCLYDE						
Cash prices	12,220	13,534	15,781	17,311	21,147	23,371
1991-92 prices	17,606	18,879	20,878	21,359	24,480	25,007
TAYSIDE						
Cash prices	3,817	4,544	2,462	3,949	6,627	4,520
1991-92 prices	5,499	6,339	3,257	4,872	7,672	4,836
ORKNEY						
Cash prices	391	842	675	1,042	804	1,118
1991-92 prices	563	1,175	893	1,286	931	1,196
SHETLAND						
Cash prices	338	285	125	540	596	228
1991-92 prices	487	398	165	666	690	244
WESTERN ISLES						
Cash prices	267	178	330	760	297	576
1991-92 prices	385	248	437	938	344	616
SCOTLAND TOTAL[1]						
Cash prices	40,230	43,920	45,951	54,072	61,991	66,037
1991-92 prices	57,963	61,265	60,793	66,716	71,763	70,660

[1] Totals include expenditure by Central Scotland Water Development Board.

(b) Capital expenditure on sewerage

£ thousand

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-897*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
BORDERS						
Cash prices	1,033	826	1,206	1,453	1,073	1,899
1991-92 prices	1,488	1,152	1,596	1,793	1,242	2,032
CENTRAL						
Cash prices	2,565	2,838	2,918	2,886	2,254	5,968
1991-92 prices	3,696	3,959	3,861	3,561	2,609	6,386
DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY						
Cash prices	1,542	1,338	1,419	1,995	2,063	2,821
1991-92 prices	2,222	1,866	1,877	2,462	2,388	3,018
FIFE						
Cash prices	2,776	3,568	3,823	4,905	5,488	6,724
1991-92 prices	4,000	4,977	5,058	6,052	6,353	7,195
GRAMPIAN						
Cash prices	9,815	10,503	9,095	7,772	5,484	8,429
1991-92 prices	14,141	14,651	12,033	9,589	6,348	9,019
HIGHLAND						
Cash prices	2,181	3,346	2,744	3,612	4,424	5,578
1991-92 prices	3,142	4,667	3,630	4,457	5,121	5,968
LOTHIAN						
Cash prices	7,466	7,474	5,727	6,652	10,112	11,110
1991-92 prices	10,757	10,426	7,577	8,208	11,706	11,888
STRATHCLYDE						
Cash prices	19,955	21,455	19,639	20,563	27,094	27,060
1991-92 prices	28,751	29,928	25,982	25,371	31,365	28,954
TAYSIDE						
Cash prices	5,094	6,003	4,224	5,764	5,485	7,257
1991-92 prices	7,339	8,374	5,588	7,112	6,350	7,765
ORKNEY						
Cash prices	75	49	371	213	329	354
1991-92 prices	108	68	491	263	381	379
SHETLAND						
Cash prices	331	486	571	130	471	203
1991-92 prices	477	678	755	160	545	217
WESTERN ISLES						
Cash prices	481	1,021	878	583	1,140	1,096
1991-92 prices	693	1,424	1,162	719	1,320	1,173

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-897*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Scotland						
Cash prices	53,314	58,907	52,615	56,528	65,417	78,499
1991-92 prices	76,814	82,170	69,609	69,747	75,729	83,994

(c) Capital expenditure on water and sewerage

£ thousand

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Borders											
Cash prices	1,491	1,588	1,809	1,903	2,058	2,180	2,111	2,085	2,418	2,691	3,988
1991-92 prices	2,925	2,841	3,022	3,038	3,129	3,141	2,945	2,758	2,983	3,115	4,267
Central											
Cash prices	3,479	4,612	4,666	5,444	4,887	4,900	5,369	4,820	5,233	5,561	8,345
1991-92 prices	6,826	8,252	7,794	8,691	7,430	7,060	7,489	6,377	6,457	6,438	8,929
Dumfries and Galloway											
Cash prices	1,900	2,220	2,212	2,610	2,526	3,019	3,505	3,315	3,657	5,489	6,433
1991-92 prices	3,728	3,972	3,695	4,166	3,840	4,350	4,889	4,386	4,512	6,354	6,883
Fife											
Cash prices	5,354	6,585	6,691	5,976	5,588	5,843	6,371	7,109	8,322	6,754	10,173
1991-92 prices	10,505	11,783	11,176	9,540	8,495	8,419	8,887	9,405	10,268	10,134	10,885
Grampian											
Cash prices	10,809	14,812	12,802	15,996	18,216	16,569	17,154	15,738	16,746	13,877	19,957
1991-92 prices	21,208	26,504	21,384	25,535	27,694	23,872	23,928	20,821	20,662	16,064	21,354
Highland											
Cash prices	4,061	4,919	5,229	6,213	5,491	4,077	4,861	5,401	6,976	7,304	9,211
1991-92 prices	7,968	8,802	8,734	9,918	8,348	5,874	6,781	7,146	8,607	8,455	9,856
Lothian											
Cash prices	17,489	13,661	12,104	13,132	12,676	12,712	13,553	12,932	14,374	17,381	17,766
1991-92 prices	34,315	24,444	20,218	20,963	19,271	18,315	18,905	17,109	17,735	20,121	19,010
Strathclyde											
Cash prices	32,976	34,274	27,238	33,620	30,350	32,175	34,989	35,420	37,874	48,241	50,431
1991-92 prices	64,702	61,327	45,497	53,669	46,141	46,357	48,807	46,861	46,731	55,845	53,961
Tayside											
Cash prices	7,078	6,924	7,317	8,104	10,841	8,911	10,547	6,686	9,713	12,111	11,777
1991-92 prices	13,888	12,389	12,222	12,937	16,482	12,839	14,712	8,846	11,984	14,021	12,601
Orkney											
Cash prices	503	458	969	1,041	1,050	466	891	1,046	1,255	1,133	1,472
1991-92 prices	987	820	1,619	1,662	1,596	671	1,243	1,384	1,548	1,312	1,575
Shetland											
Cash prices	1,523	640	710	421	822	669	771	696	670	1,067	431
1991-92 prices	2,988	1,145	1,186	672	1,250	964	1,075	921	827	1,235	461
Western Isles											
Cash prices	683	1,165	707	893	823	748	1,199	1,208	1,343	1,437	1,672
1991-92 prices	1,340	2,085	1,181	1,426	1,251	1,078	1,673	1,598	1,657	1,664	1,789
Scotland[1]											
Cash prices	87,804	92,104	83,511	95,353	96,242	93,544	102,827	98,566	110,599	127,408	144,536
1991-92 prices	172,278	164,804	139,491	152,217	146,316	134,777	143,435	130,402	136,462	147,492	154,654

[1] Totals include expenditure by Central Scotland Water Development Board.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of *(a)* capital debt outstanding and *(b)* total loan charges for (i) water supply, (ii) sewerage and sewerage treatment and (iii) water and sewerage in each year since 1988 in each water authority in Scotland, and in total for Scotland.

Sir Hector Munro *[holding answer 16 November 1992]*: Details of capital debt and loan charges for water and sewerage services by regional council and for Scotland from 1988-89 to 1990-91, the lastest figures available, are given in the tables.

(a) Level of Debt and Loan Charges for Water

£ thousand

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Borders			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	9·14	10·10	11·54
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	1,379	1,569	1,804

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Central			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	21·60	23·30	24·31
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	3,064	3,290	3,743
Dumfries and Galloway			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	12·73	15·50	17·50
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	1,766	1,933	2,386
Fife			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	32·02	33·50	35·29
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	4,278	4,683	5·011
Grampian			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	63·00	67·80	75·31
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	8,502	9,099	9,860
Highland			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	16·94	17·60	18·36
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	2,579	2,811	3,027
Lothian			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	88·81	93·60	124·81
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	9,872	10,446	12,094
Strathclyde			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	129·49	142·90	149·73
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	18,735	20,352	22,999
Tayside			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	27·78	32·80	34·16
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	4,040	5,128	5,827
Orkney			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	3·23	0·00	0·70
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	368	91	0
Shetland			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	0·23	0·20	0·00
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	1,075	101	95
Western Isles			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	3·05	3·20	3·74
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	616	782	339
Scotland			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	408·03	440·50	495·45
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	56,274	60,285	67,145

(b) Level of Debt and Loan Charges for Sewerage

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Borders			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	9·89	10·56	11·47
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	1,377	1,626	1,931
Central			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	28·86	29·55	34·03
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	4,185	4,434	4,820
Dumfries and Galloway			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	13·78	15·22	18·39
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	1,850	2,034	2,295
Fife			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	29·15	32·90	37·45
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	3,885	4,495	5,565
Grampian			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	81·58	82·10	84·00
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	11,308	11,412	11,478
Highland			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	25·10	27·52	30·10
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	3,584	3,968	4,446
Lothian			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	95·03	102·69	110·20
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	10,936	12,474	13,712
Strathclyde			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	228·27	243·73	241·88
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	32,007	33,359	36,092
Tayside			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	44·75	48·13	56·72
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	6,154	6,950	7,676
Orkney			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	0·00	0·00	0·00
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	213	309	0
Shetland			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	0·00	0·00	0·00
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	2,661	0	0
Western Isles			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	4·81	3·50	5·33
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	632	750	1,050
Scotland			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	561·22	595·92	627·56
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	78,792	81,811	89,065

(c) Level of debt and loan charges for water and sewerage

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Borders			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	19·03	20·66	23·01
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	2,756	3,195	3,735
Central			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	50·46	52·85	58·34
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	7,249	7,724	8,563
Dumfries and Galloway			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	26·51	30·72	33·89
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	3,616	3,967	4,681
Fife			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	61·17	66·40	72·74
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	8,163	9,178	10,576
Grampian			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	144·58	149·90	159·31
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	19,810	20,511	21,338
Highland			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	42·04	45·12	48·46
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	6,163	6,779	7,473
Lothian			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	183·4	196·29	235·01
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	20,808	22,920	25,806
Strathclyde			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	357·77	386·63	391·63
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	50,742	53,711	59,051
Tayside			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	72·53	80·93	90·88
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	10,194	12,078	13,503
Orkney			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	3·23	0·00	0·70
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	581	400	0
Shetland			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	0·23	0·20	0·00
Loan charges *(£ thousand)*	3,736	101	95
Western Isles			
Level of debt *(£ million)*	7·86	6·70	9·07

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Loan charges (£ thousand)	1,248	1,532	1,389
SCOTLAND			
Level of debt (£ million)	969·25	1,036·42	1,123·01
Loan charges (£ thousand)	135,066	142,096	156,210

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate his Department has made of the value of fixed assets and property held by each water authority.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* Details of water authorities' fixed assets and property are not held centrally and no estimate of their value is available.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the unmeasured *(a)* water charge, *(b)* notional sewerage element and *(c)* total household water charges for each year since 1989-90 in the area covered by each water authority.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* Water and sewerage is not charged on a household basis. Costs are met from the community water charges and, for domestic sewerage, through the community charge arrangements. Estimates of average expenditure on water and sewerage per household in each regional and islands council area are given in the tables.

(a) Average Expenditure on Water per Household

£

Authority	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Borders	56·82	49·16	52·32	70·71
Central	27·56	26·73	27·28	36·42
Dumfries	49·92	60·27	56·64	63·87
Fife	31·71	23·88	36·30	43·51
Grampian	52·10	54·57	67·11	69·75
Highland	31·12	40·47	54·29	59·86
Lothian	32·83	33·92	45·66	52·94
Strathclyde	34·49	37·22	51·29	58·03
Tayside	35·69	34·57	42·64	45·82
Orkney	37·13	44·56	75·18	81·99
Shetland	11·40	67·06	72·49	76·11
Western Isles	61·18	78·14	86·19	97·79
Scotland	36·23	38·49	49·65	56·26

(b) Average Expenditure on Sewerage per Household

£

Authority	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Borders	49·25	55·34	60·33	66·42
Central	41·20	40·95	48·05	48·76
Dumfries	38·45	47·59	54·34	60·42
Fife	31·39	30·09	35·72	39·28
Grampian	41·11	40·63	49·65	47·50
Highland	36·25	38·96	42·25	47·58
Lothian	37·65	38·02	46·37	46·61
Strathclyde	35·45	37·05	40·31	43·50
Tayside	34·78	34·30	46·03	48·32
Orkney	20·74	27·45	29·25	31·29
Shetland	28·57	26·95	38·36	43·66
Western Isles	42·33	56·62	60·93	69·64
Scotland	36·69	37·78	43·65	45·99

(c) Average expenditure on water and sewerage combined per household

£

Authority	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Borders	106·07	104·50	112·66	137·13
Central	68·76	67·68	75·33	85·18
Dumfries	88·37	107·86	110·98	124·28
Fife	63·10	55·97	72·02	82·79
Grampian	93·21	95·20	116·76	117·25
Highland	67·37	79·43	96·53	107·44
Lothian	70·49	71·94	92·03	99·55
Strathclyde	69·94	74·27	91·60	101·54
Tayside	70·47	68·87	88·67	94·14
Orkney	57·87	72·00	104·43	113·28
Shetland	39·97	94·01	110·85	119·77
Western Isles	103·51	134·76	147·13	167·43
Scotland	72·92	76·26	93·30	102·25

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of operating costs for *(a)* water supply, *(b)* sewerage and sewerage treatment and *(c)* total water supply and sewerage treatment at (i) current prices and (ii) constant 1991-92 prices—using the GDP deflator—for each year since 1988-89 in each water authority and in total for Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* From local authority financial returns, the figures for gross expenditure less loan charges are given in the tables for water and for sewerage for each authority, at cash and constant 1991-92 prices. Figures for 1991-92 are not yet available.

(a) Operating costs for water

£ thousand

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
BORDERS			
Cash prices	2,227	4,069	3,579
1991-92 prices	2,748	4,708	3,830
CENTRAL			
Cash prices	8,485	9,013	9,881
1991-92 prices	10,470	10,428	10,573
DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY			
Cash prices	3,599	3,971	4,885
1991-92 prices	4,441	4,594	5,227
FIFE			
Cash prices	5,584	6,038	11,415
1991-92 prices	6,891	6,986	12,214
GRAMPIAN			
Cash prices	9,982	10,918	13,270
1991-92 prices	12,318	12,632	14,199
HIGHLAND			
Cash prices	4,620	5,079	6,311
1991-92 prices	5,701	5,876	6,753
LOTHIAN			
Cash prices	12,502	13,813	15,468
1991-92 prices	15,427	15,982	16,551
STRATHCLYDE			
Cash prices	49,315	54,701	53,638
1991-92 prices	60,855	63,289	57,393
TAYSIDE			
Cash prices	9,313	9,997	11,650
1991-92 prices	11,492	11,567	12,466

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Orkney			
Cash prices	1,044	1,086	1,342
1991-92 prices	1,288	1,257	1,436
Shetland			
Cash prices	965	1,460	1,330
1991-92 prices	1,191	1,689	1,423
Western Isles			
Cash prices	720	720	1,227
1991-92 prices	888	833	1,313
Scotland			
Cash prices	108,356	120,865	133,996
1991-92 prices	133,711	139,841	143,376

1991-92 prices established using the Gross Domestic Product Deflator.

(b) Operating costs for sewerage

£ thousand

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Borders			
Cash prices	1,902	2,178	3,942
1991-92 prices	2,347	2,520	4,218
Central			
Cash prices	4,974	5,752	6,632
1991-92 prices	6,138	6,655	7,096
Dumfries and Galloway			
Cash prices	2,279	2,710	3,186
1991-92 prices	2,812	3,135	3,409
Fife			
Cash prices	3,800	3,685	6,579
1991-92 prices	4,689	4,264	7,040
Grampian			
Cash prices	6,789	7,051	8,329
1991-92 prices	8,378	8,158	8,912
Highland			
Cash prices	2,456	2,633	3,680
1991-92 prices	3,031	3,046	3,938
Lothian			
Cash prices	10,502	14,683	13,914
1991-92 prices	12,959	16,988	14,888
Strathclyde			
Cash prices	33,860	38,417	42,233
1991-92 prices	41,783	44,448	45,189
Tayside			
Cash prices	4,086	4,555	5,875
1991-92 prices	5,042	5,270	6,286
Orkney			
Cash prices	86	130	525
1991-92 prices	106	150	562
Shetland			
Cash prices	115	545	401
1991-92 prices	142	631	429
Western Isles			
Cash prices	106	139	341
1991-92 prices	131	161	365
Scotland			
Cash prices	70,955	82,478	95,637
1991-92 prices	87,558	95,427	102,332

1991-92 prices established using the Gross Domestic Product Deflator.

(c) Operating costs for water and sewerage services combined

£ thousand

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Borders			
Cash prices	4,129	6,247	7,521
1991-92 prices	5,095	7,228	8,047
Central			
Cash prices	13,459	14,765	16,513
1991-92 prices	16,608	17,083	17,669
Dumfries and Galloway			
Cash prices	5,878	6,681	8,071
1991-92 prices	7,253	7,730	8,636
Fife			
Cash prices	9,384	9,723	17,997
1991-92 prices	11,580	11,250	19,254
Grampian			
Cash prices	16,771	17,969	21,599
1991-92 prices	20,695	20,790	23,111
Highland			
Cash prices	7,076	7,712	9,991
1991-92 prices	8,732	8,923	10,690
Lothian			
Cash prices	23,004	28,496	29,382
1991-92 prices	28,387	32,970	31,439
Strathclyde			
Cash prices	83,175	93,118	95,871
1991-92 prices	102,638	107,738	102,582
Tayside			
Cash prices	13,399	14,552	17,525
1991-92 prices	16,534	16,837	18,752
Orkney			
Cash prices	1,130	1,216	1,867
1991-92 prices	1,394	1,407	1,998
Shetland			
Cash prices	1,080	2,005	1,731
1991-92 prices	1,333	2,320	1,852
Western Isles			
Cash prices	826	859	1,568
1991-92 prices	1,019	994	1,678
Scotland			
Cash prices	179,311	203,343	229,633
1991-92 prices	221,270	235,268	245,707

1991-92 prices established using the Gross Domestic Product Deflator.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of gross revenue expenditure on *(a)* water supply, *(b)* sewerage and sewage treatment and *(c)* total water and sewerage at (i) current prices and (ii) constant 1991-92 prices—using the GDP deflator—for each year since 1988-89 by each water authority and in total for Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* Gross revenue expenditure on water and sewerage services by regional and islands councils and for Scotland from 1988-89 is given in the tables at cash prices and constant 1991-92 prices, for *(a)* water, *(b)* sewerage and *(c)* water and sewerage services combined. Figures for 1991-92 are not yet available.

(a) Gross revenue expenditure on water

£ thousand

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Borders			
Cash prices	3,606	5,638	5,383
1991-92 prices	4,449	6,527	5,760
Central			
Cash prices	11,549	12,303	13,624
1991-92 prices	14,250	14,242	14,578
Dumfries and Galloway			
Cash prices	5,365	5,904	7,271
1991-92 prices	6,620	6,835	7,780
Fife			
Cash prices	9,862	10,721	16,426
1991-92 prices	12,168	12,411	17,576
Grampian			
Cash prices	18,484	20,017	23,130
1991-92 prices	22,806	23,172	24,749
Highland			
Cash prices	7,199	7,890	9,338
1991-92 prices	8,882	9,134	9,992
Lothian			
Cash prices	22,374	24,259	27,562
1991-92 prices	27,606	28,083	29,491
Strathclyde			
Cash prices	68,050	75,053	76,597
1991-92 prices	83,963	86,884	81,959
Tayside			
Cash prices	13,353	15,125	17,477
1991-92 prices	16,475	17,509	18,700
Orkney			
Cash prices	1,412	1,177	1,342
1991-92 prices	1,742	1,363	1,436
Shetland			
Cash prices	2,040	1,561	1,425
1991-92 prices	2,517	1,807	1,525
Western Isles			
Cash prices	1,336	1,502	1,566
1991-92 prices	1,648	1,739	1,676
Scotland			
Cash prices	164,630	181,150	201,141
1991-92 prices	203,127	209,705	215,221

1991-92 prices established using the Gross Domestic Product Deflator.

(b) Gross revenue expenditure on sewerage

£ thousand

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Borders			
Cash prices	3,279	3,804	5,873
1991-92 prices	4,046	4,404	6,284
Central			
Cash prices	9,519	10,186	11,452
1991-92 prices	11,301	11,792	12,254
Dumfries and Galloway			
Cash prices	4,129	4,744	5,481
1991-92 prices	5,095	5,492	5,865
Fife			
Cash prices	7,246	8,180	12,144
1991-92 prices	8,940	9,469	12,994
Grampian			
Cash prices	18,097	18,463	19,807
1991-92 prices	22,329	21,373	21,193
Highland			
Cash prices	6,040	6,601	8,126
1991-92 prices	7,452	7,642	8,695
Lothian			
Cash prices	21,438	24,524	27,626
1991-92 prices	26,451	28,390	29,560
Strathclyde			
Cash prices	65,867	71,776	78,325
1991-92 prices	81,2269	83,090	83,808
Tayside			
Cash prices	10,240	11,505	13,551
1991-92 prices	12,635	13,319	14,500
Orkney			
Cash prices	307	439	525
1991-92 prices	379	508	562
Shetland			
Cash prices	2,776	545	400
1991-92 prices	3,425	631	428
Western Isles			
Cash prices	829	889	1,391
1991-92 prices	1,023	1,029	1,488
Scotland			
Cash prices	149,407	161,656	184,701
1991-92 prices	184,345	187,138	197,630

1991-92 prices established using the Gross Domestic Product Deflator.

(c) Gross revenue expenditure on water and sewerage services combined

£ thousand

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Borders			
Cash prices	6,885	9,442	11,256
1991-92 prices	8,495	10,930	12,044
Central			
Cash prices	20,708	22,489	25,076
1991-92 prices	25,550	26,034	26,831
Dumfries and Galloway			
Cash prices	9,494	10,648	12,752
1991-92 prices	11,714	12,326	13,645
Fife			
Cash prices	17,108	18,901	28,570
1991-92 prices	21,109	21,880	30,570
Grampian			
Cash prices	36,581	38,480	42,937
1991-92 prices	45,135	44,546	45,943
Highland			
Cash prices	13,239	14,491	17,464
1991-92 prices	16,335	16,775	18,686
Lothian			
Cash prices	43,812	48,783	55,188
1991-92 prices	54,057	56,473	59,051
Strathclyde			
Cash prices	133,917	146,829	154,922
1991-92 prices	165,232	169,974	165,767
Tayside			
Cash prices	23,593	26,630	31,028

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
1991-92 prices	29,110	30,828	33,200
ORKNEY			
Cash prices	1,719	1,616	1,867
1991-92 prices	2,121	1,871	1,998
SHETLAND			
Cash prices	4,816	2,106	1,825
1991-92 prices	5,942	2,438	1,953
WESTERN ISLES			
Cash prices	2,165	2,391	2,957
1991-92 prices	2,671	2,768	3,164
SCOTLAND			
Cash prices	314,037	342,806	385,842
1991-92 prices	387,472	396,843	412,851

1991-92 prices established using the Gross Domestic Product Deflator.

Assisted Areas

Ms. Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement concerning the review of assisted area status and its particular implications for the Dunfermline travel-to-work area.

Mr. Stewart: The needs and problems of all areas, including Dunfermline, are being carefully considered in the review of assisted area status. Decisions on the designation of particular areas will be informed by an analysis of data on a range of relevant factors and by the responses to the consultation paper which my right hon. Friend issued in June.

Caithness and Sutherland

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has plans to visit Caithness and Sutherland to discuss the future of the local economy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit Caithness and Sutherland at present.

Nimmo Smith/Friel Report

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Nimmo Smith/Friel report of their review of the cases mentioned in a report to the chief constable of the Lothian and Borders police.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Nimmo Smith and Mr. Friel have not as yet completed their investigation nor reported to my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate. It is therefore not appropriate at this stage to make any statement.

Transport Links

23. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he proposes for improving transport links between Scotland, the rest of the United Kingdom and the European Community.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend is undertaking a wide-ranging programme of trunk road improvements. The final sections to complete the dual carriageway link to Aberdeen are under construction and most significantly of all Scotland's main road artery south, the A74 is being totally reconstructed to extend the M6 north to Glasgow. My right hon. Friend is also working closely with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to encourage, where appropriate, improved rail, air and, sea links to and from Scotland.

SCE Higher Grade

24. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made with plans to replace the SCE higher grade examination.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Howie committee published early this year its thorough and comprehensive review of curriculum and examinations in the upper secondary school. The future of the highers is of the first significance for Scottish education, and our decision to allow a consultation period running to December has been welcomed. We shall decide the way forward thereafter.

Private Health Insurance

25. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy with regard to the availability of national health service facilities to private health care insurance companies.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has delegated authority to health boards and NHS trusts to decide on the number and location of private beds in NHS hospitals. Beds are provided only when NHS services are not prejudiced.

Sunday Trading

26. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has recently received about Sunday trading.

Mr. Stewart: Since June 1992, my right hon. Friend has received three separate representations from one individual in support of the present arrangements for Sunday trading in Scotland.

Larne-Stranraer Ferry

27. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to upgrade road and rail links with Stranraer, to link with the increased use of the Larne-Stranraer ferry crossing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office has already made significant progress in improving the trunk road network in the south west of Scotland. The A75 has been substantially upgraded in recent years. However, to alleviate some remaining operating difficulties further work is planned to improve safety and overtaking opportunities. In conjunction with the Department of Transport, my right hon. Friend and I will continue to ensure that the transport infrastructure needs of the area are fully identified.

Hospitals

29. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the public consultation process regarding applications for national health service trust status in the Argyll and Clyde health board area.

Mr. Stewart: An application for NHS trust status by the Royal Alexandra hospital, Paisley was issued for public comment by the Argyll and Clyde health board on 24 July. The three-month statutory consultation period expired on 26 October. A report by the health board on the consultation has been received and will be considered carefully by my right hon. Friend.

33. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what public consultations the local health board has carried out on trust status for Renfrewshire hospitals.

Mr. Stewart: Public consultation on an application for NHS trust status by the Royal Alexandra hospital, Paisley was carried out between 24 July and 26 October in accordance with the National Health Service Trusts (Consultation before Establishment) (Scotland) Regulations 1991.

Local Government Reorganisation

31. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further discussions he has had with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities about his proposals for local government reorganisation.

Mr. Stewart: I recently chaired the first meeting of a steering group, comprising the president and other members of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, which is to review the internal management of local authorities. My right hon. Friend is also looking forward to receiving, in due course, a response from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to the consultation paper "Shaping the New Councils", which was published on 12 October 1992.

Fishing Industry

32. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the fishing industry; and if he will make a statement on the current implications for the Scottish fleet of current negotiations on the multi-annual guidance programme.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend and I meet representatives of the industry as and when required. My last formal meeting with the Scottish Fishermen's Federation was on 1 October. Negotiations on the United Kingdom's multi-annual guidance programme for 1993-96 will clearly have significant implications for the Scottish fleet. It is generally recognised that fishing effort is too high and has to be reduced, but it is equally important that the targets which emerge from these discussions are realistic. Negotiations are continuing on this basis.

Industrial Output and Employment

34. **Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce in the near future an initiative to increase industrial output and employment.

Mr. Stewart: The measures announced in the autumn statement and my right hon. Friend's specific proposals for Scotland arising out of the public expenditure settlement will benefit the Scottish economy.

NHS Trusts

35. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many national health service trusts have been approved in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: Three trusts have been approved, two of which are currently operational. A further 14 applications are at various stages of the public consultation process.

Forestry Commission (Vehicles)

36. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many vehicles the Forestry Commission operates; how many use unleaded petrol; how many are diesel; and how many vehicles are serviced by the private sector.

Sir Hector Monro: The Forestry Commission owns and operates 2,239 road vehicles, of which 50 use unleaded petrol and 1,950 use diesel. The other 239, which use leaded petrol, will be replaced with diesel vehicles over the coming year. About one quarter of the servicing and maintenance of the commission's vehicles is carried out by the private sector.

Unemployment (Greater Glasgow)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many long-term unemployed there are in the Greater Glasgow area.

Mr. Stewart: The most recent available figures are those for the quarter ended in July 1992. They show that at that time there were in the Glasgow travel-to-work area 43,757 people—6·5 per cent. of the work force—who had been unemployed for six months or longer, of whom 28,968—4·3 per cent. of the work force—had been unemployed for 12 months or longer.

Governance

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out a timetable for the completion of his stocktaking exercise on the future governance of Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I have given to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway).

Development Areas

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will announce the outcome of the review on development areas in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The public consultation paper on the review of the assisted areas map which my right hon. Friend issued in June stated that the Government's aim was to implement a revised map early in 1993, following the necessary clearance with the European Commission. This remains our intention.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of the health and safety policy of each of the agencies within his Department.

Mr. Lang: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the three agencies in my Department. I have asked the chief executive of each of the agencies to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Dr. R. K. M. Hay to Mr. John McAllion, dated 11 November 1992:

In response to your request to the Secretary of State for Scotland, I attach a copy of the policy statement for the Scottish Agricultural Science Agency. A copy will also be placed in the Library as requested.

Letter from Andrew MacLeod to Mr. John McAllion, dated 12 November 1992:

I have been asked to reply to your written parliamentary question asking the Secretary of State to place in the Library a copy of the health and safety policy of the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency.

I enclose for your information a copy of our health and safety policy document. I have also arranged for copies to be available in the Library.

Letter from S. Rosie to Mr. John McAllion, dated 12 November 1992:

In the Director and Chief Executive's absence on business this week, I am responding to your recent parliamentary question and the Secretary of State's reply of 11 November.

A copy of Historic Scotland's Health and Safety Policy has been placed in the House of Commons Library. A copy is enclosed for ease of reference. This policy statement, introduced in June 1991, is backed up by a series of Instruction and Information sheets, covering all aspects of health and safety applicable to the Agency. A high priority is attached to health and safety. Our full-time Safety Officer continually monitors performance and implements any changes needed to comply with legislative requirements.

Fisheries Research Services

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the future organisation of the Fisheries Research Services of the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department.

Mr. Lang: I have decided that, under the next steps initiative, my officials should initiate formal consultations with the Office of Public Service and Science and Treasury with the view to Fisheries Research Services being a candidate for agency status.

Construction

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the details of the £70 million package of construction-related work which he announced following the Chancellor of the Exchequer's "Autumn Statement".

Mr. Lang: I have now decided on the £70 million package of measures to be undertaken in the current financial year to assist the Scottish economy.

I have distributed the resources between programmes to achieve a rapid impact on construction and related industries. As a result, a broad range of programmes is involved, and a large number of bodies in both central and local government will receive additions to their programmes for the current year.

I have allocated a total of £20 million for additional expenditure on housing. One component of this package will be £7·5 million for homelessness, which will be made available to local authorities on the basis of proposals I will ask them to submit by 11 December. The balance will be issued to local authorities as additional allocations. My hon. Friend the Minister for education and housing will be announcing the distribution to individual councils when he meets local authority representatives on Monday 23 November.

This housing package is, of course, in addition to the benefits which Scottish Homes will receive from the repayment of debt which I announced last week.

The remaining £50 million will be divided among several central and local government programmes. A total of £9·5 million will be given for special enterprise, economic development and environmental improvement projects to be undertaken by Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the new town development corporations and the urban regeneration initiatives.

The current year's trunk roads programme will be supplemented by £8·5 million, to allow additional starts on a number of schemes and on highly desirable maintenance and improvement works, including installation of more central reservation safety barriers. There will be an additional £5 million for local authority roads projects.

There will be an additional £10·25 million for the health service and social work capital programmes, to be spent on a large number of projects across the country, focusing on upgrading and maintenance works and works to improve energy efficiency. There will be an extra £5 million for capital expenditure on schools, including £400,000 for grant-aided schools not in the local authority sector.

A further £0·75 million will be used to expand the programme for modernisation of prisons. There will be £1 million extra for police capital expenditure, and an additional £2·5 million for local authority general services.

On the water and sewerage programme, I have allocated a further £6·5 million for projects in the current year to service new developments and to make continuing progress with environmental improvements.

I have also allocated £1 million additional provision for historic buildings repair grant.

I shall publish details of the individual allocations and projects to be supported as soon as possible.

This is a package specially designed to secure an immediate impact on the construction industry in all its sectors. It will bring employment opportunities where employment is most needed, and it will help continue the modernisation of Scotland's infrastructure. The work is to be completed by the end of March and I estimate that the package will sustain around 4,000 jobs directly and through suppliers over this period.

A1

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his plans for financing the upgrading of the A1 road to dual carriageway standard; and if he will make it his policy that no section of that trunk road will be subject to toll charges.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 November 1992]:* On 7 July this year, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, reaffirmed the Government's conclusion that it would be desirable to dual the whole of the A1 between Edinburgh and Newcastle. Very substantial progress is being made with improvements to the route and our present financial plans account for the dualling of half the length of the A1.

While the Government are encouraging the private sector to consider viable options for new toll roads, no such proposals have been received for the A1.

Council House Purchases

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will institute an inquiry into the incidence of proxy purchasing of council houses involving contracts

between elderly tenants who qualify for the maximum discount under the right-to-buy legislation, and third parties outwith their families who provide the purchase price in return for a legal right to inherit the property; and if he will make a statement on the Government's view of this practice.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* I would welcome any specific information the hon. Member can provide me with on the details and extent of the practice he describes.

Nurses

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give figures to show *(a)* the total cost and *(b)* the average cost for each nurse of training registered general nurses for each of the past three years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* This information is not available.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish figures to show the numbers of nurses in training, the numbers of nurses who have completed registered general nurse training and the numbers of nurses who have completed registered general nurse training who have not obtained employment, in each of the past three years in Scotland; and if he will provide a breakdown by local health authority.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* Figures showing the numbers of nurses in training in the NHS in Scotland are already contained in the annual publication "Scottish Health Statistics". A total of 1,936 nurses completed registered general nurse training in 1991-92.

Accurate information on the number of nurses who have completed registered general nurse training and who have sought and have not obtained employment in the NHS in Scotland is not available. The table can give only a broad indication. Those within the definition "not in NHS in Scotland" include, for example, those who have been unable to complete their training within the normal three-year period; those who, having qualified, may have chosen to have a break in service before seeking employment; those who have found employment as a nurse outwith the NHS or in England; those who may have qualified, joined the NHS and left within a census period, and those nurses converting to registered general from enrolled status. Those who qualify and work occasionally in the NHS, for example, bank or agency nurses, also cannot be identified and have therefore been counted with the "not employed" category.

Final year general basic students—one year later[1]; by health board year beginning 30 September

	Total final year students	Status in following year			
		In post[2]	Further training[2]	Not in NHS in Scotland[3]	Participation rate[4] (per cent.)
1988					
Scotland	1,521	1,061	47	413	72·8
Argyll and Clyde	79	59	2	18	77·2
Ayrshire and Arran	55	49	0	6	89·1
Borders	19	19	0	0	100·0
Dumfries and Galloway	38	23	1	14	63·2
Fife	82	47	1	34	58·5
Forth Valley	64	41	1	22	65·6
Grampian	101	85	1	15	85·1
Greater Glasgow	479	330	13	136	71·6
Highland	81	51	6	24	70·4
Lanarkshire	118	92	5	21	82·2
Lothian	294	183	10	101	65·6
Orkney	0	0	0	0	—
Shetland	0	0	0	0	—
Tayside	111	82	7	22	80·2
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	—
1989					
Scotland	1,654	1,000	54	600	63·7
Argyll and Clyde	81	51	1	29	64·2
Ayrshire and Arran	68	60	2	6	91·2
Borders	16	10	0	6	62·5
Dumfries and Galloway	42	27	3	12	71·4
Fife	89	45	1	43	51·7
Forth Valley	47	30	3	14	70·2
Grampian	133	92	4	37	72·2
Greater Glasgow	446	248	7	193	56·9
Highland	84	34	12	38	54·8
Lanarkshire	115	74	2	39	66·1
Lothian	323	183	13	127	60·7
Orkney	0	0	0	0	—
Shetland	0	0	0	0	—
Tayside	208	146	6	56	73·1
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	—
1990					
Scotland	1,708	1,075	30	603	64·7

	Total final year students	Status in following year			
		In post[2]	Further training[3]	Not in NHS in Scotland[3]	Participation rate[4] (per cent.)
Argyll and Clyde	86	64	1	21	75·6
Ayrshire and Arran	63	57	0	6	90·5
Borders	18	15	0	3	83·3
Dumfries and Galloway	48	37	0	11	77·1
Fife	77	43	0	31	55·8
Forth Valley	72	43	5	24	66·7
Grampian	141	108	4	29	79·4
Greater Glasgow	478	250	8	220	54·0
Highland	82	53	3	26	68·3
Lanarkshire	124	78	1	45	63·7
Lothian	329	189	5	135	59·0
Orkney	0	0	0	0	—
Shetland	1	0	0	1	0·0
Tayside	189	138	3	48	74·6
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	—

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[1] This table excludes those who were still final year students one year later.

[2] Includes staff employed in another speciality and/or health board.

[3] May include agency or bank nurses and those who fail to qualify.

[4] Proportion working in NHS in Scotland or continuing with further training.

Oral Cancer

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to reverse the current increase in the incidence of oral cancer in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* Cancers and oral and dental health were identified as priorities in "Health Education in Scotland: A National Policy Statement" published in 1991. A major focus of activity in the programmes being developed by the Health Education Board for Scotland, will be on such risk factors as smoking and alcohol.

The crucial importance of detecting and treating pre-malignant and malignant conditions at an early stage is emphasised in dentists' training, and in a video issued by the Scottish Office Home and Health Department to all dental practices.

To ensure the highest standard of treatment, a Scottish cancer therapy network is being established. This will facilitate the exchange of information about clinical experience and practice in the treatment of all cancers to ensure that best practice is quickly recognised and spread throughout Scotland.

TRANSPORT

Shipping

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 20 October, *Official Report,* column *238,* what proposals for encouraging the growth of the British and other European fleets he discussed with the Chamber of Shipping.

Mr. Norris: Discussions of the non-financial issues have centred on the main areas where we consider there is scope for international action, particularly opening up new opportunities for United Kingdom and Community shipowners in third countries, increasing competitiveness including tackling state aids and consistently enforcing high standards for all shipping.

Other issues discussed are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Private Detectives

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the authorisation of the employment of Bray's Detective Agency to investigate peaceful protesters at Twyford Down, Hampshire; when the agency was employed; what is the cost of the contract; and when is it due to end.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department has employed Bray's Detective Agency (Southampton) Ltd. to serve papers on people who have trespassed on the Department's land and to photograph trespassers. The agency has been employed from time to time since March this year on an hourly basis at its standad rates, plus expenses. It will continue to be employed on this basis for as long as necessary.

Car Drivers

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what consideration he is giving to restricting the engine size of cars driven by fully qualified drivers *(a)* under the age of 22 years or *(b)* for newly qualified drivers over the age of 21 years for the first year after they have passed their driving test; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consideration he has given to introducing P plates to denote newly qualified drivers; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what measures he plans to introduce to reduce deaths and injuries as a result of driving errrors caused by drivers under the age of 22 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have commissioned an extensive research programme into the causes of accidents involving young and inexperienced drivers, with a view to developing a set of measures to reduce their high accident rate. Whether those measures suggested by the hon. Member are included will depend on how their likely effectiveness is assessed by that research.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what proportion of road accidents involved cars driven by *(a)* 17 to 21-year-olds, *(b)* 22 to 30-year-olds, *(c)* 31 to

40-year-olds, *(d)* 41 to 64-year-olds and *(e)* over 64-year-olds result in (i) death or (ii) personal injuries; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proportion of road accidents involved cars driven by *(a)* 17 to 21-year-olds, *(b)* 22 to 30-year-olds, *(c)* 31 to 40-year-olds, *(d)* 41 to 64-year-olds and *(e)* over 64-year-olds.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The information requested is contained in the table.

Road injury accidents[1] and car drivers, by type and severity of accident: Great Britain: 1991

Number/percentage

	Accidents[2]			*Car drivers*	
Injury accident type	*Number*	*Percentage of all injury accidents*	*Percentage fatal*	*Number*	*Percentage in fatal accidents*
Car accidents					
Car driver age[3]					
17 to 21	47,816	20·3	1·79	51,017	1·81
22 to 30	74,281	31·5	1·58	83,669	1·56
31 to 40	54,420	23·1	1·33	59,746	1·33
41 to 64	65,312	27·7	1·49	73,125	1·51
65 or more	16,162	6·9	2·35	16,747	2·33
All car accidents	205,097	87·0	1·62	308,007	1·53
All accidents	235,798	100·0	1·76	308,007	1·53

[1] Details of road accidents where nobody is injured are not collected.

[2] Accidents with more than one car may be in more than one category.

[3] Excluding drivers whose age was not reported.

Speed Limits

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans his Department has to increase the number of residential areas with 20 mph speed limits.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is for local traffic authorities to introduce these zones where appropriate, subject to the consent of the Secretary of State. Consent has been granted to 37 zones and no application has been refused.

We have issued advice to local authorities on how to establish a 20 mph zone. Such zones are eligible for transport supplementary grant when introduced to address a road accident problem.

HEALTH

Hospital Appointments

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest figures available for waiting lists for hospital appointments in London, by health district; and what are the comparable figures for 1991, 1990 and 1989.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 29 October 1992 at column *848* and the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) on 12 November 1992 at column *951*.

Morphine

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she intends to take to prevent unqualified assistants of general medical practitioners dispensing a concentrated oral solution of morphine sulphate to patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: The conditions under which a dispensing doctor employs another person to dispense on his behalf is a matter for that doctor. Under the common law, he owes a duty of care to his patients to ensure that he employs a competent dispenser.

London Ambulance Service

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many ambulances the London ambulance service has; how many are less than two years old; and, of the rest, in which years they were registered.

Mr. Sackville: The London ambulance service currently has 816 ambulances consisting of 374 accident and emergency ambulances and 442 patient transport vehicles.

Information on the age of these ambulances is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. James Harris, the chairman of the London ambulance service, for details.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the number of 999 emergency calls received by the London ambulance service for the years 1980 to 1991.

Mr. Sackville: The information on emergency calls has been collected centrally since 1987-88. The available information is given in the table.

London Ambulance Service—Total number of emergency calls

	Number
1987-88	470,348
1988-89	451,150
1989-90[1]	231,294
1990-91	456,695
1991-92[2]	472,310

[1] As a result of industrial action in this period, the service was unable to provide a complete year's return. The figure shown represents approximately half the calls received.

[2] Figure is provisional.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the number of ambulances used by the London ambulance service for the years *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1975, *(c)* 1980 and *(d)* each year from 1986 to 1991.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. James Harris, the chairman of the London ambulance service, for details.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health at what level the decision was taken for the purchase of the Leyland DAF vehicles as currently used by the London ambulance service.

Mr. Sackville: The decision to purchase these particular vehicles was taken by the London ambulance service board following the evaluation of competitive tenders and field trials.

Land Sales

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the estimated income from land sales by each regional health authority in England in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what is the projected income for 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: Total capital receipts, for each regional health authority, from all sales of land and property in 1989-90 and 1990-91 are shown in the table. Provisional estimates of receipts for 1991-92 and projected receipts for 1992-93 are also shown.

Receipts from disposal of land and property by RHAs

£ million

			Estimates	
	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*[1]	*1992-93*[2]
Northern	3·7	2·7	4·8	5
Yorkshire	11·5	5·0	4·1	2
Trent	18·2	25·6	4·7	9
East Anglia	4·5	1·3	2·7	2
North West Thames	45·2	17·2	32·0	24
North East Thames	22·0	14·0	21·9	21
South East Thames	21·0	7·6	10·1	20
South West Thames	9·0	15·2	19·2	10
Wessex	15·5	5·8	5·2	6
Oxford	5·1	9·5	6·6	13
South Western	14·4	20·3	10·9	18
West Midlands	9·0	4·0	8·0	11
Mersey	15·0	14·9	4·5	10
North Western	7·9	16·3	1·0	5

[1] Provisional.

[2] Projected.

It should be noted that provisional figures and projections may change.

Private Detectives

9. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what use her Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if she will list the firms involved.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on how many occasions since 1979 her Department has engaged private detective agencies to investigate the activities of British citizens; and if she will list the date and purpose of each investigation.

Mr. Sackville: The Department's records do not show any use of private investigators during the period in question.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the bed complement at *(a)* the Doncaster royal infirmary and Montagu hospital trust and *(b)* the Doncaster healthcare trust; and how many bed days have been lost since 1 April to date through (i) maintenance, (ii) refurbishment and (iii) lack of financial resources.

Mr. Sackville: The average number of beds available daily at the Doncaster royal infirmary and Montagu hospital NHS trust at the end of March 1992 was 886. The remaining information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. C. Bryant, chairman of Doncaster royal infirmary and Montagu hospital NHS trust, and Mr. P. Horsburgh, chairman of Doncaster healthcare NHS trust, for details.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for the creation of a class of community bed for treatment of patients outside the acute hospital sector; and what proportion of patients in such beds she envisages will be treated by *(a)* general practitioners, *(b)* district nurses and *(c)* other categories of carers; and if she will specify what other categories are contemplated.

Mr. Sackville: Community hospitals have played an important role in the national health service for many years. It is for each health authority to determine, through contracts with the providers of health care, the pattern of local services best suited to the needs of the communities they serve.

Charity Trust Funds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by regional and district health authority and health service trusts the charity trust fund balances at 31 March.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information derived from 1991-92 annual accounts submitted to the Department will be available later in the year.

Assisted Conception Unit, Walsgrave Hospital

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what fee the assisted conception unit at Walsgrave hospital pays to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority each time a cycle of treatment is conducted; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Assisted conception units which carry out certain infertility treatments and embryo research have, under the terms of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990, to be licensed by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority. During the passage of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill it was accepted that applicants for licences should pay a significant part of the cost of licensing. The authority is therefore required to raise 50 per cent. of its costs through fees to licensed centres.

Licences are issued annually, with an initial fee on application of £250 for treatment licences and £100 for research or storage licences. Additional fees are charged to centres based on the numbers of treatment cycles performed in the year prior to application. The current figures are £30 per IVF—in vitro fertilisation—cycle and £7 per donor insemination cycle. Further details of the authority's licensing structure are contained in its annual report, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Brain-damaged Children

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will review the facilities and services provided for brain-damaged children by health authorities; and if she will issue instructions on minimum standards for the treatment of these children.

Mr. Yeo: District health authorities are responsible for assessing the health needs of their residents and purchasing a comprehensive range of services to meet those needs. These include a wide range of services, equipment and support for children with brain damage including child health surveillance, primary care, therapy services, wheelchairs and other equipment. Health authorities have a duty to ensure that they obtain the highest quality and most cost-effective care for all their residents, taking into account appropriate professional advice. We also expect them to collaborate with other service providers such as local education authorities and social services departments.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish by health authority and specialty the waiting lists for in-patient and out-patient treatment for 31 March 1992 and for 31 March 1989.

Mr. Sackville: Information about waiting times for in-patients by district health authority and specialty, is given in "Hospital Waiting List, In-Patients and Day Cases" published every six months, copies of which are available in the Library.

Information about waiting times for first out-patient appointment is not collected centrally. However, all health authorities are required under the patients charter to publish information on the local standards they have set for first out-patient appointments and on performance against targets.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidelines she has issued to health authorities regarding the appropriate waiting time for a first opthalmic out-patient appointment;

(2) if she will introduce into the patients charter a standard for waiting time for a first out-patient appointment.

Mr. Sackville: Under the patients charter, health authorities are already setting local standards for waiting times for first out-patient appointments and regional health authorities have been asked to set targets to build on this progress.

Dentistry

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number and percentage of pupils in Lancashire inspected and re-inspected by the school dental service in 1979 and the most recent year for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of inspections and re-inspections by the community dental services in Lancashire in the year ending 31 March 1990 were 81,017 and 11,684 respectively. Comparable figures are not available for 1979. Information relating to the number of pupils in the county of Lancashire is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the comparative productivity of salaried and contractual dentists; and what information she has on the costs of treatments in each case.

Dr. Mawhinney: The monitoring of the cost effectiveness and productivity of salaried dentists is the managerial responsibility of those family health services authorities concerned. Data held centrally are not sufficiently detailed to permit a treatment-by-treatment comparison between general dental practitioners and salaried dentists.

Health Service, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration was given to the appointment of the chairman and non-executive directors of Doncaster healthcare trust to appointing a greater proportion of persons living within Doncaster or south Yorkshire.

Dr. Mawhinney: The area where chairmen and non-executive directors live is a factor in appointing chairmen and non-executive directors of NHS trusts. Those appointed are expected to live or work in the area served by the trust, or to have connections with it.

Computers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set up a public inquiry into the investment in computers by the national health service since 1986, into their appropriateness and robustness, and into whether the contracts were issued in accordance with standing orders.

Mr. Sackville: No. The National Audit Office published a report of its inquiry into the management of national health service computer projects in 1990 and we accepted its recommendations. The Audit Commission plans a further inquiry in 1994. It is for the local general manager to ensure, and auditors to be satisfied, that staff letting contracts comply with standing orders.

Guidelines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will issue revised guidelines as to the matters with which health authorities should deal in public.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no current plans to do so.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent guidance she has issued to health authorities on purchasing.

Mr. Sackville: The NHS management executive's priorities and planning guidance for 1993-94 issued in July 1992 (EL(92)47), a copy of which is available in the Library, required regions to take a range of actions to develop the purchasing role of health authorities. Over the last two years the NHS management executive has also issued good practice guidance on several purchasing and contracting issues.

Health Authorities

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what basis annual remuneration for NHS chairmen and non-executive directors was calculated; and what is the minimum time each would be expected to contribute to their duties each month.

Dr. Mawhinney: The remuneration of health authority and trust chairmen is determined by the Secretary of State with the consent of the Treasury; the level of remuneration depends on a number of factors including the level of duties and responsibilities. Chairmen are expected to spend between two and a half and three and a half days per week on their duties, depending on the nature of the authority or trust. Non-executive members and directors are expected to spend two to three days per month on their duties.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what disciplinary action has been taken against *(a)* officers, *(b)* chairmen, *(c)* members and *(d)* non-executive directors in respect of the recent contractural problems in Wessex and the West Midlands regional health authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: Disciplinary action taken against officers is a matter for the regional health authorities concerned. Formal disciplinary procedures are not appropriate for chairmen, members or non-executive directors as they are not NHS employees.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans there are to change the nature or extent of the current duties and responsibilities of *(a)* the Doncaster health authority and *(b)* the Doncaster family health services authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for Trent regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Michael Carlisle, the chairman of the authority, for details.

Food Supplements

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the proposals for the restriction on the sale of food supplements manufactured by Foresight.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food received comments from Foresight earlier this year on the Government's proposal for an EC framework directive on dietary supplements.

A proposal for a draft directive has not yet been made by the EC Commission.

Hospital Trusts

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will permit those hospital trusts approved in the most recent wave to alter the management structure submitted in the application before the trusts begin operating on 1 April 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service trusts are free to create their own management structures. Before 1 April 1993 third wave trusts may appoint staff and do anything reasonably necessary to prepare for their operational date.

Manchester Royal Infirmary

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will increase the funding of the Manchester royal infirmary for renal services.

Mr. Sackville: Renal services at Manchester royal infirmary are funded by North Western regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Bruce Martin, the chairman of the authority, for details.

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients *(a)* at Manchester royal infirmary, *(b)* in the North West regional health authority and *(c)* in England are currently on the waiting list for (i) renal disconnect systems and (ii) all renal treatment.

Mr. Sackville: Waiting time information by individual procedure is not collected centrally. However, patients who are suffering from end stage renal failure are not placed on waiting lists but are treated immediately by means of haemo-dialysis or kidney transplant.

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients at the Manchester royal infirmary have been treated under *(a)* conventional and *(b)* renal disconnect systems in each of the past three years.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not collected centrally. Manchester royal infirmary is part of the Central Manchester hospitals and community care NHS trust. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. K. Collis, chairman of the trust, for details.

Expenditure

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the level of capital spending on hospital and community health services in net terms after deducting proceeds from land and property sales, in each year since 1974-75 *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* adjusted using the gross domestic product deflator and *(c)* adjusted using the relevant index of NHS prices;

(2) what was the level of *(a)* total NHS expenditure, *(b)* current expenditure on the hospital and community health services, *(c)* capital expenditure on the hospital and community health services, *(d)* expenditure on the family practitioner services, *(e)* expenditure on centrally funded NHS services and *(f)* expenditure on personal social services, in each year since 1974-75, (i) in cash terms, (ii) adjusted using the relevant pay and prices index and (iii) adjusted using the gross domestic product deflator.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 11 November 1992]*: The information requested is given in the table. In addition, a net increase in 1993-94 of £1·066 million for the national health service as a whole was announced in the "Autumn Statement"—a real increase of 1 per cent. over 1992-93.

NHS expenditure: gross (excludes trust debt remuneration)

Year	*Cash*	*Adjusted by the GDP 1990-91 prices*	*Adjusted for input unit cost 1990-91 prices*
1974-75	3,426	15,577	18,194
1975-76	4,511	16,339	18,599
1976-77	5,149	16,428	18,771
1977-78	5,689	15,965	19,044
1978-79	6,525	16,514	19,767
1979-80	7,755	16,821	19,578
1980-81	10,103	18,520	20,131
1981-82	11,329	18,938	20,805
1982-83	12,353	19,277	21,281
1983-84	13,114	19,559	21,537
1984-85	14,102	20,031	21,828
1985-86	14,923	20,088	21,957
1986-87	16,044	20,909	22,207
1987-88	17,653	21,819	22,624
1988-89	19,599	22,591	22,814
1989-90	21,112	22,831	23,075
1990-91	23,632	23,632	23,632
1991-92	26,739	24,931	—
1992-93	29,379	26,276	—

HCHS current gross expenditure
(excluding trusts' capital expenditure)

Year	*Cash*		*Adjusted by GDP 1990-91 prices*		*Adjusted input unit costs 1990-91 prices*	
	A	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*
1974-75	—	2,346	—	10,667	—	12,613
1975-76	—	3,073	—	11,131	—	12,828
1976-77	—	3,508	—	11,192	—	12,868
1977-78	—	3,925	—	11,015	—	13,257
1978-79	—	4,509	—	11,412	—	13,896
1979-80	—	5,375	—	11,659	—	13,747
1980-81	—	7,072	—	12,964	—	14,130
1981-82	—	7,804	—	13,045	—	14,411
1982-83	—	8,403	—	13,113	—	14,570
1983-84	—	8,842	—	13,187	—	14,587
1984-85	—	9,344	—	13,272	—	14,570
1985-86	—	9,852	—	13,262	—	14,603
B:						
1985-86	10,053	—	13,533	—	14,901	—
1986-87	10,820	—	14,101	—	15,003	—
1987-88	11,960	—	14,783	—	15,284	—
1988-89	13,268	—	15,294	—	15,331	—
1989-90	14,222	—	15,380	—	15,459	—
1990-91	16,027	—	16,027	—	16,027	—
1991-92	18,232	—	17,000	—	—	—
1992-93	19,818	—	17,725	—	—	—

HCHS capital gross expenditure
(including trusts' capital expenditure)

Year	*Cash*		*Adjusted by GDP 1990-91 prices*		*Adjusted input unit costs 1990-91 prices*	
	A	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*
1974-75	—	242	—	1,100	—	1,043
1975-76	—	326	—	1,181	—	1,075
1976-77	—	355	—	1,133	—	1,046
1977-78	—	314	—	881	—	809
1978-79	—	365	—	924	—	842
1979-80	—	402	—	872	—	768
1980-81	—	552	—	1,012	—	838
1981-82	—	666	—	1,113	—	980
1982-83	—	695	—	1,085	—	1,006
1983-84	—	718	—	1,071	—	1,019
1984-85	—	810	—	1,151	—	1,104
1985-86	—	881	—	1,186	—	1,133
1985-86	964	—	1,298	—	1,240	—
1986-87	1,041	—	1,357	—	1,275	—
1987-88	1,103	—	1,363	—	1,286	—
1988-89	1,186	—	1,367	—	1,307	—
1989-90	1,423	—	1,539	—	1,436	—
1990-91	1,551	—	1,551	—	1,551	—
1991-92	1,635	—	1,524	—	—	—
1992-93	2,001	—	1,790	—	—	—

FHS gross expenditure

Year	*Cash*		*Adjusted by GDP 1990-91 prices*		*Adjusted input unit costs 1990-91 prices*	
	A	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*
1974-75	—	697	—	3,169	—	3,736
1975-76	—	925	—	3,350	—	3,862
1976-77	—	1,078	—	3,439	—	4,047
1977-78	—	1,220	—	3,424	—	4,218
1978-79	—	1,473	—	3,728	—	4,499
1979-80	—	1,731	—	3,755	—	4,469
1980-81	—	2,173	—	3,983	—	4,583
1981-82	—	2,504	—	4,186	—	4,767
1982-83	—	2,894	—	4,516	—	5,087
1983-84	—	3,112	—	4,641	—	5,205

Year	*Cash*		*Adjusted by GDP 1990-91 prices*		*Adjusted input unit costs 1990-91 prices*	
	A	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*
1984-85	—	3,432	—	4,875	—	5,349
1985-86	—	3,615	—	4,866	—	5,366
B:						
1985-86	3,376	—	4,544	—	5,011	—
1986-87	3,631	—	4,732	—	5,123	—
1987-88	4,019	—	4,967	—	5,300	—
1988-89	4,554	—	5,249	—	5,474	—
1988-90	4,811	—	5,203	—	5,451	—
1990-91	5,304	—	5,304	—	5,304	
1991-92	6,013	—	5,607	—	—	—
1992-93	6,458	—	5,776	—	—	—

Central health and miscellaneous services gross expenditure

Year	*Cash*	*Adjusted by the GDP 1990-91 prices*
1987-88	404	499
1988-89	411	474
1989-90	464	502
1990-91	506	506
1991-92	618	576
1992-93	633	566

PSS expenditure

Year	*Cash*	*Adjusted by GDP deflator*	*Adjusted for input unit cost*
1974-75	602	3,062	3,262
1975-76	798	3,233	3,595
1976-77	905	3,230	3,599
1977-78	988	3,101	3,584
1978-79	1,115	3,156	3,735
1979-80	1,375	3,336	3,907
1980-81	1,703	3,492	4,026
1981-82	1,879	3,513	3,695
1982-83	2,051	3,580	3,764
1983-84	2,218	3,700	3,861
1984-85	2,361	3,751	3,949
1985-86	2,453	3,694	3,886
1986-87	2,727	3,974	4,122
1987-88	3,073	4,249	4,326
1988-89	3,421	4,411	4,512
1989-90	3,893	4,709	4,772
1990-91	4,390	4,909	4,944
1991-92	4,809	5,025	5,061
1992-93	5,186	5,186	5,186

HCHS capital net expenditure
(including trusts' capital expenditure)

Year	*Cash*		*Adjusted by GDP 1990-91 prices*		*Adjusted input unit costs 1990-91 prices*	
	A	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*
1974-75	—	242	—	1,100	—	1,043
1975-76	—	326	—	1,181	—	1,075
1976-77	—	355	—	1,133	—	1,046
1977-78	—	314	—	881	—	809
1978-79	—	357	—	904	—	824
1979-80	—	392	—	850	—	749
1980-81	—	536	—	983	—	814
1981-82	—	646	—	1,080	—	950
1982-83	—	676	—	1,055	—	979
1983-84	—	685	—	1,022	—	972
1984-85	—	760	—	1,080	—	1,035
1985-86	—	796	—	1,072	—	1,024
1985-86	888	—	1,195	—	1,142	—
1986-87	892	—	1,162	—	1,093	—
1987-88	902	—	1,115	—	1,051	—
1988-89	906	—	1,044	—	998	—
1989-90	1,191	—	1,288	—	1,202	—
1990-91	1,372	—	1,372	—	966	—
1991-92	1,427	—	1,331	—	—	—
1992-93	1,856	—	1,660	—	—	—

Note:

(a) All figures in HCHS, capital and current, and CHMS have been adjusted to reflect the transfer of public health laboratory services from the HCHS to CHMS.

(b) Figures in column A have been adjusted to reflect the transfer of the family health service administration, the family health services cash limited spending and the Disablement Services Authority partly to the HCHS and partly to CHMS, (and also take account of changes since 1990-91 relating to the NHS reforms). Figures in column B do not reflect these transfers and are therefore not comparable with those for later years.

(c) CHMS figures only available from 1987-88 onwards. There is no pay and price index for the CHMS.

(d) 1991-92 figures are provisional and 1992-93 figures are estimated outturn.

Hospital Patients (Segregation)

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines his Department has issued to hospitals about segregating elderly patients from other patients.

Mr. Yeo: There is no policy of segregation for acute medical treatment; but some health problems in elderly people are best treated by specialist teams, which will usually be concentrated in one part of a hospital designed to cater for the special needs of elderly people. Decisions about the most appropriate type and place of treatment are for local clinical judgment. The Department has no proposals to issue guidelines.

NHS Pensions

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will amend the NHS pension scheme to allow unmarried members of the scheme to nominate a person to receive the benefit of the scheme after their death.

Dr. Mawhinney: The scheme already provides entitlement to lump sum death benefit to be paid to the estate of an unmarried member. We are reviewing the provisions of the scheme.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 19 November 1992

NORTHERN IRELAND

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those agencies in his Department which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Mr. Mates: I refer the hon. Member to a reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary State, Office of Public Service and Science on 17 November, *Official Report*, column *104*.

Announcements about privatisation or contractorisation of Northern Ireland agencies will normally be made as each agency's periodic review of its framework document is completed.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will set up an inquiry into assistance by RUC officers to the South African agents, du Randt and Flores.

Mr. Mates: No, because I am advised that there is no substance to the allegations.

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what use his Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Mr. Mates: Private detectives have been used as follows:

Date	*Cost*	*Purpose*
1987-88	£126·05	Service of Enforcement Notices under the Planning (NI) Order 1972.
1988-89	Nil	—
1989-90	£553·25	To investigate the circumstances of persons claiming compensation against the Department of the Environment as a result of alleged personal injuries.
1990-91	£3,090·31	
1991-92	£2,644·78	

The firms used have not been named in order to protect their identity.

Government Loans Fund

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the outstanding amounts from the Government Loans Fund for each of the Northern Ireland district councils and other Northern Ireland public bodies.

Mr. Mates: The Government Loans Fund was abolished by articles 7 to 15 of the Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 and its functions were transferred to the Consolidated Fund for Northern Ireland. The amounts owed to the Consolidated Fund in respect of government loans by each of the district councils and other public bodies is set out in the table.

	£
Antrim Borough Council	3,179,498
Ards Borough Council	3,208,270
Armagh District Council	3,053,863
Ballymena Borough Council	845,118
Ballymoney Borough Council	1,674,124
Banbridge District Council	2,817,219
Belfast City Council	13,156,729
Carrickfergus Borough Council	32,369
Castlereagh Borough Council	7,474,718
Coleraine Borough Council	3,438,279
Cookstown District Council	302,725
Craigavon Borough Council	1,429,832
Derry City Council	7,973,570
Down District Council	5,090,230
Dungannon District Council	1,275,374
Fermanagh District Council	806,733
Larne Borough Council	2,019,767
Limavady District Council	1,495,537
Lisburn Borough Council	1,858,928
Magherafelt District Council	1,053,612
Moyle District Council	1,765,237
Newry and Mourne District Council	10,166,233
Newtownabbey Borough Council	8,087,643
North Down Borough Council	10,387,713
Omagh District Council	4,501,915
Strabane District Council	3,563,347
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	1,534,125,582
Ulster Folk and Transport Museum	76,761

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

British Subjects

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what compensation is available to British subjects deprived of their livelihood and detained without charge or trial in a foreign country.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: British nationals in these circumstances should seek compensation through the courts of the country concerned.

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further steps he intends to take to secure the release of Mr. Allan Nicklin from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Her Majesty's ambassador in Riyadh is urging the Saudi Arabian authorities to speed up the process of Mr. Nicklin's departure from Saudi Arabia. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pressed the case with the Saudi Arabian ambassador in London on 17 November 1992.

Iranian Arms Procurement

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the resumption of activities in connection with Iranian arms procurement at 4 Victoria street; and what action he intends to take.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have not given approval for the Iranian military procurement offices to be reopened in Britain by the Iranian Government. Any evidence of wrongdoing would be urgently investigated and, if appropriate, would be a matter for the courts.

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received from the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the United Nations-sponsored Cyprus peace talks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The set of ideas produced by the United Nations Secretary-General, and endorsed by the Security Council as the basis for a settlement, was worked through in full in direct talks from 28 October to 11 November. There are significant areas of common ground. Important differences remain, with some Turkish Cypriot positions incompatible with the ideas. We welcome the agreement to resume talks in early March and will continue to play a full part in encouraging progress.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet President Vassiliou of Cyprus to discuss the British Government's response to the collapse of United Nations-sponsored Cyprus peace talks in New York; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no current plans to meet President Vassiliou, but we remain in regular contact with him and all parties to the dispute. The Cyprus talks, chaired by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, have not collapsed: the parties have agreed to resume the talks in March next year.

Pet Animals

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom ratification and implementation of the Council of Europe convention on pet animals.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

While existing domestic legislation already fulfils some of the requirements of the Convention, some legislative changes would be required before the United Kingdom could be a party to it. We are currently considering the changes which would be required.

DEFENCE

Submarine Reactor Cores

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number and location of used nuclear submarine reactor cores held by his Department.

Mr. Aitken: Currently some 37 nuclear submarine used reactor cores are stored at BNFL Sellafield. In addition, one nuclear submarine used reactor core is held at each of the following locations: Rosyth royal dockyard, Devonport royal dockyard, and the naval reactor test establishment Dounreay.

A91 Project Definition Study

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer by the Minister of State for Defence Procurement of 6 November, *Official Report*, column *530*, when the A91 project definition study was commissioned; who is carrying out the study; and what is the cost of the study.

Mr. Aitken: The contract for the A91 project definition study was awarded to NNC Ltd. on 24 August 1992. The costs associated with this contract are commercially confidential.

Heavy Duty Vehicles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many truck cargo heavy duty vehicles have now been delivered to his Department.

Mr. Aitken: Eight.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the volumes of *(a)* low-level waste, *(b)* intermediate-level waste and *(c)* high-level waste stored at (i) AWE Aldermaston, (ii) AWE Burghfield and (iii) AWE Cardiff for each year since 1979.

Mr. Aitken: The amounts stored for each year are set out in the table:

Volumes of low and intermediate-level waste stored at AWE sites

Volumes are in cubic metres

Year	*AWE Aldermaston LLW*	*AWE Aldermaston ILW*	*AWE Burghfield LLW*	*AWE Cardiff LLW*
1979	580	870	7	160
1980	720	370	5	80
1981	780	340	8	70
1982	1,060	860	2	90
1983	1,140	520	6	220
1984	1,160	800	3	140
1985	1,200	950	3	60
1986	1,670	1,140	3	210
1987	1,340	1,380	0·3	170
1988	2,630	1,570	0·7	20
1989	2,100	1,780	0·7	20
1990	1,680	1,940	1	10
1991	1,800	2,100	1	20
1992	2,210	2,200	1	50

Notes:

1. The apparent change in AWE(A) LLW holdings between 1987 and 1988 is mainly due to revised volume accounting arrangements. Measurement by gross volume of ISO containers was introduced at this time.
2. Figures stated are holdings in December for each of the years quoted, actual material held fluctuates during the course of the year.
3. ILW has been accumulating each year since 1983, following suspension of sea dumping.
4. Figures for AWE(A) and AWE(C) are rounded to the nearest $10m^3$.

Plutonium

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the plutonium processing laboratories in A90 are expected to be declared operational.

Mr. Aitken: The plutonium processing facilities in A90 are scheduled to become operational in time to meet the needs of the Trident programme.

Ancillary Services

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to transfer ancillary services that do not have an offensive or defensive function to the private sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The Ministry of Defence, in common with other Government Departments, is testing the quality and value for money of its own in-house services by exposing them to competition from the private sector. We plan, over the next four years, to expose to competition activities that currently cost us £1·2 billion a year. Where the private sector can offer better quality and value for money, the work will be transferred.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date it was first brought to his attention that Matrix Churchill goods were being used for military purposes in Iraq.

Mr. Rifkind: I first became aware in September this year that Matrix Churchill goods might have been used for military purposes in Iraq.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those agencies in his Department which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Mr. Aitken: All my Department's agencies are periodically reviewed as set out in the procedure described by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science on 17 November, *Official Report*, column *104*.

Army Pay and Personnel Unit

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilian and military personnel are at present employed in the Army pay and personnel unit.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A total of 389 military and 1,770 civilian personnel are at present employed in the Army's pay and personnel process.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his plans for the relocation and the future size and composition of the Army pay and personnel unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A study examining the most efficient and cost-effective organisation for the Army's personnel function, and recommending a site for the organisation, has just been completed. I hope to be able to announce our proposals and commence consultation with the trade unions and other interested parties shortly.

Armaments

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding the transportation of armaments by rail in Scotland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In Scotland, as in any part of the United Kingdom, the Department uses the most convenient and cost-effective methods of transporting armaments. Providing these criteria can be met, movement by rail is, however, the preferred method. All the necessary safety precautions are taken and the relevant safety regulations strictly adhered to, whatever the method of transport.

"Options for Change"

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what review is being undertaken of the objectives contained within "Options for Change" in the light of the deployment in Bosnia and the possibility of further deployment of British troops.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government's plans for force restructuring were developed in the recognition that instabilities and risks to our security would continue to exist in Europe and elsewhere. Nothing in recent events, including the commitment of troops to Bosnia, has invalidated those plans.

Portland Naval Base

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 29 October, *Official Report*, column *802*, whether he has sought the views of other NATO countries concerning the closure of the Portland naval base; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The naval authorities of nations that regularly undertake operational sea training—OST—at Portland have been advised of its proposed transfer to Devonport and have indicated that this would not be a factor in deciding whether they wished to continue participating in OST. We expect to provide the same standard of service to these foreign navies at Devonport.

House Purchase Scheme

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the new house purchase savings scheme for service personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am pleased to announce arrangements for the introduction of the service home savings scheme have been completed. It will come into operation on 1 December 1992. The scheme is open to service personnel who have served for three years and who do not already own a home. If they save regularly for at least five years, with monthly contributions from £50 to £200, then when they buy a home, my Department will give them £1 for every £3 they have saved, including interest earned on their savings.

Four financial institutions have been selected to operate the scheme, and will offer competitive rates on the savings deposited with them. They are:

Bank of Scotland
Gartmore Money Management
Norwich and Peterborough Building Society
Skipton Building Society

I am placing in the Library of the House copies of the explanatory brochure on the scheme which is being sent to all service personnel.

The introduction of this new scheme represents a significant step forward in improving the opportunities for service personnel to become home owners.

Hydrographic Office

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the performance of the Hydrographic Office in its second year of operation as a defence support agency.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have today placed in the Library a copy of the Hydrographic Office defence support agency's annual report and accounts for the year 1991-92.

As the chief executive, Rear Admiral Myres, notes in his foreword, the performance targets set for 1991-92 were not insignificant, and the annual report shows that the Hydrographic Office has met or exceeded all its targets. This has been achieved in a difficult year for the Ministry as a whole, faced with the continuing need to secure economies in defence spending and the chief executive and his staff are to be congratulated.

TRANSPORT

Overloaded Coaches

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many coaches have been found to be seriously overloaded after arrival at Channel ports from mainland Europe during the last year in which statistics are available.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Coach traffic from mainland Europe is not specifically targeted for weighing at ports of entry. But of the 506 coaches weighed by the Vehicle Inspectorate at the Department's weighbridge site on the A2 near Dover during the year ending 31 October 1992, the vast majority will have entered the United Kingdom from mainland Europe. Eighty-three coaches—some 16 per cent. of those weighed—were found to be seriously overloaded and were immediately prohibited from continuing their journeys.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he will ensure that a unified network of rail services is maintained for passengers and freight after privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: The Government proposals are set out in "New Opportunities for the Railways", Cm 2012. Railtrack will provide and control the track network. Train services will be provided by private sector operators, including franchisees meeting standards set by a new franchising authority.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to regulate rail fare rises and keep them within inflation after privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: Where franchised rail services enjoy significant market power, fares will be controlled through the franchise contracts. In addition, the regulator will be able to control fares on non-franchised services to protect abuse of monopoly power. Detailed arrangements will be decided later, taking account of the circumstances of individual services: the first franchises will not be let until 1994.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that tickets for rail services will continue to be acceptable across the network after privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: We have given a clear commitment to preserve through-ticketing. It will be for operators to negotiate acceptance of each other's tickets, to the extent that the regulator does not decide to impose such a requirement.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will preserve railcards, travelcards, and discount and concessionary fares in his plans for the railway network after privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: The offer of discounted ticketing arrangements will be a matter for the operator's judgment, as it is now for BR. In a competitive environment there will be every incentive for operators to seek to attract custom and maximise revenue by such measures. The regulator will have powers to intervene if necessary to ensure that benefits to passengers are maintained.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure rail services with through and connecting trains after privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: We expect the involvement of the private sector to ensure a better response to passenger demand for connecting and through services. Railtrack, as the track authority, will be responsible for the overall planning and operation of the timetable, in close consultation with operators and with oversight by the regulator.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he will ensure continued comprehensive timetable and passenger information for the entire railway network after privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: It will be in the commercial interests of operators to publicise their services and produce timetable information for passengers. If there is any doubt about the extent to which adequate information will be available, the rail regulator will have powers to impose appropriate requirements.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he will maintain customer involvement in changes and improvements to rail services after privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: The Government are well aware of the benefits of the current arrangements and are clear that effective consumer representation needs to be maintained. I have discussed our privatisation proposals with the Central Transport Consultative Committee on a number of occasions and have taken note of its initial views. We intend to publish a document on consumer representation by the end of the year.

Rail Access

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he will make it his policy to increase access to stations, in the national railway network, for elderly and disabled persons.

Mr. Freeman: The day-to-day operation of the railways, including the provision of all facilities at stations, is currently the responsibility of British Rail. BR has a policy commitment to improve access and facilities for people with mobility problems wherever possible. All major stations have a range of appropriate facilities; BR also issues design guidance on making stations accessible and run extensive disability awareness training programmes for their staff. In addition, it has a special adviser on disability who chairs an advisory group which looks at all proposals for station developments.

Rail Services (Rural Areas)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to preserve and enhance rail services to rural areas.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail is under an obligation to provide services which are comparable generally with those provided in 1988. There is no reason why privatisation of the railways should result in service reductions or closures. Subsidy is not dependent on public ownership of the railways and we have made it clear that we intend to provide subsidy where it is required to maintain socially necessary services.

A24

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the cost of converting the A24 to dual carriageway from the Worthing border to the Offington roundabout.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The A24 is the responsibility of West Sussex county council. The Department is not aware of any plans to widen the section between Findon and Offington corner. However, as part of its work in relation to the A27 Worthing-Lancing improvement, the Department has estimated that the cost of dualling this section of the A24 would be between £7·5 million, and £12·3 million, depending on the standard adopted. These costs are at fourth-quarter 1990 prices.

Market Testing

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he intends to take to ensure that any market testing by his Department measures like with like and that there is a level playing field for such exercises.

Mr. Norris: The White Paper "Competing for Quality", Cm 1730, introduced the concept of the in-house bid to market-testing. The Department is conducting extensive consultations to establish a sound framework within which market-testing exercises will be carried out. It is also ensuring that the experiences of other Departments inform the deliberations. Central Departments are also advising on common issues. Evaluation of bids when received will be carried out with the assistance of the Department's accountancy adviser. Attention to comparing like with like and ensuring a level playing field are central to the Department's procedures.

Merchant Seamen

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, during the United Kingdom European presidency, he will seek changes in EC regulations to ensure that most United Kingdom and European merchant seamen serving on vessels under flags of convenience will not be discriminated against with regard to social security and health arrangements.

Mr. Norris: Current EC regulations cover only those seamen serving on vessels operating under a flag of a member state. However, all British seamen working overseas outside the Community are entitled to make voluntary national insurance contributions, thereby preserving their rights to some benefits.

Networker Trains

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the quality of service of the new Networker trains currently being tested on the North Kent suburban lines.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend has not received any representations about the quality of service of the new Networker trains which started coming into service at the beginning of October. The new trains are currently running during the off-peak period in addition to the timetabled trains to see how they perform in passenger service. Once the trains have completed, these trials they will be phased into peak services, probably from the end of November. All off-peak services should be operated by Networkers by May 1993 and the complete replacement of the trains should be complete by the end of 1995-96.

Petroleum

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the transport of petroleum by rail in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend has received a letter from the hon. Member, and will respond shortly.

West Highland Railway Line

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his Department has had with British Rail regarding proposals to end the carriage of petroleum supplies on the West Highland line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: None. This is a commercial matter for British Rail.

Strasbourg Air Services

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what effect the single market will have on the ability of British airlines to provide services to and from Strasbourg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Existing Community rules allow British airlines to operate services to Strasbourg. These rules, however, contain limitations on the capacity which carriers are entitled to provide, and regulate the fares which can be charged. On 1 January 1993, the Community's single market in air transport takes effect. Capacity limitations will then be removed; and free pricing will be introduced, subject to safeguards against excessively high or predatory fares. The decision to operate services on particular routes remains a matter for the commercial judgment of the airlines.

Roads (Investment)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what rate of return on investment is achieved on *(a)* local safety schemes and *(b)* motorway widening schemes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* Returns provided by local authorities indicate that the sums earmarked for local safety schemes in the transport supplementary grant settlement for 1991-92 produced an average first year rate of return of 76 per cent., and over the first three years an average rate of return of 213 per cent.

Motorway widening schemes are appraised using the COBA and QUADRO computer programs. For those programmed motorway widening schemes that have reached the stage of having a validated cost-benefit assessment based on current traffic forecasts, the average ratio between the discounted benefits and the discounted costs is 3 : 1.

ENVIRONMENT

Council House Sales

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the receipts of local councils from council house sales they have been allowed to spend.

Mr. Robin Squire: Local authorities have been allowed to spend 25 per cent. of their receipts from council house sales and 50 per cent. of most other receipts. Under regulations which came into force on 13 November 1992, local authorities may spend in full the capital receipts obtained between that date and 31 December 1993 from nearly all sales of council houses and other assets.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will allow local authorities to spend more of their council house receipts.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 12 November 1992]:* Under regulations which came into force on 13 November 1992, local authorities may spend in full the capital receipts obtained between that date and 31 December 1993 from nearly all sales of council houses and other assets.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contributions were made by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* consultants to his Department, to the international radioactive waste management advisory committee of the International Atomic Energy Agency special meeting held in Vienna in October.

Mr. Maclean: The second meeting of the international radioactive waste management advisory committee sub-group on principles and criteria for radioactive waste disposal, which met in Vienna from 27 to 29 October 1992, was attended by an inspector from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution who participated fully in the discussions which took place.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those agencies in his Department which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Mr. Howard: None of the agencies for which I am responsible is currently a candidate for privatisation or contractorisation. These are, however, issues that are considered as part of each agency's three-year review; where appropriate, an announcement would be made.

Competitive Tendering

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proposals he has to amend the Local Government (Direct Labour Organisations) (Competition) Regulations 1989, S.I., 1989, No. 1588;

(2) if he will make it his policy to apply regulation 6 of the Local Government (Direct Labour Organisations) (Competition) Regulations 1989, S.I., 1989 No. 1588, on compulsory competitive tendering, to all works of maintenance irrespective of their value.

Mr. Redwood: All construction and maintenance work, other than a limited range of highways work, carried out by local authorities on their own account, is subject to the competitive tendering provisions of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 and the regulations made thereunder. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has consulted on proposals to subject the full range of highways work to these provisions, and the responses are being considered. We have no plans to amend the regulations in respect of the limited competition-free allowances provided for work carried out by authorities for other public bodies.

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what use his Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Mr. Howard: None.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions since 1979 his Department has engaged private detective agencies to investigate the activities of British citizens; and if he will list the date and purpose of each investigation.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 18 November 1992]:* None.

Water

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to bring forward proposals for statutory annual reports and audits on water resources management in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: No. The present arrangements are adequate. They require the National Rivers Authority, among other things, to prepare annual reports on its activities, including its duty to conserve, and secure the proper use of, water resources; and to publish information from which assessments can be made of the actual and prospective demand for water and of actual and prospective water resources.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to amend the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to require all planning applications affecting sites of special scientific interest to receive direct ministerial approval.

Mr. Maclean: No. Department of the Environment circular 1/92 states that the Secretary of State will normally call in planning applications which are likely to affect SSSIs of international importance and of recognised national importance. Guidance to local authorities and others on how the conservation of our natural heritage is to be reflected in land use planning and development control is set out in circular 27/87. The guidance will be updated in a planning policy guidance note, which will be published shortly.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will undertake further investigation on the type and nature of contamination on all sites which are included on his departmental register of contaminated land.

Mr. Maclean: My Department does not keep such a register. We are considering the responses to our proposals for the compilation by local authorities of registers of land which may be contaminated. Authorities have a duty to investigate possible contamination where they consider that this may constitute a nuisance, and to ensure that action is taken where necessary.

Methyl Bromide

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies have been undertaken into atmospheric effects of methyl bromide.

Mr. Maclean: The best current understanding of the effects of methyl bromide was recently summarised and assessed by the methyl bromide science panel at the request of the United Nations Environment Programme.

Pit Closures

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account has been taken of the employment effect of pit closures in calculating standard spending assessments.

Mr. Robin Squire: Proposals for 1993-94 standard spending assessments will be announced shortly as part of the provisional revenue support grant settlement.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 12 November, *Official Report*, column 974, concerning Lord Walker, if he will give details as to the terms, including salary, on which Lord Walker has been appointed chairman-designate of the urban regeneration agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 17 November 1992]*: Lord Walker will be chairman of the urban regeneration agency when it is established. His current role as chairman-designate does not constitute a formal appointment. He will receive no remuneration as chairman-designate or as chairman.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the expenditure levels for reclamation projects in opencast mining sites for each year since 1980; and what projection for such costs are available for the next *(a)* 10 years and *(b)* 50 years.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not held centrally.

Unemployment

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment has been made of increased costs to local authorities resulting from increased unemployment levels, when calculating standard spending assessments.

Mr. Robin Squire: Proposals for standard spending assessments for 1993-94 will be announced shortly as part of the provisional revenue support grant settlement.

Portland Naval Base

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional funding will be made available to *(a)* Dorset county council and *(b)* Weymouth borough council as a result of the closure of Portland naval base; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to provide additional funding on this account through the revenue support grant settlement for 1993-94.

Pollution Control

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will determine the appeals by National Power and PowerGen under section 22(5) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 for parts of their applications for integrated pollution control authorisation to be excluded from the public register on grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Howard: I have today dismissed the appeal by PowerGen which related to forecast schedules of emission for 1991. In view of what I conclude to be the significance of the information to the process of application and authorisation and the consequent importance of its being available to the public, and my conclusions on the likelihood and extent of prejudice, I consider that the inclusion of the information in the register would not have been prejudicial to an unreasonable degree to the commercial interests of the appellant.

I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales have today jointly determined to allow National Power's appeal, which relates to different information. We are satisfied that the information is not directly relevant to determination of the applications for authorisation themselves or to any of the conditions that are likely to be imposed in the authorisations and is not necessary to enable the public to comment effectively on the applications. The information was provided in excess of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's normal requirements and is not of the type intended by the legislation to be made available to the public. In view of the lack of relevance for the purposes of integrated pollution control, we consider that any prejudice to the company's commercial interests would be unreasonable in the circumstances.

The appeals were the first of their kind under the new system and raised complex issues which required full and careful consideration. Forecast schedules of emission have been supplied by PowerGen for 1992 and are the subject of a separate appeal. Similar information in respect of 1993 will be required to be supplied to HMIP shortly by both PowerGen and National Power. It is to be hoped that any further issue of confidentiality will be resolved as soon as possible, and that determination of all the companies' applications for authorisation will then proceed without undue delay.

Orimulsion

Mr. Oakes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications he has received for authorisation to burn orimulsion; for what amounts in tonnes; and at which power stations.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 10 November 1992]:* Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has received four applications to burn orimulsion.

The applicants state that the amounts of orimulsion which each station can burn at maximum load will be as follows:

Padiham Power Station, Lancashire (National Power) approximately 43 tonnes per hour; Pembroke Power Station, Dyfed (National Power) approximately 700 tonnes per hour; Ince "B" Power Station, Cheshire (PowerGen) approximately 165 tonnes per hour and Richborough Power Station, Kent (PowerGen) approximately 126 tonnes per hour.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with local authorities about the report by the Institute of Local Government on the effects on costs and services of local government in the metropolitan areas of England following the abolition of the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Squire *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* My right hon. and learned Friend has had no such discussions.

Housing, Pendle

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will give the number of households on the waiting list of Pendle borough council for each year since 1982;

(2) what percentage of *(a)* the local authority, *(b)* housing associations, *(c)* the private sector and *(d)* the total housing stock in Pendle was assessed as requiring major expenditure to bring it up to standard, in each year since 1982.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities report in their annual housing investment programme—HIP—returns the number of dwellings in their own stock that are unfit, not unfit but in need of renovation, and those designated under the housing defects legislation and not yet reinstated, along with estimates of those owned by housing associations and in the private sector.

Since 1986, local authorities also report the number of households on their council housing waiting lists.

The information reported by Pendle is as follows:

	Percentage of housing stock requiring capital expenditure				
	LA[1 2]	*HA*	*Private*[3]	*Total*[1 2 3]	*Number of households on waiting list*
1982	26	0	40	37	n/a
1983	24	0	38	35	n/a
1984	23	0	37	34	n/a
1985	34	11	37	37	n/a
1986	39	14	37	39	1,206
1987	36	14	45	44	1,708
1988	34	5	53	50	1,481
1989	20	20	53	48	1,598
1990	22	9	48	44	1,507
1991	78	8	51	54	2,597
1992	86	9	55	58	2,901

[1] Pendle BC has provided amended local authority and total figures for 1991 since the HIP1 returns were finalised.

[2] The information collected for local authority dwellings that were not unfit but in need of renovation in 1991 and 1992 relates to all dwellings requiring capital expenditure whereas, prior to 1991, a lower limit of £3,000 was imposed.

[3] The information collected for private sector dwellings that were not unfit but in need of renovation in 1991 and 1992 relates only to dwellings whose owners were likely to be eligible for discretionary renovation grants.

[4] In 1990 Pendle borough council relaxed the conditions of entry to its waiting list for council housing.

Lleyn Peninsula

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will commission an independent assessment of the possible environmental damage from exploration for fossil fuels off the Lleyn peninsula.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

I am responding to this question in view of my ministerial responsibilities for oil and gas exploration licensing. It is the responsibility of the company holding the petroleum production licence to commission an environmental impact assessment if asked to do so in the special conditions attached to the licence. Hamilton Oil Company was awarded the two blocks north-west of the Lleyn peninsula in the 12th round of offshore oil and gas licensing. It will be required to produce such an assessment before development takes place on these blocks. The assessment will be copied to statutory bodies, such as the Joint Nature Conservancy Committee, water authorities and mineral planning authorities, which will advise if the planned development is likely to have an adverse effect on the environment.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines have been issued to local authorities concerning the treatment of attendance allowance income in respect of means-tested support services.

Mr. Yeo: I have been asked to reply.

We are in the process of issuing guidance to local authorities on the new charging rules from next April for people in residential accommodation under local authority arrangements. The guidance explains that local authorities should disregard attendance allowances and the care component of disability living allowance where it is paid to temporary residents.

We will be issuing guidance later about the treatment of attendance allowance and the care component of disability living allowance in charging for domiciliary and day care services.

Personal Social Services

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the capital allocations for personal social services issued to each local authority in England for each year since 1981-82 and the annual capital guidelines for personal social services for the same years, at current and constant prices.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 10 November 1992]*: I have been asked to reply.

Table 1 gives details of personal social services capital allocations by local authority from 1987-88, at current and constant prices. From 1990-91 the allocations include supplementary credit approvals and the secure accommodation for children grant, where applicable. Prior to 1990-91, supplementary credit approvals were not available. Information about capital allocations from 1981-82 to 1986-87 and about allocations for secure accommodation for children prior to 1990-91 could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Table 2 gives details of annual capital guideline allocations, from their introduction in 1990-91, at current and constant prices.

Capital Allocations for Personal Social Services issued to Local Authorities from 1987-88 to 1992-93

£ (000s)

	1987-88		*1988-89*		*1989-90*		*[2]1990-91*		*[2]1991-92*		*[2]1992-93*
	Current prices	*Constant prices[1]*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices[1]*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices[1]*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices[1]*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices[1]*	*Current and Constant prices[1]*
Camden	593	819	996	1,284	1,215	1,469	1,726	1,930	1,208	1,260	1,497
Greenwich	616	851	308	397	194	235	591	661	512	533	632
Hackney	432	597	566	729	643	777	698	780	893	931	885
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,113	1,538	557	718	671	811	1,271	1,421	1,072	1,118	1,014
Islington	381	527	1,357	1,749	678	820	1,275	1,426	426	444	1,004
Kensington and Chelsea	155	214	297	383	149	180	927	1,036	1,414	1,474	895
Lambeth	390	539	677	872	339	410	912	1,020	1,073	1,119	1,174
Lewisham	238	329	1,022	1,317	511	618	467	522	632	658	782
Southwark	372	514	208	268	196	237	961	1,075	1,337	1,394	918
Tower Hamlets	163	225	140	180	131	158	1,413	1,580	1,226	1,278	1,391
Wandsworth	381	527	1,278	1,647	639	773	414	463	566	590	744
Westminster	171	236	201	259	176	213	286	320	506	528	575
City of London	0	0	5	6	5	6	23	26	9	9	10
Inner London	5,005	6,917	7,612	9,810	5,545	6,704	10,965	12,260	10,873	11,336	11,520
Barking and Dagenham	115	159	145	187	134	162	242	271	343	357	367
Barnet	767	1,060	675	870	338	409	705	788	693	722	930
Bexley	183	253	208	268	195	236	352	394	538	561	647
Brent	353	488	241	311	224	271	405	453	820	854	726
Bromley	340	470	289	372	272	329	771	862	610	636	846
Croydon	274	379	302	389	318	384	498	557	699	729	886
Ealing	557	770	278	358	259	313	468	523	630	657	1,160
Enfield	278	384	827	1,066	1,026	1,241	504	564	576	600	781
Haringey	404	558	202	260	175	212	307	343	422	440	1,048
Harrow	633	875	752	969	585	707	320	358	459	479	582
Havering	184	254	766	987	383	463	375	419	467	487	626
Hillingdon	581	803	886	1,142	443	536	709	793	590	615	747
Hounslow	444	614	222	286	225	272	314	351	440	459	646
Kingston-upon-Thames	111	153	132	170	172	208	225	252	279	291	444
Merton	167	231	384	495	401	485	270	302	401	418	517
Newham	339	468	304	392	186	225	330	369	503	524	592
Redbridge	378	522	236	304	209	253	373	417	532	555	731
Richmond-upon-Thames	177	245	259	334	149	180	269	301	418	436	538
Sutton	247	341	197	254	559	676	277	310	411	428	525
Waltham Forest	345	477	636	820	471	569	757	846	874	911	882
Outer London	6,877	9,504	7,940	10,233	6,722	8,128	8,471	9,471	10,704	11,159	14,220
All London	11,882	16,420	15,551	20,042	12,267	14,832	19,436	21,731	21,578	22,495	25,740
Avon	748	1,034	976	1,258	1,043	1,261	1,559	1,743	1,993	2,078	2,368
Bedfordshire	1,199	1,657	765	986	838	1,013	825	922	1,039	1,083	1,339
Berkshire	821	1,135	1,119	1,442	1,164	1,407	1,587	1,774	1,468	1,530	1,846
Buckinghamshire	613	847	866	1,116	550	665	961	1,074	1,557	1,623	1,755
Cambridgeshire	901	1,245	692	892	691	835	1,000	1,118	1,364	1,422	1,905
Cheshire	3,851	5,322	3,530	4,549	3,058	3,697	1,950	2,180	1,969	2,053	2,259
Cleveland	477	659	687	885	481	582	841	940	1,448	1,510	1,631
Cornwall	392	542	434	559	723	874	1,093	1,222	1,004	1,047	1,208
Cumbria	457	632	466	601	440	532	783	875	1,043	1,087	1,127
Derbyshire	880	1,216	1,326	1,709	1,360	1,644	2,036	2,276	1,932	2,014	2,222
Devonshire	1,040	1,437	1,231	1,586	1,078	1,303	1,751	1,958	2,581	2,690	2,713
Dorsetshire	1,237	1,709	1,367	1,762	880	1,064	1,192	1,333	1,385	1,444	1,605
Durham	538	743	572	737	602	728	927	1,036	1,262	1,315	1,451

	1987-88		1988-89		1989-90		[2]1990-91		[2]1991-92		[2]1992-93
	Current prices	Constant prices[1]	Current prices	Constant prices[1]	Current prices	Constant prices[1]	Current prices	Constant prices[1]	Current prices	Constant prices[1]	Current and Constant prices[1]
East Sussex	1,451	2,005	807	1,040	809	978	1,665	1,862	1,821	1,898	2,133
Essex	1,254	1,733	3,466	4,467	3,615	4,371	4,434	4,958	3,239	3,377	3,994
Gloucestershire	399	551	490	631	469	567	915	1,023	1,073	1,118	1,347
Hampshire	1,343	1,856	1,543	1,989	1,576	1,906	2,729	3,051	3,290	3,429	3,925
Hereford and Worcester	583	806	1,170	1,508	898	1,086	1,063	1,189	1,349	1,406	1,632
Hertfordshire	842	1,164	929	1,197	1,000	1,209	1,514	1,693	1,968	2,052	2,432
Humberside	994	1,374	1,095	1,411	754	912	2,167	2,423	2,090	2,178	2,615
Isle of Wight	378	522	911	1,174	559	676	725	811	574	599	517
Kent	1,252	1,730	1,427	1,839	1,366	1,652	2,353	2,631	3,287	3,426	4,043
Lancashire	1,946	2,689	1,774	2,286	1,502	1,816	2,258	2,525	3,057	3,186	3,521
Leicestershire	794	1,097	1,295	1,669	1,587	1,919	1,859	2,079	1,975	2,058	2,365
Lincolnshire	434	600	538	693	523	632	913	1,021	1,186	1,236	1,359
Norfolk	755	1,043	712	918	696	842	1,179	1,318	1,565	1,632	2,004
Northamptonshire	620	857	772	995	751	908	888	993	1,298	1,353	1,589
Northumberland	289	399	288	371	272	329	477	533	677	706	782
North Yorkshire	555	767	673	867	647	782	1,124	1,257	1,592	1,659	1,776
Nottinghamshire	979	1,353	1,013	1,306	943	1,140	1,602	1,791	2,090	2,178	2,415
Oxfordshire	612	846	545	702	523	632	893	998	1,500	1,564	1,825
Shropshire	1,371	1,895	1,089	1,403	1,319	1,595	1,185	1,325	1,021	1,065	1,202
Somerset	350	484	432	557	419	507	727	813	941	981	1,142
Staffordshire	994	1,374	1,382	1,781	1,886	2,280	2,212	2,473	2,360	2,460	2,438
Suffolk	734	1,014	614	791	577	698	1,049	1,173	1,572	1,639	1,909
Surrey	1,108	1,531	972	1,253	921	1,114	1,561	1,745	2,094	2,183	2,494
Warwickshire	460	636	452	583	471	569	754	843	1,111	1,158	1,446
West Sussex	1,149	1,588	876	1,129	928	1,122	1,251	1,399	1,473	1,536	1,835
Wiltshire	485	670	836	1,077	603	729	863	965	1,431	1,491	1,635
Isles of Scilly	5	7	3	4	1	1	19	21	4	4	5
Shire Counties	35,290	48,769	40,130	51,718	38,523	46,578	54,881	61,361	65,679	68,470	77,803
Bolton	204	282	246	317	231	279	413	462	774	807	949
Bury	153	211	164	211	152	184	282	315	397	414	493
Manchester	751	1,038	428	552	396	479	695	777	951	991	1,320
Oldham	247	341	207	267	252	305	527	589	724	755	608
Rochdale	174	240	256	330	222	268	360	403	511	533	631
Salford	342	473	451	581	273	330	377	422	538	561	636
Stockport	257	355	368	474	260	314	459	513	583	608	767
Tameside	202	279	205	264	190	230	345	386	577	601	847
Trafford	184	254	207	267	192	232	346	387	488	509	595
Wigan	235	325	287	370	268	324	480	537	785	818	796
Knowsley	188	260	173	223	160	193	261	292	371	387	547
Liverpool	447	618	469	604	423	511	736	823	1,076	1,122	1,250
St. Helens	888	1,227	444	572	222	268	299	334	420	438	517
Sefton	395	546	360	464	271	328	475	531	725	756	716
Wirral	356	492	681	878	927	1,121	529	591	944	984	1,157
Barnsley	280	387	455	586	397	480	822	919	555	578	611
Doncaster	275	380	274	353	367	444	454	508	1,046	1,090	1,000
Rotherham	214	296	608	784	718	868	407	455	677	706	873
Sheffield	568	785	613	790	485	586	900	1,006	1,145	1,193	1,447
Gateshead	193	267	274	353	391	473	330	369	652	679	843
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	231	319	384	495	319	386	448	501	724	755	819
North Tyneside	176	243	186	240	170	206	313	350	389	406	539
South Tyneside	223	308	153	197	788	953	1,467	1,640	1,176	1,226	731
Sunderland	546	755	290	374	405	490	546	610	769	802	812
Birmingham	1,037	1,433	1,357	1,749	1,734	2,097	2,968	3,318	2,585	2,695	2,921
Coventry	649	897	1,060	1,366	962	1,163	678	758	1,066	1,111	1,184
Dudley	321	444	285	367	849	1,027	1,338	1,496	978	1,020	796
Sandwell	275	380	332	428	390	472	467	522	1,058	1,103	931
Solihull	161	222	188	242	179	216	324	362	750	782	810
Walsall	1,008	1,393	953	1,228	965	1,167	783	875	520	542	842
Wolverhampton	254	351	557	718	521	630	798	892	536	559	798
Bradford	488	674	432	557	407	492	713	797	1,244	1,297	1,194
Calderdale	189	261	183	236	172	208	316	353	463	483	552
Kirklees	321	444	355	458	333	403	584	653	808	843	978
Leeds	1,128	1,559	842	1,085	1,248	1,509	1,107	1,238	1,793	1,869	2,366
Wakefield	268	370	292	376	273	330	487	545	751	783	903
Metropolitan Boroughs	13,828	19,110	15,019	19,356	16,510	19,962	22,835	25,531	29,546	30,801	33,776
All England	61,000	84,299	70,700	91,116	67,300	81,372	97,152	108,624	116,804	121,768	137,319

[1] at 1992-93 prices.

[2] Includes supplementary credit approval and secure accommodation for children grant allocations where appropriate.

Table 2

Personal Social Services Annual Capital Guidelines allocated to Local Authorities from 1990-91 to 1992-93

£000s

	1990-91		*1991-92*		*1992-93*
	Current prices	*Constant prices*[1]	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*[1]	*Current and constant prices*[1]
Camden	1,048	1,172	734	765	514
Greenwich	561	627	425	443	529
Hackney	430	481	376	392	462
Hammersmith and Fulham	246	275	303	315	373
Islington	248	277	340	355	428
Kensington and Chelsea	903	1,010	632	659	442
Lambeth	350	391	476	497	571
Lewisham	336	376	457	476	560
Southwark	318	356	441	459	555
Tower Hamlets	487	545	341	355	403
Wandsworth	381	426	521	543	641
Westminster	259	290	361	377	457
City of London	7	8	9	9	10
Inner London	5,575	6,233	5,415	5,645	5,945
Barking and Dagenham	217	243	298	310	367
Barnet	669	748	626	652	769
Bexley	322	360	441	460	544
Brent	372	416	505	526	623
Bromley	735	822	610	636	753
Croydon	461	515	632	659	783
Ealing	432	483	586	610	720
Enfield	471	527	531	553	658
Haringey	279	312	377	393	470
Harrow	291	325	392	409	479
Havering	344	385	467	487	574
Hillingdon	678	758	473	493	584
Hounslow	286	320	390	406	483
Kingston-upon-Thames	201	225	279	291	351
Merton	244	273	335	349	414
Newham	295	330	403	421	499
Redbridge	342	382	472	492	588
Richmond-upon-Thames	243	272	339	354	426
Sutton	250	280	344	359	422
Waltham Forest	727	813	509	531	529
Outer London	7,859	8,787	9,010	9,393	11,035
All London	13,434	15,020	14,425	15,038	16,980
Avon	1,477	1,651	1,933	2,015	2,233
Bedfordshire	773	864	1,039	1,083	1,236
Berkshire	1,520	1,699	1,468	1,530	1,743
Buckinghamshire	902	1,009	1,240	1,293	1,482
Cambridgeshire	939	1,050	1,297	1,352	1,552
Cheshire	1,868	2,089	1,902	1,983	2,149
Cleveland	787	880	1,082	1,128	1,215
Cornwall	1,046	1,170	949	990	1,105
Cumbria	734	821	998	1,040	1,127
Derbyshire	1,956	2,187	1,866	1,945	2,129
Devonshire	1,665	1,862	2,134	2,225	2,466
Dorsetshire	1,131	1,265	1,385	1,444	1,605
Durham	870	973	1,195	1,246	1,348
East Sussex	1,600	1,789	1,516	1,580	1,780
Essex	4,312	4,821	3,077	3,208	3,641
Gloucestershire	863	965	1,073	1,118	1,244
Hampshire	2,606	2,914	3,092	3,224	3,640
Hereford and Worcester	1.001	1,119	1,349	1,406	1,529
Hertfordshire	1,430	1,599	1,968	2,052	2,329
Humberside	1,387	1,551	1,711	1,784	1,942
Isle of Wight	701	784	491	512	344
Kent	2,232	2,496	3,071	3,202	3,616
Lancashire	2,146	2,399	2,802	2,921	3,168
Leicestershire	1,782	1,992	1,772	1,847	2,027
Lincolnshire	857	958	1,186	1,236	1,359
Norfolk	1,112	1,243	1,535	1,600	1,820
Northamptonshire	833	931	1,141	1,190	1,306
Northumberland	441	493	611	636	689
North Yorkshire	1,059	1,184	1,472	1,534	1,673
Nottinghamshire	1,516	1,695	2,030	2,116	2,312
Oxfordshire	837	936	1,148	1,197	1,369
Shropshire	1,142	1,277	804	839	915

	1990-91		*1991-92*		*1992-93*
	Current prices	*Constant prices*[1]	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*[1]	*Current and constant prices*[1]
Somerset	680	760	941	981	1,096
Staffordshire	2,125	2,376	2,060	2,147	2,335
Suffolk	989	1,106	1,290	1,345	1,531
Surrey	1,476	1,650	2,027	2,113	2,391
Warwickshire	705	788	966	1,007	1093
West Sussex	1,187	1,327	1,473	1,536	1,732
Wiltshire	809	905	1,114	1,161	1,295
Isles of Scilly	3	3	4	4	5
Shire Counties	51,496	57,577	60,212	62,771	69,569
Bolton	380	425	524	547	596
Bury	255	285	352	367	400
Manchester	649	726	884	922	1,002
Oldham	497	556	437	456	495
Rochdale	331	370	408	425	462
Salford	346	387	473	493	533
Stockport	424	474	583	608	656
Tameside	315	352	436	454	494
Trafford	316	353	433	452	488
Wigan	443	495	612	638	693
Knowsley	235	263	305	318	344
Liverpool	688	769	935	975	1,047
St. Helens	271	303	375	391	424
Sefton	439	491	607	633	684
Wirral	491	549	677	706	762
Barnsley	792	886	555	578	501
Doncaster	419	468	579	604	657
Rotherham	374	418	500	522	568
Sheffield	848	948	1,078	1,123	1,216
Gateshead	301	337	415	432	464
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	413	462	563	587	632
North Tyneside	284	318	389	406	436
South Tyneside	1,441	1,611	1,009	1,051	706
Sunderland	510	570	582	607	654
Birmingham	1,434	1,603	1,965	2,048	2,221
Coventry	642	718	603	628	681
Dudley	1,302	1,456	911	950	693
Sandwell	431	482	591	616	668
Solihull	295	330	405	422	457
Walsall	750	839	520	542	589
Wolverhampton	766	856	536	559	563
Bradford	665	744	919	958	1,041
Calderdale	287	321	396	413	449
Kirklees	543	607	747	779	845
Leeds	1,042	1,165	1,434	1,495	1,622
Wakefield	450	503	624	651	710
Metropolitan boroughs	20,070	22,440	23,364	24,357	25,452
All England	85,000	95,037	98,000	102,165	112,000

[1] At 1992-93 prices.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will update his answer of 17 June, *Official Report*, columns *552-53*, on the executive agencies that have been established to date, the number of staff at the time of establishment and the number of staff currently employed in each case, in full-time equivalents.

Mr. Waldegrave: The current list of established agencies including organisations that are operating on next steps lines, comparing the number of staff employed at the time of launch with latest staffing figures, is as follows:

Agency	*Staff at launch*	*Current staff*[1]
Accounts Services Agency	90	90
ADAS Agency	2,000	2,000
Building Research Establishment	680	710
Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments)	220	230
Central Office of Information[2]	740	640
Central Science Laboratory	370	370
Central Statistical Office	1,090	1,160
Central Veterinary Laboratory	620	600
Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment[3]	580	610
Civil Service College	200	230
Companies House[2]	1,100	1,090
Compensation Agency[4]	150	150
Defence Analytical Services Agency[3]	140	130
Defence Operational Analysis Centre[3]	170	170
Defence Postal and Courier Services[3]	490	490
Defence Research Agency	12,000	11,250
Directorate General of Defence Accounts[3]	2,180	2,060
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency	5,400	4,570

Agency	*Staff at launch*	*Current staff*[1]
Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency[4]	260	260
Driving Standards Agency	2,000	1,980
Duke of York's Royal Military School	100	100
DVOIT	515	515
Employment Service	33,800	46,000
Fire Service College[2]	270	270
Forensic Science Service	600	600
Historic Royal Palaces	350	340
Historic Scotland	610	630
HMSO[2]	3,250	3,220
Hydrographic Office[3]	890	830
Insolvency Service	1,400	1,550
Intervention Board	1,000	970
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	300	330
Land Registry	10,800	9,560
Medicines Control Agency	310	300
Meteorological Office	2,450	2,500
Military Survey[3]	1,265	1,180
National Engineering Laboratory	430	380
National Physical Laboratory	830	810
National Weights and Measures Laboratory	40	50
Natural Resources Institute	460	460
Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation[3]	1,630	1,610
NHS Estates	120	130
NHS Pensions	630	630
Occupational Health Service	100	125
Ordnance Survey	2,550	2,340
Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland[4]	210	210
Patent Office[2]	1,150	1,035
Planning Inspectorate	605	605
Public Record Office	430	430
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre	50	60
Queen Victoria School	65	70
Radiocommunications Agency	520	520
RAF Maintenance[3]	13,800	12,900
Rate Collection Aency[4]	270	280
Recruitment and Assessment Services	280	230
Registers of Scotland	1,000	1,340
Royal Mint[2]	970	1,010
Scottish Agricultural Science Agency	140	140
Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency	250	210
Service Children's Schools (NW Europe)[3,6]	1,000	1,050
Social Security Agency[4]	5,500	5,100
Social Security Benefits Agency	65,600	62,760
Social Security Contributions Agency	7,200	8,310
Social Security IT Services Agency	3,600	4,070
Social Security Resettlement Agency	600	460
Teachers' Pension Agency	290	290
The Buying Agency[3]	110	80
Training and Employment Agency[4]	1,700	1,670
Transport Research Laboratory	630	630
UK Passport Agency	1,270	1,270
Valuation Office	5,250	5,120
Vehicle Certification Agency	70	70
Vehicle Inspectorate[2]	1,600	1,820
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	70	80
Warren Spring Laboratory	290	300
Wilton Park Conference Centre	30	30
76 Agencies		
Executive Units		
HM Customs and Excise[5]	26,900	26,400
Inland Revenue	63,780	63,780

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[1] April 1992 figures for civil servants and armed forces personnel. Casuals are excluded. Part-time staff are counted as half units.

[2] Trading fund.

[3] Defence Support Agency.

[4] Northern Ireland Civil Service.

[5] Departments operating fully on next steps lines. Staffing figures for Inland Revenue exclude the Valuation Office which is a free-standing agency.

[6] Launch figure excludes 1,360 locally engaged staff. Current figure excludes 1,285 locally engaged staff.

[7] Launch figure includes 8,430 armed forces personnel in Ministry of Defence agencies, current figure includes 7,730 armed forces personnel in Ministry of Defence agencies.

Medical Research

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much Government aid has been given since 1979 for research into *(a)* the causes and *(b)* potential cures of (i) cancer and (ii) AIDS.

Mr. Robert Jackson *[holding answer 18 November 1992]:* The main Government agency for the funding of medical research is the Medical Research Council. Between 1979-80 and 1991-92, MRC total expenditure on research specifically related to cancer was £142 million. The MRC also supports research which is more general in its application but is also likely to be relevant to cancer; it estimates that it spent £73 million on such research in 1991-92. Information is not collected centrally on other Government-funded expenditure on cancer research undertaken by university departments and medical schools, health departments or health authorities.

Information on Government support for AIDS research has been collected since 1986-87. Over the period 1986-87 to 1992-93 an estimated £105 million has been devoted by Government to AIDS research. This figure excludes expenditure by university departments and medical schools on research funded by the Government through the Universities Funding Council.

It is not possible separately to identify research expenditure on the causes and cures of cancer or AIDS.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Concessionary Television Licences

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will arrange for concessionary television licences to be available to households consisting of registered blind adults; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: A television licence is not required where broadcast television signals are received in sound only through a specially adapted monitor such as that supplied by the Royal National Institute for the Blind. A reduction of £1·25 on the cost of a television licence was instituted in 1971 when radio licences were abolished and is available to all registered blind people not resident in a public or charitable institution or in a school.

WALES

Pembrokeshire Hospital Trust

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the Pembrokeshire hospital trust business plan which has been submitted to his Department.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Pembrokeshire NHS trust has submitted a draft business plan which is subject to further discussion. The NHS trust will be required to make a summary of the plan widely available in due course.

Waiting Time Initiative

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each health authority in Wales, for each of the last three years and for the current financial year, the allocation his Department has made under the waiting time initiative, giving details of the schemes for which the money has been specified.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is as follows:

Waiting times initiative: Funding and Schemes 1989-90—1992-93

District	*1989-90*		*1990-91*	
	Allocation £	*Schemes*	*Allocation* £	*Schemes*
Clwyd	34,000	Purchase additional hip replacement operations.	40,000	ENT: additional in-patient operations to reduce waiting list.
East Dyfed	11,800	Dermatology: additional out-patient sessions at West Wales General Hospital.	102,000	Dermatology: additional out-patient, in-patient, and day cases to eliminate out-patient wait over three months.
Gwent	222,000	Trauma and orthopaedics: additional in-patient and out-patient.	249,000	Trauma and orthopaedics: additional in-patients and new out-patients.
Gwynedd	36,679	(i) Gynaecology: additional in-patient treatments. (ii) Oral surgery: additional out-patients at Ysbyty Gwynedd and in-patients at Llandudno General.	57,460	Additional in-patients in ENT and gynaecology.
Mid Glamorgan	298,126	(i) ENT: additional in-patient, out-patient and day case activity in Ogwr, Rhondda and Taff Ely. (ii) Dermatology: additional out-patients in Ogwr. (iii) Orthopaedics: additional out-patients in Ogwr and Taff Ely.	216,000	(i) ENT: additional in-patient, out-patient and day case activity district wide. (ii) Dermatology: additional out-patients to reduce list over three months for first out-patient appointment.
Pembrokeshire	130,000	Purchase of additional hip replacement operations from the private sector.	110,000	(i) General surgery: additional in-patients district wide. (ii) Trauma and orthopaedics: additional hip and knee operations. (iii) District-wide waiting list validation exercise.
Powys	20,000	Additional in-patient cataract operations,	8,500	General surgery: additional in-patients at Bronglais General Hospital.
South Glamorgan	254,313	Trauma and orthopaedics: additional in-patient and out-patient activity district wide.	117,855	Trauma and orthopaedics: additional in-patient treatments district wide.
West Glamorgan	102,479	(i) Trauma and orthopaedics: additional out-patients at North Unit. (ii) Dermatology: additional out-patients at North and East Units. (iii) Minor operations: additional in-patients at East Unit.	105,000	Trauma and orthopaedics: additional out-patients, in-patients and day cases district wide.

District	*1991-92*		*1992-93*	
	Allocation £	*Schemes*	[1] [2]*Allocation* £	*Schemes*
Clwyd	75,000	(i) Additional in-patient urology operations at Ysbyty Maelor. (ii) Additional orthopaedic operations at Glan Clwyd.	103,500 (36,800)	
East Dyfed	48,000	(i) Equipment to permit an additional day case cataract operation session per week. (ii) Additional urology/lithotripsy operations.	84,000 (5,900)	
Gwent	60,000	(i) Additional day cases in general surgery, gynaecology and orthopaedics at Nevill Hall. (ii) Additional out-patient sessions in orthopaedics/physiotherapy at Royal Gwent.	132,000 (16,800)	

District	*1991-92*		*1992-93*	
	Allocation £	*Schemes*	[1] [2]*Allocation* £	*Schemes*
Gwynedd	36,000	ENT: Additional in-patients at Ysbyty Gwynedd.	85,000	
Mid Glamorgan	170,000	(i) ENT: Additional in-patient treatments at Prince Charles and East Glamorgan Hospitals. (ii) Two additional out-patient clincs in Merthyr/Cynon Valley Unit. (iii) Dermatology: additional out-patients district wide.	170,500 (17,200)	
Pembrokeshire	—	No allocation made.	35,500	
Powys	18,000	District wide additional out-patient sessions in ENT, general surgery, ophthalmology and orthopaedics.	38,500 (2,100)	
South Glamorgan	215,000	(i) Day surgery equipment at UHW. (ii) Surgical: lasers for UHW.	123,000 (4,200)	
West Glamorgan	256,000	(i) Orthopaedics: additional out-patients at Neath General Hospital. (ii) Urology: additional day case treatments at Morriston. (iii) Ophthalmology: equipment to facilitate extra ophthalmologist at Singleton Hospital. (iv) Orthopaedics: additional in-patients, out-patients and day cases at Morriston Hospital.	108,000 (17,000)	

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[1] Figures in brackets are allocations to family health service authorities, on behalf of GP fund holders. 1992-93 is the first year that initiative funds have been allocated to both DHAs and GP fund holders.

[2] In 1992-93 allocations were not made to specific projects but were used to support DHA and GP fund-holder initiatives aimed at meeting the patients charter waiting times guarantees.

HCFC22

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what quantity of HCFC22 is purchased by his Department per annum.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not available.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many catastrophic leaks of ozone-depleting substances have occurred within his Department's buildings in the past five years.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much funding has been allocated or spent to deal specifically with measures to reduce his Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances.

Mr. David Hunt: Funds are not specifically earmarked by my Department for this purpose. Measures to reduce consumption of these substances are taken as part of our general procurement arrangements and the costs involved are not separately identifiable.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the quantity of ozone-depleting substances recycled within his Department and returned to the manufacturer.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not available.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance has been sought and received on alternatives or substitutes to the ozone-destroying chemicals in use by his Department.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department receives guidance on an ongoing basis from the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many chlorofluorocarbon domestic fridges are contained within his Department's buildings.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what proportion of his Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances becomes controlled waste in terms of section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990;

(2) what action has been taken to ensure that ozone-destroying substances consumed by his Department are identified as controlled wastes when they are no longer in use;

(3) what measures have been taken to ensure that ozone-destroying substances in use by his Department identified as controlled waste under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 do not reach the atmosphere.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department works within the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to ensure all its "controlled waste" is properly and legally dealt with. However, information is not collected centrally about the disposal of "controlled waste".

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what targets have been set for the recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals within his Department's buildings.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department's policy is to ensure that wherever practicable these substances are recovered for recycling.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many refrigeration and air conditioning systems in his Department are equipped with automatic leak detection systems.

Mr. David Hunt: None. However, all systems are subject to a stringent maintenance regime intended readily to detect any abnormalities.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many chlorofluorocarbon and hydrochlorofluorocarbon installations are contained within his Department's buildings.

Mr. David Hunt: These installations are present in six properties occupied by my Department.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales by what date his Department's use of ozone-depleting chemicals will conform to EC regulations on limits on these chemicals.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) on 22 June 1992, at column *69*.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which current uses of ozone-depleting chemicals by his Department are considered essential.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department has not identified any direct uses of these chemicals which it considers essential.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give an undertaking to purchase only ozone-friendly fridges that do not contain chlorofluorocarbons or hydrochlorofluorocarbons for his Department.

Mr. David Hunt: Yes. I can give an undertaking that my Department will purchase only ozone-friendly fridges, provided that they are available and offer good value for money.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what the latest available figures are for his Department's total purchase of chlorofluorocarbons and hydrocholorofluorocarbons.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not available.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide details from the maintenance and servicing record of the quantity and type of ozone-destroying chemicals used annually in his Department's refrigeration and air conditioning equipment for servicing and in leakages; and what proportion is removed for recycling.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not available.

Halon Fire Extinguishers

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many portable halon fire extinguishers are contained within his Department's buildings; and what measures are being taken to ensure their recycling and replacement.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department has 57 halon fire extinguishers remaining in buildings it occupies. These are all due to be replaced in this financial year with the appropriate ozone-friendly alternatives. They will be removed and disposed of safely under controlled conditions with their contents being recycled in accordance with the relevant British standard.

Business Rates

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which local authorities in Wales have granted applications for relief under section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In the period from 1 April 1990 to 31 March 1992 Llanelli borough council, Newport borough council, Cardiff city council and Lliw Valley borough council granted applications for relief under section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

Farm and Countryside Grant Scheme

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 2 November, *Official Report*, column *9*, (1) what was the total financial sum of the disallowed claims under the farm and countryside grant scheme for each of the years *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1990, *(c)* 1991 and *(d)* 1992 to 30 September;

(2) what was the total financial sum of the disallowed claims for sheep annual premium for each of the years *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1990, *(c)* 1991 and *(d)* 1992 to 30 October.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what use his Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Tir Cymen

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to extend the Tir Cymen scheme to the whole of Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Tir Cymen is the countryside stewardship scheme in Wales. It has been introduced for a period of five years as an experimental project in three areas because it is the first environmental incentive scheme for all farmed landscapes and habitats in a large area and it is essential to evaluate the administrative, financial and monitoring systems adopted. The extension of the scheme will depend on the outcome of that evaluation and the resources then available.

Household Waste

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the local authorities in Wales that plan to *(a)* fulfil and *(b)* exceed Government targets for local authority recycling of 25 per cent. of all household waste by the year 2000.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

1987—None.
1988—1 buzzard.
1989—4 buzzards, 6 red kites.
1990—2 buzzards.
1991—2 buzzards, 1 red kite, 1 peregrine falcon.
1992—To date 1 buzzard and 3 red kites.

Departmental Printing

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the value of his Department's total annual expenditure on printing for each of the past 10 financial years; what tendering procedure has been followed; and if it has been changed since 1982-83.

Mr. David Hunt: Annual expenditure on printing costs for the past five financial years is as follows:

Year	*£(000's)*
1987-88	378
1988-89	458
1989-90	560
1990-91	543
1991-92	489

Figures for earlier years are not available.

Prior to September 1991 the majority of the Department's printing requirements were met under standing arrangements with HMSO. Purchasing since that date has been conducted entirely on the basis of competitive tendering for individual tasks.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the population-based formula for public expenditure for Wales, referred to in his press notice of 12 November, as it applied for *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: The population-based formula for public expenditure which applied until 1992-93 provided adjustments in the Welsh block provision equal to 5·88 per cent. of the survey changes agreed for comparable programmes in England. For 1993-94 the formula has been updated to 6·02 per cent. to take account of the latest estimated population relativity between the two countries.

PRIME MINISTER

Kashmir

Mr. Cox: To ask the Prime Minister if he will seek to place the issue of Kashmir on the agenda of the next Commonwealth conference to take place during 1993 in Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government believe the Kashmir dispute can be resolved only by peaceful agreement between India and Pakistan. We have offered to help to achieve a lasting settlement, if both sides wish us to do so.

Engagements

2. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 19 November.

3. **Sir Peter Tapsell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 19 November.

4. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Iraq

10. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Prime Minister when he became aware that Bank of Credit and Commerce International accounts were being used to facilitate arms trading with Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* I have no such knowledge.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Expenditure

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his autumn statement of 12 November, what are the percentage figures for expenditure under the population-related formula on Wales and Northern Ireland comparable to the 10·66 per cent. specified for Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The comparable figure for Wales, reflecting the population figures in the 1991 census, is 6·02 per cent. For Northern Ireland it is 2·87 per cent.

Iraq

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the reasons for the dropping by Customs and Excise of their prosecution at Dover magistrates court in July against Contractors 600 for illegal exportation to Iraq of lathes supplied by the Colchester Lathe Company; what payments of fines were made by the company; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* The proceedings referred to were in respect of the export of castings without the requisite licence. The alleged offence was under section 68(1) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 which does not allege fraudulent intent.

Proceedings in this case were stayed following an agreement by the commissioners in the exercise of their authority under section 152 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 to compound proceedings on payment of £75,000.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the extent of the change of the number of criminal cases listed for magistrates courts in England and Wales during the current year.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not available. I understand that "Home Office Criminal Statistics" for 1991, the latest year available, are expected to be published within the next few months.

Lord Justice Scott

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list those cases, or other tribunals, over which Lord Justice Scott is currently presiding or participating; and what cases are currently listed in which he is due to preside or participate.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Lord Justice Scott was sitting as a member of a three-judge Court of Appeal, hearing appeals in the ordinary course of the court's business which might concern a wide variety of subject matters. He is now devoting all of his time to the inquiry.

It is impossible to give any firm indication of the cases listed before the court of which he would have been a member, since cases are only provisionally listed until the availability of judges is known. It is often necessary to make changes at short notice to such lists.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list those agencies in the Lord Chancellor's Department which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 17 November, *Official Report*, column *104*, by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Services and Science to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) who asked what plans my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster had to review the status of agencies set up as part of the Government's next steps programme; and whether a statement would be made. The procedures outlined in that answer will apply to the Public Record Office and the Land Registry, the agencies for which the Lord Chancellor is responsible. An announcement about the future status of each agency will be made at the appropriate time.

Trial Delays

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the average length of time between committal and trial at Crown courts *(a)* for each of the last five years and *(b)* for the latest date available.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The table shows the average waiting time between committal to the Crown court for trial and start of hearing for each year since 1987.

Committals for Trial—Waiting Times
England and Wales

1987 — 12·3 weeks
1988 — 12·2 weeks
1989 — 12·4 weeks
1990 — 12·1 weeks
1991 — 12·6 weeks
1992 (January to September) — 13·6 weeks

Legal Aid

Dr. Berry: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proposals he has to alter the categories of representation on immigration matters available under the legal aid green form scheme.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the sum total of money recovered in each year since 1987, by the Legal Aid Board and its predecessor by way of costs recovered either by award or by agreement between parties *(a)* in total, *(b)* for matrimonial legal aid and *(c)* for personal injuries.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The net sum of costs recovered by way of award or agreement between the parties by the Legal Aid Board in matrimonial cases and in total was as follows:

Year	*Matrimonial*	*Civil Non-matrimonial*	*Total*
	£	£	£
1987-88	3,567	41,473	46,473
1988-89	3,670	51,867	57,294
1989-90	3,995	63,916	69,220
1990-91	3,615	73,188	78,216
1991-92	3,751	91,916	97,170

Information on the amount of costs recovered by the Legal Aid Board in respect of personal injury cases is not available separately, but is included in the figures for non-matrimonial cases.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how much has been paid by the Legal Aid Board and its predecessor to accountants in each year since 1987 *(a)* in total and *(b)* in respect of matrimonial legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Legal Aid Board does not specifically maintain statistics on the amounts it pays in respect of accountants' fees. It does, however, publish the amount paid on disbursements, of which accountants' fees are an element, in its annual reports. In each year between 1987-88 and 1991-92, the following amounts were paid by the Legal Aid Board in respect of disbursements, in total and in matrimonial cases:

£000s

Year	*Total Disbursements*	*Matrimonial Disbursements*
1987-88	33,478	8,653
1988-89	39,971	10,657
1989-90	49,791	11,224
1990-91	61,774	13,239
1991-92	84,788	15,897

Miss Lestor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many legal aid certificates were issued which were valid up to and including trial in each year since 1987.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of criminal legal aid orders granted, which cover all necessary proceedings including trial, in each year between 1987 and 1991 was as follows:

	Number
1987	612,008
1988	621,151
1989	642,652
1990	657,665
1991	661,215

The number of civil legal aid certificates issued during the same period was as follows:

	Number
1987	233,497
1988	225,996
1989	259,157
1990	297,555
1991	337,301

It is not possible to distinguish between civil legal aid certificates which cover the whole of the proceedings and those which cover only part of the case.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the sum of money recovered in each year since 1987 by the Legal Aid Board and its predecessor by way of contributions towards legal aid by the assisted persons *(a)* in total, *(b)* for matrimonial aid and *(c)* for personal injuries.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The net sum of contributions towards legal aid by assisted persons collected by the Legal Aid Board in matrimonial cases and in total was as follows:

£ thousands

	Matrimonial	*Civil non-matrimonial*	*Total*
1987-88	5,818	5,344	15,381
1988-89	6,284	5,690	16,608
1989-90	6,852	6,417	18,779
1990-91	6,889	6,824	20,073
1991-92	7,116	7,039	19,656

Information on the amount of contributions retained by the Legal Aid Board in respect of personal injury cases is not available separately but is included in the figures for non-matrimonial cases.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) how much money has been paid out in total by the Legal Aid Board and its predecessor in each year since 1987, in respect of experts' fees.

(2) how much money has been paid out by the Legal Aid Board and its predecessor in each year since 1987 in respect of experts' fees in personal injuries cases where the plaintiff was legally aided.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Legal Aid Board does not maintain information specifically on the amounts it pays in respect of experts' fees. It does, however, publish the amounts paid on disbursements, of which experts' fees and court fees form a substantial element, in its annual reports. The information provided by the board in its annual reports is broken down into matrimonial, non-matrimonial and criminal magistrates cases only. The amount paid out in respect of personal injury cases is not shown separately but is included in the figures for non-matrimonial cases. The table sets out the amounts paid in disbursements by the board during the past five years.

Financial year	*Matrimonial (approx.)* *(£)*	*Non-matrimonial (approx.)* *(£)*	*Criminal magistrates'* *(£)*
1987-88	10,734,559	18,114,601	4,628,434
1988-89	12,733,551	21,933,247	5,304,540
1989-90	14,737,109	28,846,229	6,207,426
1990-91	18,371,514	36,351,321	7,050,742
1991-92	23,975,952	52,028,421	8,783,886

Miss Lestor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many legal aid certificates were issued in each year since 1987 which were *(a)* limited in the scope of the work that might be undertaken or *(b)* limited by reference to a particular stage in the proceedings before trial.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Legal Aid Board does not keep statistics on the number of civil legal aid certificates issued with limitations. The total number of certificates issued in each year between 1987-88 and 1991-92 was as follows:

In year	*Certificates*
1987-88	233,487
1988-89	225,996
1989-90	259,157
1990-91	297,555
1991-92	337,301

Miss Lestor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what has been the total cost to the legal aid fund of the cases involving *(a)* the Birmingham Six, *(b)* the Guildford Four, *(c)* the Maguire family, *(d)* Judith Ward, *(e)* Guinness and *(f)* Barlow Clowes (i) up to and including the trial stage and (ii) up to and including the appeal stage, including references by the Home Secretary to the Court of Appeal.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is not possible to give the total cost to the Legal Aid Fund in respect of each of those cases. In some instances information is no longer available, and in others claims have yet to be finally determined. The position in respect of each case is as follows:

(a) information on the costs of the original trial and 1976 appeal of the Birmingham Six is no longer available. The cost of the 1987 appeal was £752,461. The cost of the Home Secretary's referral to the Court of Appeal in 1991 has yet to be finally determined;

(b) information on the costs of the original trial and subsequent appeal of the Guildford Four is no longer available. The cost of the Home Secretary's referral to the Court of Appeal was £426,494;

(c) the cost of the Home Secretary's referral of the Maguire family case to the Court of Appeal was £284,814. No other information is available;

(d) the cost of the original trial of Judith Ward was £29,582. The cost of the Home Secretary's referral to the Court of Appeal has yet to be determined;

(e) to date around £1·3 million has been paid out of the Legal Aid Fund and central fund to the defence in the Guinness trials. Not all the expected claims have yet been received and the final amount is yet to be determined;

(f) the final costs to the Legal Aid Fund for the Barlow Clowes case have yet to be determined.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was spent by the Legal Aid Board in each year since 1987 on *(a)* matrimonial legal aid and *(b)* personal injury cases.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Net expenditure on legal aid by the Legal Aid Board in respect of matrimonial cases between 1987-88 and 1991-92 was as follows:

Matrimonial

	£000's
1987-88	53,631
1988-89	68,398
1989-90	71,223
1990-91	85,855
1991-92	115,806

Information on the amount spent on personal injury cases is not readily available, although such expenditure forms part of non-matrimonial legal aid for which expenditure during the same period was as follows:

Non-Matrimonial

	£000's
1987-88	43,998
1988-89	54,429
1989-90	76,500
1990-91	102,801
1991-92	160,925

Miss Lestor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what direction he has made to the Legal Aid Board to enter into contractual arrangements with Mrs. Bruce and similar persons to provide specialist welfare advice to solicitors following the comments of the House of Lords in the case of Regina v. Legal Aid Board ex parte Bruce.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None. Solicitors with knowledge of the benefits system may provide advice through the green form scheme. The Legal Aid Board has recently published its proposals on the provision of franchises and is considering how these would apply to advice agencies.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the sum of money recovered in each year since 1987, by the Legal Aid Board and its predecessor by way of the statutory charge *(a)* in total, *(b)* for matrimonial legal aid and *(c)* for personal injuries.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The amounts retained by the Legal Aid Board by way of the statutory charge in each year between 1987-88 and 1991-92 was as follows:

£ thousands

	Matrimonial	*Civil non-matrimonial*	*Total*
1987-88	19,309	3,752	23,061
1988-89	26,359	4,760	31,120
1989-90	24,231	5,316	29,547
1990-91	24,708	5,963	30,671
1991-92	27,929	6,817	34,746

Information on the sums recovered by the Legal Aid Board in respect of personal injury cases is not available separately, but the amounts are included in the figures for non-matrimonial cases.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how much money has been paid out by the Legal Aid Board and its predecessor in each year since 1987 to experts employed by the defence in criminal cases.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Legal Aid Board does not maintain information specifically on the amounts it pays in respect of experts' fees for criminal proceedings in the magistrates courts. It does, however, publish the amount paid on disbursements, of which experts' fees and court fees form a substantial element, in its annual report. In each year between 1987-88 and 1991-92, the following amounts were paid by the Legal Aid Board in respect of disbursements in criminal—magistrates courts—proceedings.

Disbursements

In year	*(£'000)*
1987-88	4,628
1988-89	5,305
1989-90	6,207
1990-91	7,051
1991-92	8,784

Miss Lestor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what are the most recent annual figures available for the cost of legal aid cases for care proceedings in respect of children.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The most recent figures available cover the period October 1991 to September 1992, being the first full year of operation of the Act. The Legal Aid Board estimates that the amount paid out during this time was £6·7 million.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what reports have been received from Professors Paterson and Sherr on legal aid franchising; and when they will be published.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Legal Aid Board has received one research report on franchising from Professors Paterson and Sherr and expects that it will be published in the early part of 1993.

Care Proceedings

Miss Lestor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has for legislation to require courts to order the unsuccessful party in care proceedings in respect of children to pay the costs of the proceedings.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None.

Mr. Abid Ali

Mr. Madden: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when the appellate authority received an explanatory statement from an entry clearance officer at the post in Islamabad in the case of Mr. Abid Ali —Ref: GV 100/16103/TAH—who first applied to join his fiancée in the United Kingdom on 25 March 1986; when his appeal hearing is to be listed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The independent appellate authority received an explanatory statement in the case of Mr. Abid Ali in relation to his settlement application on 23 June 1989 and another concerning his visit visa appeal on 2 July 1992. The appeals were heard together at Leeds on 16 November 1992; the visit visa appeal was withdrawn at the hearing and the adjudicator reserved judgment in the settlement appeal.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the Government's summary of conclusions to the wages council consultations in 1988.

Mr. McLoughlin: There were 394 responses to the consultation document. Of these, 80 favoured abolition, 308 wanted the councils to be retained and six were inconclusive. The replies from employer organisations with seats on the councils showed a marked change of view since the 1985 consultations, when the majority wanted the system retained. Replies from employer bodies represented on the six largest councils, which embraced 94 per cent. of the workers covered by the system, showed that a majority wanted the councils abolished.

Trade Union Commissioner

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the cost to public funds of setting up the office of the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members; and what has been the cost of running the office in each year since its establishment.

Mr. McLoughlin: The White Paper accounts of the independent Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members show the costs of setting up and running the commissioner's office, in each financial year since its establishment were:

	£000
1988-89	252,000
1989-90	246,000
1990-91	260,000
1991-92	290,000

Health and Safety

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many deaths and serious accidents due to workplace activities have been reported in each year since 1974.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information based on injuries reported in Great Britain is provided in the table.

Number of fatal and serious injuries[2], 1974 to 1990-91, as reported to all HSC/E enforcing authorities

	Employees		*Self employed*		*Members of the public*	
	Fatals	*Major[3]*	*Fatals*	*Major[3]*	*Fatals*	*Major[3]*
1974	651	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	—	—
1975	620	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	—	—
1976	584	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	—	—
1977	524	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	—	—
1978	499	[1]—	123	[1]—	—	—
1979	492	[1]—	123	[1]—	—	—
1980	440	[1]—	139	—	—	—
1981	441	12,320	54	91	7	5,600
1982	472	12,290	48	127	8	5,600
1983	448	12,450	65	114	8	6,300
1984	438	12,490	60	144	10	6,700
1985	400	13,180	71	206	[4]159	6,900
1986-87	355	20,695	52	690	92	14,575
1987-88	361	20,057	84	867	113	12,880
1988-89	[5]529	19,944	80	1,152	121	12,614
1989-90	370	20,396	105	1,310	[6]206	11,378
1990-91	346	19,896	87	1,326	139	9,981

[1] — Not available.

[2] Injuries at work to employees and self-employed persons and members of the public injured as a result of someone else's work activity reported under various pieces of legislation, but chiefly the Factories Act 1961 for the calendar years prior to 1981, under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NADOR) for the calendar years 1981 to 1985, and under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) for the subsequent financial years commencing 1 April 1986.

[3] Introduced under NADOR on 1 January 1981. Definition extended under RIDDOR, 1 April 1986.

[4] Data includes the 56 fatalities to members of the public in the Bradford City Football Club fire disaster.

[5] Includes the 167 fatalities in the Piper Alpha Disaster, 6 July 1988.

[6] Data includes the 95 fatalities and 766 major injuries to members of the public arising from the Hillsborough Stadium disaster.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many deaths due to industrial diseases and health-disabling diseases have been reported as due to workplace activity in each year since 1974.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available figures for deaths due to asbestosis, mesothelioma and other prescribed industrial diseases are given in the table.

Deaths from Occupational Diseases in Great Britain

	Asbestosis	*Mesothelioma*	*Other diseases*
1974	74	245	789
1975	97	271	818
1976	116	315	814
1977	132	336	737
1978	109	390	719
1979	102	434	710
1980	102	458	697
1981	137	472	633
1982	128	504	624
1983	121	573	655
1984	129	624	531
1985	140	615	587
1986	166	702	524
1987	144	808	487
1988	152	862	—
1989	157	900	—
1990	163	882	—

For asbestosis and mesothelioma, the numbers are of death certificates mentioning these conditions. An estimated 100 mesotheliomas annually are not asbestos related. For other diseases, the numbers are for awards of death benefit under the industrial injuries scheme up to the discontinuation of this benefit in April 1988.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on how many occasions the current director of field operations of the Health and Safety Executive has inspected a factory; and what are his managerial qualifications for his post.

Mr. McLoughlin: The director of field operations—DFO—does not, as a matter of policy, carry out inspections at factories or other premises for which the Health and Safety Executive—HSE—is the enforcing authority.

The DFO has overall management responsibility for more than 1,900 staff covering a wide range of duties in the field operations division. Inspection of factories is but one aspect of the work of the factory inspectorate and is undertaken by factory inspectors based in each of HSE's 20 area offices.

The current DFO has extensive managerial experience with HSE and has taken part in management and development training programmes within and external to the civil service.

Over-50s

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what training opportunities are available to those over 50 years of age who find themselves out of work.

Mr. McLoughlin: All the Government's employment and training measures are open to those over 50 years of age who satisfy the relevant entry conditions, including length of unemployment where appropriate.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps she is taking to maintain employment prospects for those over 50 years of age.

Mr. McLoughlin: We are keen to improve employment prospects for people of all ages and believe that discrimination on the grounds of age is wasteful and shortsighted. We are encouraging employers to abandon arbitrary age limits in recruitment and to adopt personnel policies which treat everyone on their merits. Employers should be making more effective use of the skills and experience of people over 50. I am confident that the advisory group on older workers, whose membership I shall announce shortly, will help change employers' attitudes towards this age group.

Labour Statistics

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of full-time employees have worked for their current employer for less than two years, in each standard planning region.

Mr. McLoughlin: The spring 1992 labour force survey shows that the proportions of full-time employees who had worked for their current employer for less than two years in each region were as follows:

	Percentage
South-East	24·9
East Anglia	24·5
South-West	24·9
West Midlands	22·6
East Midlands	21·3
Yorks and Humberside	24·7
North-West	22·0
Northern	23·7
Wales	25·2
Scotland	24·0
Northern Ireland	20·8

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of employees currently working part-time in the United Kingdom have worked with their present employer for less than five years, in each standard planning region.

Mr. McLoughlin: The spring 1992 labour force survey shows that the proportions of part-time employees who had worked for their current employer for less than five years in each region, were as follows.

	Percentage
South-East	66·6
East Anglia	64·1
South-West	65·4
West Midlands	63·1
East Midlands	63·3
Yorks and Humberside	66·2
North-West	61·5
Northern	62·6
Wales	63·8
Scotland	63·3
Northern Ireland	54·6

Wages Councils

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will place in the Library a copy of the research commissioned by her Department on the effect of abolition of wages councils on employment prospects for women.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department has commissioned several studies on the general economic effects of the wages councils. They suggest that the abolition of wages councils should improve employment prospects in the wages council industries, where the majority of workers are women. However, the studies do not focus exclusively on the prospects for women.

Pesticides

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action is to be taken against the pesticides contractor involved in case No. C132/91 investigated by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive—HSE—considers that there was insufficient evidence to prove that the contractor involved in case number C.132/91 investigated by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration—PCA—was in breach of any health and safety legislation. The PCA found that HSE had acted correctly in its assessment of the work of the contractor.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action she intends to take following the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration's second report 1992-93 in case No. C132/91 involving Mrs. Bettina Jonic Calder.

Mr. McLoughlin: Following the report by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration into Mrs. Calder's complaint, the Health and Safety Executive has introduced procedural changes relating to its dealings with members of the public and to the way it handles complaints which are received. The HSE considers that no further action is required.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the case of Mrs. Bettina Jonic Calder, Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration reference No. C132/91, will be included in the annual record of pesticides incidents investigated by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. McLoughlin: The pesticide incident involving Mrs. Bettina Jonic Calder was investigated by the Health and Safety Executive in 1989 and details were recorded in the HSE's report "Pesticides Incidents Investigated in 1989/90" published in July 1990.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will review the role and operations of the pesticide incidents appraisal panel of the Health and Safety Executive following the finding in case No. C132/91 by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration.

Mr. McLoughlin: The role and operation of the pesticides incidents appraisal panel were not investigated by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and his report made no call for their review. However, certain aspects of the work of the panel are currently under review, both in response to concern subsequently raised by the complainant and independently of her case.

Skills Training Agency (Properties)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many properties belonging to the former Skills Training Agency or skillcentres have been sold off.

Mr. McLoughlin: The former Skills Training Agency occupied 56 properties. The following 33 properties were transferred to Astra Training Services Ltd. in May 1990:

Barking
Basildon
Bellshill
Billingham
Birmingham
Bradford
Bristol
Cheshire
Dundee
Durham
Enfield
Gloucester
Gwent
Hillington
Hull
Irvine
Manchester
Medway
Milton Keynes
North Staffs
Norwich
Peterborough
Plymouth
Preston
Redruth
Rochdale
Sheffield
Southampton
Tyneside
West Glamorgan
West Sussex
Wigan
Wrexham

The following 13 properties were disposed of as shown:

Site	*Disposal date*	*To*
Cumbria	May 1990	Training for Industry and Commerce Co. Ltd.
Lambeth	May 1990	Training Business Group
Liverpool	May 1990	Metel Ltd.
Leicester	17 August 1990	Hammond Grange Ltd.
Chesterfield	31 August 1990	Surrendered to Landlord
East Lancashire	19 October 1990	Lancashire County Enterprises Ltd.
Chelmsford	2 November 1990	Surrendered to Landlord
Leeds	19 December 1990	Jarvis Porter Ltd. and G. and L. Parish
Wakefield	8 March 1991	Gallery Le Shon Ltd.
Edinburgh	28 March 1991	The Post Office
Southampton	9 August 1991	Surrendered to Landlord
Slough	21 November 1991	Fairview New Homes plc.
Reading	27 January 1992	Intersurgical Ltd.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much her Department has received under the clawback arrangements when Skills Training Agency or former skillcentre property has been sold off.

Mr. McLoughlin: Because no former Skills Training Agency or former skillcentre properties sold to private sector companies have been resold or redeveloped under circumstances which could trigger clawback payments, no receipts have been received under these arrangements.

Skillcentres

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the skillcentres which have closed since February 1990 giving the date of closure in each case; and how many of the original centres are still operating.

Mr. McLoughlin: Fifty-one skillcentres, of a total of 60, were sold when the Skills Training Agency was privatised in 1990. The remaining nine, at Letchworth, Portsmouth, Reading, Twickenham, Perivale, Chesterfield, Northampton, Southampton (Millbrook) and Chelmsford were closed by the Department on 31 July 1990. The operation of the sold centres is the responsibility of the purchasers and not of the Department, but I understand that some 43 continue to function.

Competitive Tendering

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what effect the changes to the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 contained in the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill will have on local authority competitive tendering; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: One of the provisions in the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill, published on 5 November, is to extend the applications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to transfers of undertakings which are not

"in the nature of a commercial venture".

These regulations provide for the transfer of employment rights when an undertaking is transferred to a new employer. There has been some misunderstanding about this amendment and its possible effects have been exaggerated in some press comments.

It has been suggested that the amendment extends the application of the regulations to the public sector and to compulsory competitive tendering for local authority services for the first time, and that people not covered in the past may now have a claim for retrospective compensation. The fact is that the regulations have always covered the public sector, including local authority services, as well as the private sector. Whether or not they apply in any individual case, however, depends on the facts of that case, and there are a number of tests to be applied.

For example, it needs to be shown that an undertaking or part of an undertaking has actually been transferred. This test has always applied and will continue to apply.

The Government are of the view that the regulations will not normally apply where a local authority contracts out in-house services, since such a transaction does not generally involve the transfer of an undertaking within the meaning of the regulations. The facts need to be considered in each case to see whether all the necessary criteria which determine whether the regulations apply have been satisfied. There will be no change in this position as a result of the amendments to the regulations proposed in the Bill.

The only relevant changes we are making in the Bill are as follows. It will no longer be necessary to show that the undertaking is in the nature of a commercial venture and property will not have to be transferred for there to be a transfer of an undertaking. These changes are required to bring the wording into line with the EC acquired rights directive and to clarify its interpretation.

The changes in the Bill do not imply that past cases should have been decided differently, because other criteria may have been relevant to those decisions; nor can it be assumed that future cases will be decided differently.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Faber: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what strategic guidance she is giving to TECs for 1993-94; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Strategic guidance for 1993-94 on training, vocational education and enterprise will be issued today to all TECs. I am pleased that, this year, it is being published jointly with my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, emphasising a consistent, coherent strategy across government. The guidance builds on the six strategic priorities identified in earlier documents and sets out the key issues for TECs to address in their plans for the coming year. Copies of the guidance "The Strategy for Skills and Enterprise" have been placed in the Library.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Aid to Africa

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy for the additional funding granted to African countries during 1991-92 to total £30 million or more.

Mr. Lennox Boyd: The year 1991-92 was an exceptional year for major humanitarian needs; £60 million was added to the overseas aid vote to enable the Overseas Development Administration to respond to humanitarian needs, including famine in the Horn of Africa.

In 1991, we provided almost £54 million bilateral humanitarian assistance to the Horn of Africa. To date in 1992, we have already pledged, from existing programme resources, £112 million bilateral assistance—including balance of payments support, food and non-food assistance—to relieve famine in Africa. Of this, £61 million has been for the Horn of Africa.

Tanzania

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria are used in determining the amount of aid given by the United Kingdom to Tanzania *(a)* bilaterally and *(b)* through the EC.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We take a number of factors into account when allocating bilateral aid to individual countries. These include the comparative poverty of the country concerned, and the effectiveness with which our aid can be used. We consider whether the country has adopted policies which will help to promote economic growth and social progress and to combat poverty. The quality of government in the country concerned is an integral part of our assessment.

The overall allocation of funds for the European development fund—EDF—is decided by the member states. The Commission then draws up national indicative programmes—NIPs—for individual countries based on the priorities set out in the Lomé convention. The overall allocation for Tanzania for EDF VII is 195 mecu for commitment over the period 1992 to 1997. Individual projects are then put to a management committee on which the Overseas Development Administration is represented. The same criteria are applied to the Commission's proposals as we apply to our own bilateral programme.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 9 November, *Official Report*, columns *553-54*, if he will list the capital and technical co-operation projects in Tanzania supported by the EC; and the total cost of the projects in each case.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Capital and technical co-operation projects funded by the EC in Tanzania since 1981 total 225·5 mecu—approximately £184 million at current exchange rates—and are listed in the table.

Project	*Total cost of project (ecus)*
Training Programme 1981-85	462,411
Attendance at Trade Fairs	25,380
Mtwara Water Supply	5,065,492
Phase 2 Agriculture Project Tringa	10,569,323
Morogoro Canvas Mill	2,500,000
Mwanza Water Supply	6,590,240
Coffee Development Programme	12,848,002
Training of Irrigation Engineers	815,131
Study Banana Pest Control in Kagera Region	56,955
Road from Idetero to Paper Mill (Supp Fin)	8,456,155
Study Rehabilitation of Zanzibar—Pemba Port	49,317
Technical Assistance Rehabilitation Hospital Zanzibar and Pemoa	267,199
1st Annual Microprojects Programme	643,239
Tanzania Trade Promotion Programme	154,884
Tanzania Tourism Promotion	185,137
Technical Assistance Food Strategy Tanzania	238,560
Region Rinderpest Control Programme	1,376,470
Nyanguge-Dunda-Musoma Road	16,761,620
Technical Assistance Ports Zanzibar and Pemba	134,930
Extensions Mbeya Water Supply System	2,975,465
Coffee Development Programme Phase 2	8,556,784
Morogoro Canvas Mill Management	2,200,000
Tanzania Industrial Research and Development Organisation Tirdo	1,471,515
2nd Annual Microprojects Programme	442,792
Banana Improvement Pest Control	967,812

Project	*Total cost of project (ecus)*
Rehabilitation Zanzibar Hospitals Phase 1	1,066,044
Co-operative and Rural Development Bank	1,478,557
Study Tanzania Seed Industry	88,630
Rehabilitation Zanzibar Hospitals Phase 2	2,557,142
Rehabilitation Zanzibar Ports	9,890,767
Moroco Shoe Factory	35,000
Total funded under Lomé II (European Development Fund 5) 1981-85	106,930,953
Food Security Agriculture Sector Programme	17,416,116
Coffee Production Marketing Agriculture Sector	13,346,696
Co-operatives Agriculture Sectors	4,255,605
Vehicle Tractor Repair Agriculture Sector	10,264,599
Road Maintenance Agriculture Sector	13,157,609
Managing Unit Assistance to Agricultural Sector	5,485,449
Rehabilitation Zanzibar Ports	13,690,820
1st Programme of Microprojects	135,554
Emergency Programme, Tanzania Railways Corporation	1,997,945
Musoma Sirari Road Study	502,865
Morogoro Canvas Mill Management	3,296,296
Study Telecom Network South West Tanzania	38,522
Study Rehabilitation STDL Dairy Plants	11,617
Incentive Goods for Tanzania	6,079,753
Sectoral Import Programme	15,378,360
Mtwara Audit Financing	59,991
Sector Import Programme	7,975,323
Seminar Public Enterprise Reform	36,782
Study Management Development Zanzibar Ports	59,334
Livestock Service Development	187,436
Study Telecom Southern Highlands	146,377
Feeder Roads in South West	4,067,335
Conservation Historic Buildings	179,664
Ibanda Uyole Road	666,635
Data Base Financial Control System	30,581
Total funded under Lomé III (European Development Fund 6) 1986-90	118,467,264
Serengeti Region Conservation Strategy	108,933
Total funded under Lomé IV (European Development Fund 7)	108,933

Source: European Commission

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nuclear Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the total cost to date in *(a)* historic costs and *(b)* 1992 prices of clean-up programmes and retrofitted technology installed at (i) Sellafield, (ii) Capenhurst, (iii) Springfields, (iv) Chapelcross, (v) Harwell, (vi) Dounreay and (vii) Risley, respectively, to protect the environment against radioactive and toxic contamination.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for the operators of the sites concerned.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what subsidies have been made available to British Nuclear Fuels in each year since 1971, to cover the long-term treatment, storage and final disposal of high-level radioactive wastes from *(a)* foreign spent fuel imported under contracts signed up to December 1975 and *(b)* spent fuel sent to Sellafield by Nuclear Electric, Scottish Nuclear and their predecessor companies;

(2) what subsidy has been made available by Her Majesty's Government to British Nuclear Fuels for the disposal of low and intermediate-level radioactive wastes arising from contracts signed for reprocessing imported spent nuclear fuel *(a)* up to December 1975 and *(b)* since January 1976.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Engine Emissions Consortium

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what was the total cost to his Department of supporting the vehicle emissions consortium's programme;

(2) when the vehicle emissions consortium programme was concluded; what action he has taken as a result; and if he will place a copy of its reports in the Library.

Mr. Eggar: The total grant contribution from my Department in support of the United Kingdom engine emissions consortium's programme of research into petrol and diesel technologies amounted to £1,810,815. The last project in the programme concluded on 31 July 1992.

The 11 collaborators in the consortium are the main beneficiaries of the research conducted. They are obliged to take reasonable steps to exploit the results of the projects in which they participated and, if necessary, to co-operate with my Department in securing an alternative person or persons to undertake such exploitation. In addition, my Department will ensure that the results of the programme, once fully evaluated, will contribute to United Kingdom policy formation on vehicle emissions legislation.

Consortium members are preparing public presentations on the programme. I shall ensure that copies of these are placed in the Library of the House. Reports on the results of the programme provided to the Department by the member companies in the consortium contain commercially confidential information. It is open to the hon. Member to contact Perkins Technology Ltd. of Peterborough, the central co-ordinator of the programme, which will seek the agreement of the member companies to provide the hon. Member with more specific project information.

Albania

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance his Department is providing British companies in creating the opportunities to trade with Albania.

Mr. Needham: The Albania trade section within my Department provides general information about the market and answers specific questions about market opportunities. In addition, the world aid section and the export intelligence service publicise the opportunities in Albania which arise from the activities of the multilateral funding agencies.

My officials also work closely with counterparts in the joint assistance unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to ensure that British companies are aware of opportunities under the know-how fund.

Assisted Area Status

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the meeting between Leicestershire county council on 3 November and the Minister for Industry regarding assisted area status for travel-to-work areas in the county.

Mr. Sainsbury: I found my meeting with Leicestershire county council interesting and useful. The points raised at the meeting will be carefully considered in the review of the assisted areas map.

Piper Alpha

Dr. Godman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the condition of the site of the Piper Alpha and of the removal of hazardous or toxic materials which could affect those engaged in maritime activities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Conditions attached to the Piper Alpha abandonment programme approved by the then Secretary of State for Energy include requirements for samples of sediment, sea water, fish and shellfish to be obtained and examined for the presence of polychlorinated biphenyls —PCBs—and radioactivity. Surveys were carried out in 1989, 1990 and 1991. The levels of PCBs and radioactivity in water, fish and shellfish, and of radioactivity in sediments, were all within the background levels found elsewhere in the North sea. Some sediment samples taken within 500 m of the platform showed elevated levels of PCBs, but these were not increasing. The measurements of PCBs in water, fish and shellfish, and in sediments further out appear to indicate that the PCBs in the sediments close to the remains of the installation are not giving rise to elevated levels in the biota.

The conditions provide for repetition of the surveys and sampling for PCBs biennially until my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is satisfied that there is no significant risk to the marine environment from PCBs associated with transformers formerly located on the installation. In addition, samples taken after 1994 will be examined for radioactivity.

The conditions also required that within a radius of 500 m the seabed should be surveyed to determine the position of any remains of the installation. This was done in 1990 and will be repeated in 1993 and biennially thereafter until my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is satisfied that any movement of debris will not cause unjustifiable interference with fishing. Outside the 500 m zone, to a radius of 1,500 m, the conditions required that the seabed be surveyed and trawled to recover debris identified, and that any debris too large or heavy to be lifted in a trawl should be recovered by other means. This operation will be completed next year.

Gas Pipelines

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on the future construction of gas pipelines, to the United Kingdom from Europe and non-European nations.

Mr. Eggar: I am not aware of any decisions by companies wishing to proceed with the construction of new gas pipelines from Europe or a non-European country to the United Kingdom. The then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy announced to the House on 30 January 1992 that a group of companies had begun a feasibility study of a gas pipeline from the United Kingdom to the continent, with a view to initial exports of United Kingdom gas. Construction of a planned gas pipeline between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland is due to begin shortly.

Gas (Electricity Generation)

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of gas used for electricity generation is not provided by British Gas and United Kingdom-based companies.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are his projections for non-United Kingdom gas consumption for *(a)* the next decade and *(b)* the next 50 years in the electricity generating industry.

Mr. Eggar: In 1991 the United Kingdom imported 7 billion cu m of Norwegian gas, almost all from the Frigg field. Production from this field is declining rapidly and will cease around 1997. Some additional gas from the Frigg area will be imported from 1993 for around 16 years. On 30 January 1992 the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy announced that the Government would facilitate two imports of Norwegian gas for sale to National Power and an independent power generation project. These are the only firm proposals to import gas of which I am aware.

The review my right hon. Friend announced to the House on 21 October will look into the latest estimates of likely gas reserves, and will consider the scale of gas-generated power stations in production, in build and in the planning process.

Deep-mine Coal

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what studies have been undertaken into the costs associated with re-opening deep-mine coalfields and the feasibility of such operations.

Mr. Eggar: British Coal has gained significant experience of the feasibility and cost of putting closed deep mines on to a care and maintenance basis with a view to possible re-opening. In recent years four major closed mines—Carway Drift, Frances, Monktonhall and Thorne —have been put on to a care and maintenance basis and one—Monktonhall—is being prepared for re-opening by the Monktonhall Mineworkers Consortium.

Regulation Costs

Mr. Betts: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was *(a)* the cost of the regulation in 1991-92 and *(b)* the number of staff employed by (i) the Office of Electricity Regulation, (ii) the Office of Gas Supply and (iii) the Office of Telecommunications.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 18 November 1992]:* Details of the staffing and running costs of Offer, Oftel, and Ofgas are given in the annual reports by each director general. Copies of the reports are in the Library of the House. The most recent reports available give the following information:

	Annual report	Staff	Annual cost (£ million)
[illegible]FFER	1991	[1]206	[2]9·255
[illegible]TEL	1991	[1]143	[3]7·5
OFGAS	1991	28	[3]1·9

[1] Average throughout year.

[2] Expenditure.

[3] Budget.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Victims Charter

14. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on progress of the victims charter.

Mr. Jack: The charter was published in February 1990 and sets out the rights and expectations of victims of crime. It contains some 50 standards by which compliance with the charter can be judged. A recent exercise showed that 57 per cent.—31 standards—had been achieved and 39 per cent.—21 standards—were in the process of being achieved, a total of 96 per cent.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

15. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the police inquiry into the Birmingham pub bombings to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The chief constable of West Midlands police is responsible for the conduct of the investigation into the Birmingham pub bombings. It would be improper for me to comment in any way on this investigation while it is continuing.

Car Crime

16. **Ms. Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to reduce car crime in the north-west.

Mr. Jack: As part of Car Crime Prevention Year we have sought to engage the whole community in a concerted effort to tackle car crime. Among the practical measures being taken in the north-west by Greater Manchester police are the promotion of vehicle watch schemes, the distribution of information packs on car security and the setting up of a special police unit to tackle car crime.

Police forces throughout the north-west have made a positive contribution to Car Crime Prevention Year and in the 12 months of the year ending June 1992 both Greater Manchester and Merseyside forces reported a fall in the level of car crimes.

Our safer cities projects in Rochdale and Salford have also taken action to educate the public in car security and have organised and funded projects aimed at diverting young people from car crime.

25. **Sir John Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response there has been from British car manufacturers to the Car Crime Prevention Year.

Mr. Jack: Many car manufacturers have responded very positively to the message of Car Crime Prevention Year by contributing or promising support estimated to be worth more than £3 million.

In addition, many more new cars are now being fitted with security systems as standard equipment and security features are being given a much higher profile in the manufacturers' advertisements.

24. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review current legislation available to deal with those who steal cars and subsequently kill and maim.

Mr. Jack: The relevant law is constantly reviewed; and action to strengthen it has been taken recently. The Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act 1992 has significantly increased the powers of the courts to deal with both drivers and passengers in a stolen car which causes damage, injury and death. In addition, we have recently announced an intention to double the maximum sentence for causing death by dangerous driving from five to 10 years imprisonment.

21. **Mr. Wolfson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he can report arising from Car Crime Prevention Year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: So far, Car Crime Prevention Year has been a highly successful campaign and I am pleased to say that the quarterly car crime figures for April to June 1992 show a reduction of over 2·5 per cent. on the corresponding quarter of 1991. While we cannot draw too many conclusions from this change, I hope that it is the start of a welcome trend.

22. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to receive advice from outside his Department about the future of the car crime prevention initiative.

Mr. Jack: I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend that I have recently formed a committee comprising people who are actively involved in all areas of car security and car crime prevention to advise me on these matters and we met for the first time on 20 October.

This committee brings together senior representatives from the motor manufacturers, the security equipment industry, motoring and consumer associations, the retail and leasing sectors, the insurance industry and the police.

Crime (Northumbria)

17. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will next meet representatives of Northumbria police authority to discuss crime levels in the area.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State is currently arranging to meet representatives of Northumbria police authority.

Prison Building Programme

18. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made on the Government's prison building programme.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Eighteen of the 21 new prisons in the Government's current building programme have now opened, providing nearly 9,500 additional places. The remainder will open within the next 18 months, providing a further 1,800 places. In addition, this year we shall be spending some £200 million on improving the existing estate.

The Government's future plans include two new prisons, providing 1,200 places, on which construction work will begin in 1995-1996, as well as a continued high level of investment in the modernisation of existing prisons.

Immigration (Carriers' Liability)

19. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fines due under the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 were waived in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was their total value.

Mr. Charles Wardle: For the 12 months ending 30 September 1992 the total value of charges waived was £1,758,000. Information about the number of charges is not available.

Concealed Weapons

20. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to empower police officers to conduct random searches for concealed weapons.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. Our view remains that compulsory searching should be allowed only where a police officer reasonably suspects that a weapon is being carried.

Safer Cities Initiative

23. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what have been the main achievements of his Department's safer cities initiatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Safer cities has successfully put into practice the partnership approach under which local agencies act in concert to identify and tackle local crime problems; and the programme has supported a wide range of local crime prevention schemes with encouraging results in terms of reduction in crime and fear of crime.

Community Service Orders

26. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the use being made of community service orders.

Mr. Jack: The courts are making increasing use of community service orders. In 1991, a total of 41,200 community service orders were started, an 8 per cent. increase over 1990.

Special Constables

27. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to extend the use of special constables.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The deployment of special constables in individual forces is a matter for chief constables. With the help of Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary, we are encouraging forces to make the widest and most imaginative use of special constables.

28. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current number of special constables; and what the figure was 12 months ago.

Mr. Charles Wardle: At 31 December 1991, the number of special constables in England and Wales was 18,072. This represents an increase of 14 per cent. on the total for 1990.

"Images of Drugs"

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement following his visit to the exhibition "Images of Drugs" in Southwark.

Mr. Jack: The exhibition, which was opened by Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, brings together the knowledge and experience of local people into a creative picture in a variety of media about the effects of drugs misuse. The exhibition is now on tour throughout the borough to schools, youth clubs, local business sites and others requesting the project for their own drug prevention purposes. It gives the people of Southwark a chance to speak in their own language about the effects of drugs on their community. The opening event, which I attended with the princess, also provided a splendid opportunity for some of the excellent local projects sponsored by the Southwark drugs prevention team to publicise their activities. I am confident that royal and ministerial attendance will have encouraged future activities, by providing a high profile focus for drugs prevention in Southwark.

In European Drugs Prevention Week, I am particularly glad to have the opportunity of praising the exhibition. It is a splendid example of how the Home Office drug prevention initiative is mobilising all sections of the community—including the business community—both in recognising the major challenge which they face and in their commitment to work together to find solutions.

Drug Offences

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a table showing, for each police force area in England and Wales, the number of notifiable drug offences by category in each year since 1985 and the total for England and Wales.

Mr. Jack: The only notifiable offence which is drugs related is that of "trafficking in controlled drugs". This information for 1985-90 is published annually in table 3.1 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary tables"; copies of which are available in the Library. Information for 1991 is contained in the following table:

Notifiable offences of trafficking in controlled drugs—1991

Police force area	*Number of offences*
Avon and Somerset	262
Bedfordshire	49
Cambridgeshire	79
Cheshire	315
Cleveland	86
Cumbria	133

Police force area	*Number of offences*
Derbyshire	129
Devon and Cornwall	226
Dorset	221
Durham	85
Essex	238
Gloucestershire	123
Greater Manchester	868
Hampshire	391
Hertfordshire	179
Humberside	179
Kent	551
Lancashire	384
Leicestershire	65
Lincolnshire	141
City of London	20
Merseyside	506
Metropolitan Police District	2,096
Norfolk	217
Northamptonshire	93
Northumbria	143
North Yorkshire	100
Nottinghamshire	112
South Yorkshire	225
Staffordshire	117
Suffolk	247
Surrey	103
Sussex	546
Thames Valley	299
Warwickshire	78
West Mercia	160
West Midlands	300
West Yorkshire	608
Wiltshire	91
Dyfed-Powys	103
Gwent	117
North Wales	126
South Wales	268
England and Wales	11,379

May Inquiry

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the projected total cost of the Sir John May inquiry; and what has been the cost to date.

Mr. Jack: The current projected final cost of Sir John May's inquiry is £1,930,000. As at the end of October 1992, the inquiry, which was set up in October 1989, had incurred expenditure of £1,357,000.

Prisoners' Requests

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of prisoners' requests or complaints referred to governors are answered within seven days.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The figure requested is not readily available and I will write to the hon. Member.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of prisoners' requests or complaints referred to area managers are answered within six weeks *(a)* in total and *(b)* in each prison service area.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: During the period April to September 1992, 69 per cent. of area managers' answers to prisoners' requests or complaints were sent within six weeks. For individual areas the figures were:

Area	*Percentage*
Central	73
Chilterns	57
East Anglia	74
East Midlands	76
Kent	81
London North	72
London South	39
Mercia	76
North East	92
North West	48
South Coast	82
Trans-Pennine	63
Wales/West	78
Wessex	81
Yorkshire	90

Refugees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to alter the policy whereby all who have a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion may enjoy the full protection afforded by the Geneva convention on refugees.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We are fully committed to meeting our obligations under the convention.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what circumstances his Department will issue more visas to victims of the war in Croatia who are currently displaced or refugees.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 3 November 1992, at columns *128-29*. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary also made it clear in his statement of 5 November that the Government will be discussing with the international organisations the numbers and timing of the evacuation of certain categories of specially vulnerable cases to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has made a decision on the 180 Bosnian refugees whose application for entry into the United Kingdom has been considered by his Department.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary decided on 16 November that six members of this group, who have existing close family ties with the United Kingdom, should be issued with visas. One hundred and eighty cases who have insubstantial or no links with this country are to be refused and eight other cases, including two medical cases, are under consideration.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent consultations Her Majesty's Government have had with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and his European Community counterparts about the future safety and well-being of refugees from Bosnia.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government are in constant touch with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees about arrangements for assisting those displaced from their homes in Bosnia. We are finalising with the UNHCR arrangements and timing for the admission and reception of 150 ex-detainees from camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina plus their dependants. This is an initial group and the UNHCR is aware of the United Kingdom's readiness to consider other similar humanitarian groups, including detainees, whom the international organisations judge should be evacuated. The United Kingdom is in regular contact with our European Community partners about these matters.

Vulnerable Prisoner Units

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which prisons currently have vulnerable prisoner units; and how many prisoners were held in each of those units on the most convenient recent date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table shows which establishments have vulnerable prisoner units and the number of prisoners held in these units on 17 November.

Establishment	*Population in VPU*
Albany	142
Brockhill	47
Channings Wood	102
Dartmoor	173
Durham	101
Frankland	71
Full Sutton	85
Littlehey	109
Liverpool	171
Maidstone	80
Risley	187
Rochester	64
Shepton Mallet	27
Usk	118
Wandsworth	213
Wayland	93
Whatton	204
Whitemoor	239
Total	2,226

Prisoners (Protection)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were being held on rule 43 or, in the case of young offenders, rule 46 for their own protection on the most convenient recent date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 17 November, 1,539 prisoners were being held on rule 43 or rule 46 for their own protection. The following list shows a breakdown of these prisoners by establishment type.

	Number
Local prisons	1,109
Remand centres	98
Adult trainers	288
Young offender trainers	23
Female establishments	21

Offences in Prisons

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions governors have invited the police to investigate alleged offences within prisons; and how many prosecutions have resulted since 1 April.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Passport Fees

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about passport fees.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Privy Council has approved an Order in Council, the Consular Fees (Amendment) Order 1992, which gives authority for an increase in passport fees on 22 November. The fee for a standard 32-page passport will increase from £15 to £18, for a frequent traveller's 48-page passport from £22·50 to £27, for a British visitor's passport from £7·50 to £12 and for a British visitor's passport, including spouse, from £11·25 to £18. The fee for an excursion document to France rises from £2 to £3 and that for a collective passport from £30 to £40. The fee for amending a passport to add particulars of children goes up from £4 to £5. The fees for amendments involving the holder's name, photograph or description are increased from £3 to £5.

This is the first general increase in passport fees for nine years and overall is well below the increase in inflation in that time. In relation to the cost of travel abroad, a fee of £18 for a standard passport or £12 for a British visitor's passport is still very good value for money.

Drugs (Prisons)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what have been the reported drug finds in each of the London prisons for the period from 1 January to 1 November.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There have been a total of 492 recorded drug finds in prison service establishments in London from 1 January 1992 to 1 November 1992. The table shows a breakdown of the reported finds.

Establishment	*Number of incidents*
Belmarsh	37
Brixton	56
Feltham	123
Holloway	11
Pentonville	33
Wandsworth	127
Wormwood Scrubs	105

Wheel Clamping

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he is making for consultations on wheel clamping on private land; and when he will expect replies to the consultation.

Mr. Jack: The Government intend to conduct a public consultation exercise on the problems associated with wheel clamping on private land in England and Wales. For this purpose, a detailed discussion paper is being prepared. This will be issued as soon as possible and will include details about the closing date for replies to the consultation exercise.

Juvenile Offenders

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures have been taken to deal with the hard core of juvenile offenders who persistently reoffend.

Mr. Jack: The Government understand and share the current concern about what appears to be a comparatively small number of juveniles who persistently reoffend. We are therefore looking urgently at the powers available to the courts and to the other authorities who deal with young offenders as well as at the facilities available at the institutions and other places to which they may be sent in order to decide what new measures it may be sensible to introduce. I would also draw my hon. Friend's attention to some of the recently implemented provisions in the Criminal Justice Act 1991. Inter alia, the Act places courts under a duty to bind over the parents of offenders under the age of 16 if they are satisfied that to do so would reduce the risk of further offending and it significantly strengthens their powers to determine what should happen to those juveniles who are refused bail and remanded to local authority accommodation. The effect of those provisions will be closely monitored.

Young Offenders Institutions

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of sexual abuse have been recorded at young offenders institutions in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The current prison service policy is that details of all assaults are recorded, including sexual assaults. Investigations are made as appropriate, but the system at present does not allow for easy retrieval of information relating specifically to sexual assault.

The reporting of incidents by prison establishments in England and Wales is currently under review, as is the system for the storage and retrieval of information about incidents. An improved system for reporting incidents, and for storing and retrieving information about incidents, is expected to be in place by the middle of 1993.

It is envisaged that, when the new systems are in place, more detailed information will be available about all assaults, including those with a sexual element.

Prison Accommodation

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total certified and functional accommodation in the prison service; and what is the projected accommodation level for each of the next seven years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The total certified normal accommodation—CNA—available for use in the prison service estate on 16 November was 45,650. The projected average CNA for each of the next seven years is as follows:

	CNA
1993-94	47,573
1994-95	48,197
1995-96	49,334
1996-97	50,098
1997-98	50,216
1998-99	50,264
1999-2000	50,264

Sunday Trading

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will include the compromise solution on shopping hours submitted by Marks and Spencer, Iceland Frozen Foods, Outlets Providing for Everyday Needs and other retailers, as one of the options for reform of the Shops Act 1950 to be presented to Parliament.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to make a statement soon about our proposals for reform.

Wolds Prison

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Wolds private prison will reach full capacity; and when he will conduct an assessment of the functioning of Wolds prison so that the feasibility of further private prisons can be assessed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Arrangements are being made to transfer to HM prison Wolds the catchment areas of Kingston-upon-Hull Crown court and committing magistrates courts. This change will take effect from 4 January 1993. I expect that Wolds will reach full capacity within a few months.

There is continual assessment of the functioning of the prison by the controller and a two-year evaluation study at Wolds is being undertaken by Hull university.

Strangeways Prison

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the certified normal accommodation will be at Strangeways prison when it becomes fully functional in 1993; and if he will give an undertaking that Strangeways will not be allowed to become overcrowded.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The certified normal accommodation of Manchester prison will be 971 when it becomes fully operational. This level of accommodation may not be reached until June 1994. When the refurbished main prison is opened in September 1993, the old remand centre which is currently the only accommodation in use could be closed. This will be in order to refurbish K wing and to carry out security improvements.

The prison service will aim to avoid the population exceeding 971 by arranging for sentenced prisoners to be transferred to serve their sentence in training prisons. But if it becomes essential to do so—for example, in order to avoid the use of police cells—the population of the prison could rise to 1,150.

Prison Population

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are his latest projections of the prison population for each of the next seven years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest projections of the prison population, based on data available up to the end of 1991, were published in a Home Office statistical bulletin "Projections of long term trends in the Prison population to 2000", Issue 10/92, published 28 May 1992. These projections do not take into account any prison places saved as a result of extra resources to strenghen initiatives aimed at diverting offenders from custody which were agreed in the autumn statement 1992. A copy of the bulletin is available in the Library.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those agencies in his Department which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Home Office has three agencies: the Fire Service College, the Forensic Science Service and the United Kingdom Passport Agency, and a fourth—the Prison Service Agency—is due to be launched in April 1993. As the then Prime Minister explained to the House on 24 October 1988, at column *14*, the status of potential agencies is carefully considered before the agency is launched. The future status of an agency will normally be re-examined during the periodic review of an agency's framework document which is a standard part of each agency's arrangements.

Drug Trafficking

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a table showing for each police area in England and Wales for each of the last three years *(a)* the number of arrests for drug trafficking, *(b)* the number of cautions for drug trafficking and *(c)* the number of convictions for drug trafficking.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 11 November 1992]:* Information on arrests is not collected centrally. The table shows the number of cautions, prosecutions and convictions for drug trafficking offences for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991, which is provisional, by police force area.

Number of cautions, prosecutions and convictions for drug trafficking offences by police force area 1989, 1990 and 1991[1]

England and Wales 1991

Police Force Area	*Cautions*			*Prosecutions*			*Convictions*		
	1989	*1990*	*1991*[1]	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*[1]	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*[1]
Avon and Somerset	10	8	33	122	167	169	77	92	83
Bedfordshire	—	4	13	35	59	50	27	50	23
Cambridgeshire	10	18	2	84	99	76	64	79	60
Cheshire	4	4	7	99	122	174	78	77	108
Cleveland	4	—	9	37	56	50	24	29	29
Cumbria	7	3	13	45	54	58	47	37	58
Derbyshire	—	4	3	51	83	91	38	55	64
Devon and Cornwall	4	6	21	132	122	153	108	106	105
Dorset	3	—	4	58	68	74	39	52	59
Durham	1	—	—	15	23	39	14	17	15
Essex	5	14	10	252	285	393	169	167	216
Gloucestershire	1	3	8	26	42	27	21	25	30
Greater Manchester	4	2	33	407	453	534	257	321	375
Hampshire	9	22	17	200	199	269	121	156	154
Hertfordshire	1	12	16	79	101	89	59	90	51
Humberside	15	19	14	93	91	144	77	73	99
Kent	46	66	25	319	361	349	286	331	357
Lancashire	—	7	5	110	179	198	77	99	133
Leicestershire	—	—	2	45	34	83	39	29	50
Lincolnshire	7	3	14	26	42	71	19	39	38
Merseyside	5	11	14	370	483	503	208	278	263
Metropolitan Police District[2]	77	34	24	2,000	1,919	1,887	1,938	1,773	1,516
Norfolk	7	9	17	92	107	140	70	95	80
Northamptonshire	3	6	3	55	75	71	27	53	49
Northumbria	1	5	5	114	165	161	73	110	122
North Yorkshire	19	5	15	21	48	60	14	23	37
Nottinghamshire	2	5	2	79	75	122	54	47	55
South Yorkshire	2	1	10	122	136	152	63	75	94
Staffordshire	5	1	5	40	45	88	45	31	76
Suffolk	5	11	17	104	108	113	70	74	73
Surrey	42	25	8	60	82	91	35	44	54
Sussex	2	4	6	516	396	673	473	399	375
Thames Valley	8	23	19	110	141	147	102	107	110
Warwickshire	2	8	19	27	23	56	22	29	37
West Mercia	14	29	31	78	102	82	72	76	60
West Midlands	6	5	18	341	333	333	263	220	244
West Yorkshire	13	20	38	151	231	300	95	144	191
Wiltshire	—	5	6	25	43	38	15	34	20
Dyfed-Powys	7	4	13	52	49	50	41	27	37
Gwent	2	11	1	26	43	58	15	25	29
North Wales	—	5	5	38	61	46	45	46	58
South Wales	7	12	5	154	180	273	109	130	177
England	344	402	506	6,540	7,152	8,108	5,280	5,538	5,563
Wales	16	32	24	270	333	427	210	228	301
England and Wales	360	434	530	6,810	7,485	8,535	5,490	5,766	5,864

[1] Provisional data.

[2] Including City of London.

Wrongful Convictions

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many allegations of wrongful conviction upon indictment have been received during each of the last 10 years by C3 division of his Department with a view to investigation and possible reference to the Court of Appeal under section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968; and, of those, how many cases in each year have been *(a)* investigated by C3 division, *(b)* sent to Ministers for a decision, *(c)* referred to the Court of Appeal and *(d)* resulted in the Court of Appeal finding that individuals had been wrongly convicted; and what was the average length of time between an allegation having been referred to C3 and a finding of wrongful conviction by the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 11 November 1992]:* I regret that information is not available in the form requested. The available information is as follows:

Number of representations received in C3 Division since 1 October 1984 in respect of allegations of wrongful conviction where a sentence of imprisonment was imposed

Period	*Number received*
1 October 1984 to 30 September 1985	654
1 October 1985 to 30 September 1986	601
1 October 1986 to 30 September 1987	560
1 October 1987 to 31 March 1988	[1]256
1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989	360
1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990	544
1 April 1990 to 31 March 1991	512
1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992	679
1 April 1992 to 30 September 1992	315

[1] A six-month period is shown because the procedure for collecting and collating these statistics was revised in April 1988.

Number of cases referred to the Court of Appeal under section 17(1)(a) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 and the number of such cases in which the conviction was quashed.

Year	*Number of cases[1] referred*	*Number of those cases in which the conviction was quashed*
1982	4	4
1983	3	3
1984	12	3
1985	4	2
1986	4	1
1987	6	3
1988	2	—
1989	3	3
1990	7	[2]7
1991	10	[2]9
1992 (up to 30 September 1992)	7	[3]—

[1] Some cases involve more than one defendant.

[2] Includes one case in which acquittal followed a retrial ordered by Court of Appeal.

[3] None of the cases referred in the period has so far been heard by the Court of Appeal.

All representations received by C3 division are fully and carefully considered; and further investigations, for example, by the police are requested whenever it is considered that such action would be appropriate.

Cautions and Discontinued Cases

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many persons were cautioned in England and Wales during the first six months of 1992;

(2) how many persons were subject to discontinuance from prosecution in the first six months of 1992.

Mr. Jack: No information is yet available on cautions or cases discontinued during the first half of 1992. The most recent information is for 1991 and was published in October 1992—Home Office statistical bulletin "Cautions, Court Proceedings and Sentencing".

Remand Prisoners (Psychiatric Reports)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many defendants charged with an imprisonable offence were remanded under section 35 of the Mental Health Act 1983 to a hospital for reports in 1991 and for the first six months of 1992.

Mr. Yeo: I have been asked to reply.

During the year ending 31 March 1990—the latest information held centrally—283 defendants charged with an imprisonable offence were remanded under section 35 of the Mental Health Act 1983 to a hospital for reports.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Fund

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each district office, the total social fund budget in each month, for the last 12-month period for which figures are available, for *(a)* community care grants, *(b)* budgeting loans and *(c)* crisis loans; how much was left of each category by (i) November and (ii) December; and which offices (1) applied for and (2) received additional resources.

Mr. Scott: Social fund grant and loan budgets are allocated on an annual basis. The Secretary of State announced an £8 million increase to the social fund budget on 2 November 1992. All districts received additional resources. Details of individual district budgets and expenditure are in the Library.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State (1) what were the social fund grants and loans budgets for offices in the northern region for 1992-93; and what was the most recently available cumulative spend figure for the current year as a percentage of that total in each case;

(2) if he will list the social fund grants and loans budgets for each office in the northern region in each year since the introduction of the social fund; and if he will also list these budgets indexed against *(a)* the retail prices index and *(b)* the social fund national spends;

(3) what was the distribution of the extra social fund allocation between offices and regions in cash and percentage terms; and what this represented in each case as a percentage uplift of the base budget.

Mr. Scott: Details of allocations, expenditure and "real terms" expenditure, both nationally and by district and local office, are in the Library. My right hon. Friend the

Secretary of State announced an £8 million increase to the social fund budget on 2 November 1992. All districts have received additional resources, details of which are being placed in the Library.

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the notional tariff of income assessements on relevant capital for benefit claimants for each year since 1986; and if he will now review these arrangements following the reduction in interest rates.

Mr. Burt: The tariff income rule in the income-related benefits was introduced in 1988 and has not been revised. The level of income assumed from capital is calculated by ignoring the first £3,000 and taking into account £1 a week for every £250, or part of £250, between £3,000 and the upper capital limit for the particular benefit.

The formula for calculating tariff income is not linked to, nor is it meant to imply, any particular rate of return that could be secured from investment. The rule gives most help to people with the least savings.

The tariff income rule is kept under review, but we have no plans for change at present.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a regional breakdown of the total budget of his Department for each of the past five years; and if he will give a regional breakdown of expenditure on each benefit for which his Department is responsible for each of the past five years, in cash and real terms.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* The information is not available in the form requested. However, the following table, which appears in "Regional Trends", presents an estimate of the regional breakdown of expenditure in respect of some major benefits. The table is for 1989-90, the most recent year available.

Estimated government expenditure on certain cash benefits,[1] 1989-90

£ million and £ per head

	National insurance benefits								
	Retirement pension	*Sickness and invalidity*	*Widow's*	*Unemployment*	*Disablement*	*Income support*	*Child benefit*	*War pensions*	*Total benefits as stated[2]*
£ million									
United Kingdom	20,558	4,208	862	765	477	8,053	4,718	641	40,281
North	1,083	323	47	61	55	510	256	39	2,376
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,803	427	73	64	54	678	414	54	3,567
East Midlands	1,374	262	56	42	29	478	337	38	2,618
East Anglia	738	80	28	22	16	176	163	20	1,243
South East	6,497	831	248	178	92	2,171	1,368	197	11,581
South West	1,915	257	67	62	26	509	360	57	3,252
West Midlands	1,715	365	77	58	49	793	449	44	3,551
North West	2,333	593	97	94	67	1,083	548	81	4,897
England	17,457	3,138	693	583	388	6,399	3,896	530	33,084
Wales	958	350	45	45	32	442	236	36	2,143
Scotland	1,689	553	92	106	43	834	406	63	3,786
Northern Ireland	453	168	32	31	14	378	180	12	1,268
£ per head[3]									
United Kingdom	359·2	73·5	15·1	13·4	8·3	140·7	82·4	11·2	703·8
North	352·5	105·1	15·4	20·0	18·0	166·1	83·4	12·7	773·2
Yorkshire and Humberside	365·0	86·4	14·8	13·0	10·9	137·2	83·8	10·9	722·2
East Midlands	343·6	65·6	14·0	10·6	7·2	119·6	84·4	9·6	654·6
East Anglia	360·9	39·1	13·5	10·9	7·8	86·3	79·6	9·7	607·7
South East	373·7	47·8	14·3	10·2	5·3	124·9	78·7	11·3	666·2
South West	411·6	55·2	14·4	13·3	5·6	109·3	77·4	12·2	699·0
West Midlands	328·7	69·9	14·7	11·2	9·4	152·1	86·2	8·5	680·7
North West	365·6	92·9	15·3	14·8	10·5	169·8	85·9	12·7	767·5
England	366·1	65·8	14·5	12·2	8·1	134·2	81·7	11·1	693·7
Wales	333·5	121·7	15·6	15·5	11·1	153·9	82·1	12·5	745·9
Scotland	331·8	108·7	18·1	20·8	8·5	163·9	79·7	12·3	743·6
Northern Ireland	286·3	106·1	19·9	19·7	8·7	239·1	113·8	7·7	801·3

Source: Department of Social Security; Department of Social Security, Northern Ireland.

[1] The quality of these estimates varies between benefits. For some of them, including retirement pension, the regional breakdown in Great Britain is based solely on population estimates. Because of changes in method, the estimates might not be entirely consistent with those published for previous years.

[2] The benefits covered do not account for the total value of social security benefits paid.

[3] Based on mid-1989 population estimates.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of *(a)* the annual cost or saving, *(b)* the numbers of gainers or losers, *(c)* the average amounts of weekly gains or losses and *(d)* the maximum amounts of weekly gains and losses in individual cases, which would result from adjustments of the housing benefit taper from 65 per cent. to (i) 50 per cent., (ii) 55 per cent., (iii) 60 per cent., (iv) 70 per cent., (v) 75 per cent. and (vi) 80 per cent.

Mr. Burt: The information requested for *(a), (b)* and *(c)* is shown in the table.

HB taper (per cent.)	*Annual Cost* *£ million*	*Annual Saving* *£ million*	*Number of gainers (000s)*	*Number of losers (000s)*	*Average weekly amount of gain* *£*	*Average weekly amount of loss* *£*
50	340	—	1625	—	4·00	—
55	210	—	1555	—	2·60	—
60	100	—	1505	—	1·30	—
70	—	90	—	1465	—	1·20
75	—	165	—	1465	—	2·20
80	—	240	—	1475	—	3·10

Figures have been provided from data drawn from the 1987-88-89 family expenditure surveys and are modelled at 1992-93 prices. These figures are rounded.

Figures for *(d)* could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people were in receipt of each benefit for which his Department is responsible in each region of the United Kingdom for each of the past five years.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* The available information on numbers of recipients by region is set out in the tables.

Income Support
Recipients of Income Support for the last three years by DSS regions

Region	*May 1989*	*May 1990*	*May 1991*
Great Britain	4,161,000	4,180,000	4,487,000
North Eastern	684,000	674,000	688,000
London North	607,000	638,000	735,000
South Western	268,000	274,000	310,000
Wales	246,000	248,000	257,000
Midlands	668,000	665,000	699,000
North Western	662,000	643,000	669,000
Scotland	486,000	481,000	487,000
London South	540,000	558,000	641,000

Source:
Income Support Statistics Annual Inquiries, May 1989-91.
Caveat:
All figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand, hence they may not sum to the totals given.

Family Credit
Recipients of Family Credit for the last five years by DSS Region

	30 April 1988	*30 April 1989*	*30 April 1990*	*30 April 1991*	*30 April 1992*
Region					
Midlands	45	51	57	64	73
Northern	41	51	56	61	70
London North	25	29	35	39	44
Wales and South West	40	43	47	49	55
North Western	42	51	53	58	64
Scotland	30	35	37	41	46
London South	20	25	28	30	37
Great Britain	243	286	314	342	389

Note: All figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Average number of Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit[1] *cases in Great Britain by standard region*

Region	*1988-89* *Housing Benefit*	*1988-89* *Community Charge Benefit*	*1989-90* *Housing Benefit*	*1989-90* *Community Charge Benefit*	*1990-91* *Housing Benefit*	*1990-91* *Community Charge Benefit*	*1991-92* *Housing Community*	*1991-92* *Community Charge Benefit*
South East	696,000	—	683,700	—	490,400	929,000	530,300	891,000
London	670,400	—	656,000	—	545,000	724,400	602,100	732,700
North	385,200	—	377,900	—	296,600	504,200	296,800	446,500
Wales	285,100	—	281,800	—	203,900	383,700	209,700	324,600
Scotland	694,100	—	556,300	850,300	542,200	590,600	542,500	640,300
Yorkshire and Humberside	529,200	—	519,000	—	387,800	664,500	397,900	635,100
East Midlands	294,400	—	287,200	—	211,400	430,300	214,800	392,000
East Anglia	197,800	—	192,000	—	142,200	279,000	150,900	257,700
South West	348,700	—	345,400	—	247,600	477,100	265,800	453,400
West Midlands	539,000	—	520,400	—	369,100	687,800	384,900	691,000
North West	733,900	—	725,900	—	514,400	960,300	524,000	875,500
Total	5,373,900	—	5,145,700	850,300	3,950,700	6,730,900	4,119,600	6,339,700

[1] Community Charge was first introduced in Scotland in April 1989 and extended to the rest of Great Britain in April 1990.

Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit

Pensions[1] or Pensions in lieu of gratuities current at the end of the Statistical Year for the last five years[2]

Region	*31 March 1991*	*31 March 1990*	*1 April 1989*	*2 April 1988*	*4 April 1987*
Great Britain	192,000	191,000	185,000	183,000	183,000
Scotland	17,000	17,000	17,000	16,000	16,000
Wales	19,000	19,000	17,000	16,000	19,000
England	152,000	151,000	148,000	147,000	143,000
Northern	22,000	22,000	22,000	21,000	21,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	19,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
East Midlands	14,000	14,000	13,000	12,000	12,000
East Anglia	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
South East	35,000	35,000	34,000	33,000	33,000
South Western	12,000	11,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
West Midlands	18,000	18,000	18,000	18,000	18,000
North Western	26,000	26,000	27,000	27,000	25,000
Overseas	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000

[1] Please note that it is possible for an IIDB beneficiary to have more than one pension in payment.

[2] Figures do not take account of late awards notified.

Source: Annual 10 per cent. sample. Table figures uprated.

Invalidity Benefit

The number of Invalidity Benefit Beneficiaries for the last five years by Standard Statistical Region
(The Statistics given are at a point in time)

Region	*30 March 1991*	*31 March 1990*	*1 April 1989*	*2 April 1988*	*4 April 1987*
Great Britain	1,306,000	1,208,900	1,126,000	1,047,500	967,900
Scotland	181,400	169,300	157,900	146,900	135,200
Wales	146,600	137,500	131,800	126,900	122,000
England	970,600	895,500	829,100	766,600	704,000
Northern	126,300	116,900	110,000	102,700	96,600
Yorkshire and Humberside	124,500	118,400	107,500	98,000	89,100
East Midlands	74,200	66,200	61,000	55,700	50,400
East Anglia	28,800	26,300	23,600	20,700	19,300
South East	219,200	204,600	192,000	179,200	163,700
South Western	71,900	66,100	60,200	57,400	53,400
West Midlands	105,900	97,300	90,300	85,400	76,200
North Western	219,800	199,700	184,500	167,500	155,300
Overseas	7,400	6,600	7,200	7,100	6,700

Source: Annual 1 per cent. sample of claims to benefit.
[Table figures uprated].

Sickness Benefit

The number of Sickness Benefit Beneficiaries for the last five years by Standard Statistical Region
(The Statistics given are at a point in time)

Region	*30 March 1991*	*31 March 1990*	*1 April 1989*	*2 April 1988*	*4 April 1987*
Great Britain	109,600	103,400	109,200	117,500	109,600
Scotland	14,800	13,300	12,900	15,800	15,400
Wales	11,700	10,300	8,900	9,600	9,500
England	83,000	79,600	87,300	92,100	84,700
Northern	9,000	9,800	[illegible]500	9,700	10,700
Yorkshire and Humberside	11,700	10,100	11,600	12,500	10,500
East Midlands	5,900	7,200	7,500	8,800	6,200
East Anglia	3,000	2,200	2,800	3,300	2,900
South East	20,000	17,600	20,700	22,900	21,200
South Western	5,500	6,500	6,200	6,50[illegible]	6,000
West Midlands	8,700	8,900	10,400	9,2[illegible]	9,900
North Western	19,200	17,300	18,600	19,[illegible]	17,300
Overseas	100	200	100	[illegible]l	Nil

Source: Annual 1 per cent. sample of claims to benefit [Table figures uprated].

Severe Disablement Allowance

The number of Severe Disablement Allowance Beneficiaries for the last five years by Standard Statistical Region
(The Statistics given are at a point in time)

Region	*30 March 1991*	*31 March 1990*	*1 April 1989*	*2 April 1988*	*4 April 1987*
Great Britain	293,300	284,600	274,500	263,200	260,100
Scotland	33,900	33,600	32,600	32,300	31,700
Wales	21,900	22,100	20,900	19,800	18,800
England	237,300	228,700	220,900	211,000	209,500
Northern	19,200	19,500	18,400	18,200	17,700
Yorkshire and Humberside	28,800	27,000	26,800	25,200	24,900
East Midlands	19,800	18,600	18,000	17,100	16,100

Region	*30 March 1991*	*31 March 1990*	*1 April 1989*	*2 April 1988*	*4 April 1987*
East Anglia	9,000	8,900	8,400	7,500	7,300
South East	69,000	66,800	65,100	63,600	64,500
South Western	24,100	23,400	22,900	21,900	22,300
West Midlands	24,000	23,600	21,600	20,600	20,000
North Western	43,400	40,900	39,700	36,900	36,700
Overseas	200	200	100	100	100

Source: Annual 1 per cent. sample of claims to benefit [Table figures uprated].

Unemployment Benefit

Number of unemployed claimants in Great Britain in receipt of Unemployment Benefit at May of each year by Standard Statistical Region

Thousands

Region	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Great Britain	636	378	299	555	669
South East	135	74	69	160	210
East Anglia	18	9	9	19	23
South West	45	25	19	43	53
West Midlands	59	32	27	59	75
East Midlands	44	26	22	39	47
Yorkshire and Humberside	69	41	31	55	58
North West	86	55	40	57	77
North	55	37	24	36	38
Wales	39	24	17	28	28
Scotland	86	56	40	52	58

Source: Quarterly Analysis of Unemployed Claimants.
Sample size 100 per cent.
Due to rounding, component parts may not sum to totals.

Independent living fund

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of the expenditure of the independent living allowance was represented by VAT payments in 1991-92.

Mr. Scott: The independent living fund is an independent charitable trust administered by trustees. Matters of policy and administration are issues for the trustees of the fund.

Disability Benefits

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how premiums available to disabled income support claimants assist low-income disabled persons unable to claim support.

Mr. Burt: Premiums that are available to income support claimants are also included in the calculation of housing benefit and community charge benefit. This increases the level of those benefits for low-income disabled people not entitled to income support.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will introduce legislation to provide a determination of an individual disabled person's financial needs, based on the additional costs associated with disability; (2) how present benefit systems provide financial support to disabled persons with special dietary needs; (3) what additional measures he is considering to meet the income requirements of the disabled; (4) if he will review benefits available to the disabled in order to consider degrees of disability.

Mr. Scott: In 1984-85 the Department of Social Security commissioned the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to carry out a major independent survey of the circumstances of disabled people. On the basis of the OPCS findings, the Government announced in the 1990 Command Paper, "The Way Ahead", a phased package of measures aimed at improving provision for people with disabilities.

The improvements were targeted at those identified by OPCS as most in need: people with moderate to severe disabilities who did not qualify for attendance allowance or mobility allowance; those disabled early in life; and people who wished to gain independence by going out to work.

The Government introduced disability living allowance and disability working allowance as the most important element of the package of improvements, which also included adjustments to the qualifying criteria and improvements in the level of certain benefits.

A system of disability benefits which attempted to cover a whole range of specific needs would be far more complicated than the existing structure, both for claimants to understand and for staff to adjudicate and administer. A system based on the severity of a person's disability, taking no account of levels of need for help would be poorly targeted and would produce an unacceptably high number of losers.

The Government believe that the new structure of benefits for disabled people is the most appropriate to their needs and provides a more coherent and comprehensive system of disability benefits than ever before.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to revise the 80 per cent. disability test for severe disability allowance.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will commission a study into the effectiveness of the current range of disabled persons' benefits in meeting needs previously addressed by supplementary benefits additional payments.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he will take to increase the take-up of disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: We shall be continuing the campaign to promote awareness of the benefit by writing individually to people receiving some of the qualifying benefits; offering advice and training to employers, advisers and welfare organisations and placing features in the specialist and local press.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals are currently outstanding on disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: On 16 November there were four appeals outstanding on disability working allowance.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the estimated cost of providing a carer for every disabled person; and what is the actual annual expenditure made available for non-professional carers.

Mr. Scott: Invalid care allowance provides an income maintenance benefit, at a cost of £262 million in 1991-92, for carers who forgo the opportunity of full-time employment to care for a severely disabled person who receives either the highest or middle rate care component of disability living allowance or attendance allowance. It is not possible to estimate the cost of providing a level of care in the unspecified circumstances described by the hon. Member.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to extend payments of disablement living allowance to persons under the age of five years and over the age of 65 years.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so. There are no age limits for the receipt of disability living allowance once it has been awarded and the care component is already available to children under the age of five years. Attendance allowance is available to those becoming disabled after the age of 65.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will abolish the residency test for severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so.

Community Care Grant

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will amend community care grant regulations to extend claimant rights to those in local authority establishments, including mental rehabilitation units.

Mr. Scott: No. There is no need to amend the social fund legislation because people who are receiving income support and who leave the establishments mentioned are already eligible for community care grants, which are discretionary, and each case is decided by a social fund officer on its own merits.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will amend community care grant regulations to include low-income groups, other than income support recipients, such as invalidity benefit recipients and pensioners.

Mr. Scott: No. The current income support rule focuses the available resources on those most in need of this type of assistance. The rule is clear and simple to understand and has always been used in this type of scheme.

Family Credit

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress has been made with the inquiry into the arrangements for family credit claims by self-employed persons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Progress of the research being undertaken by the social policy research unit at York university into family credit and the self-employed has been slower than expected. Results are not expected to be published until spring 1993.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what estimate he has made of the level of the Christmas bonus for pensioners which would be required to match the equivalent purchasing power of the £10 bonus of 1974;

(2) what is the total estimated additional cost of fully indexing the pensioners' Christmas bonus to achieve the same purchasing power as the £10 bonus paid in 1974.

Miss Widdecombe: The Christmas bonus, which is paid regardless of need and which no Government have increased since its introduction in 1972, would now be worth £49·75 had it been increased annually since 1974 in line with prices. The additional cost would be approximately £489 million.

Income Support

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families with one or more wage earners qualify for family income support.

Mr. Burt: At April 1992, a total of 369,000 families, with one wage earner, received family credit and 19,000 with two wage earners.

Mr. Ken Vince

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the case of the late Mr. Ken Vince about whose claim for mobility allowance the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe wrote to the chief executive of the Benefits Agency on 20 July and who died two months before the chief executive replied to the right hon. Member on 4 November.

Mr. Scott: The administration of mobility allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the right hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Alfred Morris, dated 18 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the Mobility Allowance Claim of the late Mr Ken Vince.

I am now in a position to confirm that a decision has been made on the late Mr Vince's claim and this has been notified direct to his next of kin. I have replied to you separately in greater detail about this.

Clearly, your constituent's claim was not handled as efficiently as it should have been. I offer my sincere apologies to Mr. Vince's family for the distress this must have caused and also for the delay in replying to your correspondence. You will be aware of the problems the Benefits Agency has faced since the introduction of Disability Living Allowance in April and the effects this has had on outstanding Mobility Allowance and Attendance Allowance claims. My letter of 19 October to all Members set out the measures we have taken to resolve these problems successfully.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Office Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Clergy (Ordination) Measure

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what information the Commissioners hold on the number of applications made for a faculty under the Measure, following the passing of the Clergy (Ordination) Measure, and the number granted; and whether he will break this down according to whether or not the applicant had commenced approved theological college training before the Measure was given Royal Assent.

Mr. Michael Alison: None. This is not a matter for the Commissioners. Faculties under this Measure are granted by the archbishop of the appropriate province.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library a copy of the health and safety policy of each of the agencies within his Department.

Mr. Gummer: Responsibility for health and safety is delegated to the chief executives of Agricultural Development Advisory Service, the Central Science Laboratory, the Central Veterinary Laboratory, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate and the Intervention Board executive agency, which is a separate Government Department responsible to the four United Kingdom Agriculture Departments. I have asked each chief executive to write to the hon. Member to ouline their policy and have also asked them to place any relevant documents in the Libraries of both Houses.

Letter from Dr. J. M. Walsh to Mr. John McAllion, dated 19 November 1992:

ADAS is in the process of developing its own Health and Safety policy, which will be placed in the Library of the House when it is available.

The current situation is covered by the reply given to Dr. David Clark MP (South Shields) on 8 July 1992, *Official Report*, column *234*.

Letter from Dr. P. I. Stanley to Mr. John McAllion, dated November 1992:

In its Annual Business Plan 1992-93, The Central Science Laboratory gave a commitment to issue its revised health and safety policy statement by the end of December 1992. The statement, which represents a major revision of the previous document in force prior to agency status, is in its final stages of preparation and on target for completion by the end of the year. When the policy statement has been agreed, it will be placed in the Library of the House.

Letter from Dr. T. W. A. Little to Mr. John McAllion, dated 19 November 1992:

As you know the Minister has asked that Chief Executives of executive agencies for which he is responsible write to you direct with their answer to your question.

I am arranging with the Ministry's Parliamentary Clerk for a copy of the Central Veterinary Laboratory's Health and Safety Policy Statement to be placed in the Library of the House of Commons forthwith.

In his reply to your question about executive Agencies in MAFF, the Minister said that as health and safety was a matter delegated to Chief Executives, he would ask them to write to you and to arrange for a copy of their policy to be placed in the Library of the House. I am doing so as Chief Executive of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD).

The VMD health and safety statement is set out in Section 4 of the VMD Personnel Charter, a copy of which is provided to every member of staff. One has now been placed in the Library of the House. As part of a review of the Personal Charter which is currently under way, the health and safety statement is being updated. I will arrange for a copy of the revised statement and Charter to be placed in the Library of the House once this has been completed.

Letter from Guy Stapleton to Mr. John McAllion, dated 19 November 1992:

I am responding to your Question to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food about the health and safety policy of executive agencies. Although the Intervention Board is a separate Government Department, I am responsible to the four Agriculture Ministers and as the subject of your question is a matter within my operational responsibility, the Minister has asked me to reply.

I attach a copy of the health and safety policy statement for the Intervention Board as it appears in the Agency's staff manual to which all staff have access.

Together with our Trade Union Side (TUS) we are currently reviewing this policy statement in the light of recent and forthcoming legislation, and guidance from the Civil Service Occupational Health Service (CSOHS) about the development of health and safety policies. Our intention is not only to update the policy statement, but also to issue a health and safety booklet to all staff which will bring together in a convenient format all necessary guidance on health and safety matters.

We implement our health and safety policy through a joint committee with the TUS which normally meets twice a year. In addition we:

(a) Carry out regular joint workplace inspections and organise training through the CSOHS;

(b) Issue guidance to staff on the control of hazardous substances which are covered by the inspections at (a) above;

(c) Carry out checks on all electrical equipment to ensure that it complies with statutory requirements;

(d) Have introduced a no smoking policy in work areas earlier this year;

(e) Have offered voluntary health screening in 1991 and over 700 staff participated. As part of this year's programme advice seminars on stress, smoking, alcohol, healthy eating and heart care will be provided.

Preparations are well in hand to meet the obligations of the VDU Directive which comes into operation on 1 January 1993. Further EC Directive on health and safety issues are expected in the near future and the Agency's objective will be to embrace those changes within its policy and procedures.

I am sending a copy of this letter and enclosure to the Library of the House.

Caterpillars

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to grant funding for research projects on the use of caterpillars to counter the spread of bracken.

Mr. Curry: We are currently reviewing our research priorities in this area.

Agri-environmental Measures

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what action he is taking to ensure speedy and effective implementation of the agri-environmental measures agreed as part of the common agricultural policy reforms during the United Kingdom presidency of the EC;

(2) if he will make it his policy to extend existing mechanisms for the support of environmentally friendly farming to include all wildlife-rich agricultural habitats in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: We are working on the development of a new nitrate reduction programme especially where this is necessary to protect drinking water sources, a new scheme to encourage organic farming, a new scheme to reduce livestock numbers where this will be environmentally beneficial, measures to increase the environmental benefits of set-aside and payments to manage land for public access and recreation. Details of these proposals will be issued for consultation this winter. They are in addition to plans to introduce a series of new environmentally sensitive areas. This combination of measures will greatly increase the coverage of schemes to support environmentally friendly farming.

Organic Agriculture

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has made at the EC Agriculture Council on the provision of financial encouragement for organic agriculture.

Mr. Curry: The UK pressed for the inclusion within the agri-environment programme of provisions for the payment of aid to organic farmers. Such provisions were adopted at the EC Agriculture Council in June.

Monetary Compensation Amounts

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will press the EC to phase in any monetary compensatory amount adjustments due to take effect from 1 January.

Mr. Curry: Monetary compensatory amounts are due to be abolished when new agrimonetary arrangements compatible with the single market are put in place on 1 January 1993. Under the new system, the green exchange rates used to convert EC prices into sterling will be kept in line with market exchange rates. The Government have phased in the adjustment to the new system by asking the Commission to propose a 7 per cent. devaluation of the green pound. This was agreed at the Agriculture Council on 16 November. If the present market exchange rate for sterling continues until the end of the year, a further devaluation of the green pound will be necessary.

Ostrich Farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many ostrich farms have been set up in the United Kingdom; and if will list their locations.

Mr. Soames: This information is not held centrally, and could be prepared only at disproportionate cost.

Money Compensation Amounts

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has of the effect of the recent devaluation of the pound sterling and the resulting effect on the monetary compensation amount scheme on the average food bill of a family of four.

Mr. Curry: Monetary compensatory amounts are due to be abolished when new agrimonetary arrangements compatible with the single market are put in place on 1 January 1993. Under the new system, the green exchange rates used to convert EC prices into sterling will be kept in line with market exchange rates. If the present market exchange rate for sterling continues until the end of the year, a further devaluation of the green pound will be necessary, in addition to the 7 per cent. devaluation agreed at the Agriculture Council on 16 November. While the recent devaluation will increase farm support prices, food prices will not increase proportionately. EC price support arrangements only affect a limited range of commodities and the cost of raw materials is only a small proportion of the cost of many foods. It is estimated that the 7 per cent. devaluation will raise the food price index by less than 1 per cent. It is too early to say what the effect of any further devaluation food prices would be.

Wild Boar

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many units are producing European wild boar in the United Kingdom for the meat market.

Mr. Curry: No official records are kept on the number of farms producing wild boar, but we estimate there are currently about 40 units in the United Kingdom.

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. Hague: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has decided how entitlement to suckler cow premium should be allocated among new entrants.

Mr. Curry: There is provision for new entrants to have some claim on the national reserve of suckler cow premium quota. We are currently considering the detailed implementation, and interested parties will be consulted before final decisions are taken.

Food Publications

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what the cost was to public funds of editing, publishing and printing the series of publications "Food Safety" PB0551, "Food Sense" PB0549, "About Food Additives" PB0552, "Understanding Food Labels" PB05523, "Food Protection" PB0554 and "Healthy Eating" PB0550; and what financial contribution was made by the food or retailing industries.

Mr. Curry: The "Food Sense" series of booklets was launched in August 1991, as part of a three-year campaign, to provide attractive and easily understood information in response to public concern about food issues. Some 12·5 million booklets, in the series referred to, have been printed so far. The costs for production and print have been met from within the Department's paid publicity budget and are as follows:

	Numbers printed millions	*Production costs £*	*Print costs £*
Food Sense	7·40	115,551	460,270
Healthy Eating	1·05	38,077	61,230
Food Safety	1·15	38,077	63,785
About Food Additives	1·10	38,077	67,352
Understanding Food Labels	1·05	38,077	59,310
Food Protection	0·80	38,077	59,760

There have been no contributions from the food or retailing industries.

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what use his Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Mr. Curry: None.

Sheep Premium

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when Mr. and Mrs. Rupert Everitt of Hemsbrook farm, Newton road, Littlehempston, Totnes, can expect to receive the first instalment of sheep premium; why there has been a delay in processing this claim; and whether Mr. and Mrs. Everitt will receive compensation for the loss of money they have suffered.

Mr. Curry: A payable order for the first instalment under the 1992 scheme was issued to Mr. and Mrs. Everitt on 5 November 1992. Applications from producer groups have been subject to additional checks this year in order to meet new European Community requirements and there has been no unreasonable delay in processing this claim.

Epping Forest

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to increase awareness of Epping forest, Essex; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Epping forest is owned by the Corporation of London. It is managed under the terms of the Epping Forest Act 1878, which requires the conservators of the forest to preserve the natural aspect and the varied vegetation of the forest as well as the public's right to use it as an open space for recreation and enjoyment. It has a large variety of habitats of high nature conservation value and most of the forest has been designated a site of special scientific interest. A balance therefore has to be sought between public use and the protection of the forest's environment.

We are satisfied that the forest is well known to the general public—they already make good use of it and the conservators provide several facilities for visitors—and we do not consider that it is necessary to increase awareness of it any further.

Methyl Bromide

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will approve and press for a phase-out of methyl bromide at the Montreal protocol negotiations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what action he is taking to phase out the use of methyl bromide in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 5 November, *Official Report*, column *372*.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what instructions have been issued to safeguard persons using methyl bromide.

Mr. Soames: The information that has been issued to safeguard persons using methyl bromide is as follows:

1. Guidance Note CS12: "Fumigation using methyl bromide", available from the Health and Safety Executive.
2. Approved Code of Practice (ACOP):

"Control of substances hazardous to health in fumigation operations"

(ISBN 0118854690), available from HMSO.

Detailed instructions relating to individual product use and any necessary precautions that must be taken will be found on the product labels.

Crop Plantings

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the percentage of United Kingdom plantings of winter wheat, spring wheat, spring barley, winter barley, oats, rye, sugar beet, potatoes and oilseed rape of *(a)* the most popular variety, *(b)* the two most popular varieties and *(c)* the three most popular varieties; if he will name the varieties; and whether the percentages of plantings to the top three varieties covers a greater or lesser proportion of total plantings to that crop than was the case 10 years ago.

Mr. Curry: Although actual planting by variety is not recorded for cereals and oilseed rape, the tables show figures based upon information collected under certified seed production records. The use of seed retained on the farm outside this system is not recorded.

For potatoes, the three most popular varieties of potatoes planted in 1992 in the United Kingdom were Maris Piper (12 per cent.); Record (10 per cent.) and Estima (9 per cent.) accounting in total for 31 per cent. of the crop, compared with 1982 when they were Maris Piper (17 per cent.), Desireé (14 per cent.) and Record (8 per cent.), accounting in total for 39 per cent. of the crop.

United Kingdom certified seed for commercial crop production for harvest in 1992

	Per cent. of volume	
The most popular variety	*Name*	*Per cent. accounted for*
Winter wheat	*Riband*	22
Spring wheat	*Axona*	38
Spring barley	*Blenheim*	21
Winter barley	*Marinka*	21

	Per cent. of volume	
The most popular variety	*Name*	*Per cent. accounted for*
Oats	*Image*	43
Rye	*Halo*	25
Sugar beet[2]	*Celt*	24
Oilseed rape	*Falcon*	22

	Per cent. of volume	
The two most popular varieties	*Names*	*Per cent. accounted for*
Winter wheat	*Riband, Beaver*	38
Spring wheat	*Axona, Tonic*	72
Spring barley	*Blenheim, Alexis*	39
Winter barley	*Marinka, Puffin*	40
Oats	*Image, Solva*	60
Rye	*Halo, Sentinel*	45
Sugar beet[2]	*Celt, Saxon*	44
Oilseed rape	*Falcon, Envol*	42

	Per cent. of volume	
The three most popular varieties	*Names*	*Per cent.* [1] *accounted for*
Winter wheat	*Riband, Beaver, Haven*	51
Spring wheat	*Axona, Tonic, Canon*	86
Spring barley	*Blenheim, Alexis, Tyne*	51
Winter barley	*Marinka, Puffin, Pastoral*	53
Oats	*Image, Solva, Aintree*	77
Rye	*Halo, Sentinel, Conrah*	56
Sugar beet[2]	*Celt, Saxon, Rex*	61
Oilseed rape	*Falcon, Envol, Libravo*	55

United Kingdom certified seed for commercial crop production for harvest in 1982

	Per cent of volume	
The most popular variety	*Name*	*Per cent. accounted for*
Winter wheat	*Avalon*	20
Spring wheat	*Timmo*	49
Spring barley	*Triumph*	24
Winter barley	*Igri*	49
Oats	*Peniarth*	61
Rye	*Rheidol*	53
Sugar beet[2]	*Monoire*	25
Oilseed rape	*Jet Neuf*	72

	Per cent of volume	
The most popular variety	*Name*	*Per cent. accounted for*
Winter wheat	*Avalon, Bounty*	38
Spring wheat	*Timmo, Broom*	93
Spring barley	*Triumph, Golden Promise*	44
Winter barley	*Igri, Sonja*	83
Oats	*Peniarth, Pennal*	98
Rye	*Rheidol, Lovaszpatoinai*	64
Sugar beet[2]	*Monoire, Nomo*	45
Oilseed rape	*Jet Neuf, Rafal*	89

	Per cent of volume	
The most popular variety	*Name*	*Per cent. accounted for*
Winter wheat	*Avalon, Bounty, Brigand*	49
Spring wheat	*Timmo, Broom, Sicco*	98
Spring barley	*Triumph, Golden Promise, Koru*	54
Winter barley	*Igri, Sonja, Maris Otter*	94
Oats	*Peniarth, Pennal, Maris Quest*	100
Rye	*Rheidol, Lovaszpatonai, Dominant*	74
Sugar beet[2]	*Monoire, Nomo, Monotri and Salohill*	69
Oilseed rape	*Jet Neuf, Rafal, Elvira*	95

[1] Apart from winter wheat, these percent figures are all less than for 1982.

[2] The information for sugar beet relates to actual commercial plantings in 1992 and 1982.

Veal Calves (Transport)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for how long veal calves transported from the United Kingdom may be sealed in transporters; what length of time United Kingdom regulations allow for animal transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Currently calves for export are not sealed in transporters. Regulations in Great Britain require farm animals to be offered food and water at intervals not exceeding 12 hours, unless the journey can be completed within 15 hours. For export journeys over 18 hours, a licence to export is issued when the exporter has made arrangements to feed and water the animals at suitable intervals.

SCOTLAND

Land Transactions

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what steps he is taking to prevent the speculative sale of Scottish land to owners and developers furth of Scotland;

(2) what record is being maintained of private land transactions in Scotland in which ownership of land is transferred furth of Scotland;

(3) what estimate has been made of land in Scotland currently owned by *(a)* Germans *(b)* Americans and *(c)* Belgians; and if he envisages a limit being placed on foreign ownership of Scottish land.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No specific record is maintained for the purpose of identifying the nationality of the owners of land in Scotland. General information on land transactions is, however, available from the Registers of Scotland executive agency.

We have no plans to impose restrictions on the market for land. In a free society, sellers must be allowed to dispose of their possessions as they think best.

Expenditure

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a percentage figure for the present financial year equivalent to the figure of 10·66 per cent. stated as applying from 1993 for the public expenditure change formula based on the 1991 census population count results, as indicated in his press notice of 12 November.

Mr. Lang: The equivalent percentage figure applied to the current financial year in the 1991 public expenditure survey was 11·76 per cent.

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what use his Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Mr. Lang: None.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many catastrophic leaks of ozone-depleting substances have occurred within his Department's buildings in the past five years.

Mr. Lang: None.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to publish the results of his Department's research evaluating the effect of compulsory competitive tendering on Scottish local authorities.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has today published the report "Evaluation of Compulsory Competitive Tendering for Scottish Local Authority Services". The research examined a selection of case study services in a small sample of local authorities to determine the costs and results of providing certain services before and after CCT. The report identifies a number of savings and increased efficiency in the provision of these services after tendering.

Copies of the report have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate has been made of the number of awards of sequestration for each of the five years immediately following commencement of operation of the provision of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill, as amended; and whether he will take steps to ensure that access to the sequestration process is not restricted.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 November 1992]*: The number of awards of sequestration in future years will be subject to a wide variety of factors, including the response of debtors and creditors to the legislation currently before Parliament. It is not, therefore, yet possible to estimate accurately the number of awards for the period requested.

The Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill already provides for access to sequestration in appropriate circumstances, subject to certain necessary safeguards to balance the interests of debtors and creditors.

Courts

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the courts which *(a)* have undergone renovation in the past four years and *(b)* are being refurbished at this moment; if he will give the cost of such work; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* The information requested is as follows:

(a) Major Projects Completed 1989-92 (inclusive)

Project	*Completion*	*Cost £ million*
Forfar Sheriff Court, *Refurbishment*	1989	0·10
Falkirk Sheriff Court, *New building*	1990	6·3
Arbroath Sheriff Court, *Refurbishment*	1991	0·55
Fort William Sheriff Court, *Refurbishment*	1991	0·15
Hamilton Sheriff Court, *Refurbishment*	1991	7·00
Aberdeen Sheriff Court, *Refurbishment*	1992	9·0
Lochmaddy Sheriff Court, *Refurbishment*	1992	0·25
Parliament House: Extension, *New building*	1992	14·0

(b) Major Projects Under Construction

	Estimated Final Cost £ million
Alloa Sheriff Court, *Refurbishment*	0·13
Dumfries Sheriff Court, *Refurbishment*	2·70
Edinburgh Sheriff Court, *New building*	51·40
Greenock Sheriff Court, *Refurbishment*	4·30
Lanark Sheriff Court, *Refurbishment*	0·15

Vulnerable Witnesses

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the courts which have live closed-circuit television links and associated equipment for the purpose of taking evidence from those deemed to be vulnerable witnesses; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* Facilities for closed circuit television links for child witnesses have been provided on a pilot basis at the High Court in Edinburgh and Glasgow and at Edinburgh and Glasgow sheriff courts. Extension to other court houses will be considered in the light of experience of use of the system in the pilot courts.

Open Air Events

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the current powers for local councils or the police to prevent open air events taking place on private land if there is a reason to expect that they will lead to disturbance.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 November 1992]:* District and island councils may licence public entertainments under section 41 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, provided that the local authority has previously resolved to license the particular activity in question. Where an unlicensed activity takes place in an area subject to licensing controls, the organiser is liable on conviction to an exceptionally high summary fine of up to £20,000 or up to six months imprisonment or both. If alcoholic liquor were to be sold at such an event, a liquor licence would be required under the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976. A local authority could prevent such an event taking place by refusal to grant a licence or the suspension of an existing licence under either the 1976 or the 1982 Acts.

Quayle Munro

Mr. Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much the Scottish Office paid the firm of Quayle Munro for its report on the future of the Scottish water industry.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* I would refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) on 26 October, at columns *530-31*.

HEALTH

Patients Charter

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to publish the results of the first quarter monitoring of the patients charter; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities, as purchasers of services, are required to publish annual reports giving details of the performance against all relevant patients charter rights and standards achieved by their providers. The national health service management executive will give an overview on performance in the chief executive's annual report for 1992-93.

Personal Social Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the *(a)* actual and *(b)* percentage difference between the social services budget estimate and standard spending assessment in 1991-92 for each social services in England;

(2) what was the percentage difference between the personal social services budget estimate and standard spending estimate *(a)* in 1991-92 and *(b)* in 1992-93 for each social services authority in England;

(3) what is the personal social services standard spending assessment for each social services authority in england in 1992-93.

Mr. Yeo: The information requested is as follows:

Spending on personal social services

Local Authority	*Budget 1991-92*	*PSS SSA 1991-92*	*Difference £ million*	*Difference Per cent.*	*Budget 1992-93*	*PSS SSA 1992-93*	*Difference £ million*	*Difference Per cent.*
Bolton	25·2	24·1	1·1	4·6	27·4	26·1	1·4	5·1
Bury	15·3	13·3	2·0	15·0	15·5	14·4	1·1	7·8
Manchester	66·3	71·9	−5·6	−7·8	64·6	76·8	−12·2	−15·8
Oldham	22·3	22·0	0·3	1·4	24·7	23·3	1·4	6·2
Rochdale	24·8	21·1	3·7	17·5	23·7	21·8	1·88	8·6
Salford	27·1	28·0	−0·9	−3·2	30·1	30·3	−0·2	−0·7
Stockport	24·4	22·7	1·7	7·5	27·4	23·9	3·5	14·5
Tameside	23·2	20·4	2·8	13·7	23·1	20·5	2·6	12·8
Trafford	17·7	18·3	−0·6	−3·3	19·3	19·8	−0·5	−2·6
Wigan	24·0	22·9	1·1	4·8	25·9	24·4	1·5	6·3
Knowsley	14·8	20·7	−5·9	−28·5	16·1	22·3	−6·2	−28·0
Liverpool	64·0	70·9	−6·9	−9·7	74·9	75·6	−0·7	−1·0
St. Helens	19·5	15·1	4·4	29·1	22·1	15·9	6·2	38·9
Sefton	25·0	24·4	0·6	2·5	27·6	25·9	1·7	6·6
Wirral	30·8	33·1	−2·3	−6·9	34·6	34·7	−0·1	−0·1
Barnsley	16·1	17·7	−1·6	−9·0	18·7	18·9	−0·2	−1·1
Doncaster	21·9	22·9	−1·0	−4·4	24·2	25·6	−1·4	−5·3
Rotherham	23·7	20·4	3·3	16·2	25·2	21·8	3·4	15·6
Sheffield	60·5	54·6	5·9	10·8	65·8	57·7	8·1	14·0
Gateshead	22·4	20·7	1·7	8·2	24·5	21·8	2·7	12·3
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	36·9	33·5	3·4	10·1	37·7	34·7	3·0	8·5
North Tyneside	22·8	18·6	4·2	22·6	24·5	20·1	4·4	22·1
South Tyneside	16·6	17·4	−0·8	−4·6	17·5	18·1	−0·6	−3·3
Sunderland	27·6	27·1	0·5	1·8	30·9	28·5	2·4	8·4
Birmingham	127·6	124·9	2·7	2·2	137·6	131·2	6·4	4·9
Coventry	34·4	31·5	2·9	9·2	37·7	32·8	4·9	15·1
Dudley	22·2	20·9	1·3	6·2	24·2	22·5	1·7	7·7
Sandwell	36·0	32·7	3·3	10·1	38·3	34·4	3·9	11·3
Solihull	17·3	14·3	3·0	21·0	18·1	15·6	2·5	16·2
Walsall	21·6	21·8	−0·2	−0·9	23·0	23·2	−0·2	−1·0
Wolverhampton	30·7	29·1	1·6	5·5	32·5	30·4	2·1	6·8
Bradford	50·0	49·9	0·1	0·2	54·7	52·5	2·2	4·2
Calderdale	21·0	18·4	2·6	14·1	22·3	20·2	2·1	10·6
Kirklees	32·3	34·2	−1·9	−5·6	36·0	36·9	−0·9	−2·4
Leeds	82·1	71·6	10·5	14·7	84·1	76·2	7·9	10·4
Wakefield	27·8	24·3	3·5	14·4	29·3	26·2	3·1	11·7
Camden	48·0	41·6	6·4	15·4	45·3	44·0	1·3	3·0
Greenwich	40·6	32·2	8·4	26·1	45·1	34·6	10·5	30·3
Hackney	53·3	55·5	−2·2	−4·0	57·7	59·3	−1·6	−2·7
Hammersmith and Fulham	36·9	38·9	−2·0	−5·1	38·2	41·2	−3·0	−7·3
Islington	41·9	43·0	−1·1	−2·6	48·9	46·7	2·2	4·7
Kensington and Chelsea	30·1	30·2	−0·1	−0·3	33·0	32·3	0·7	2·3
Lambeth	72·4	71·2	1·2	1·7	79·2	75·9	3·3	4·4
Lewisham	47·2	43·8	3·4	7·8	47·5	47·5	0·0	0·0
Southwark	44·4	51·0	−6·6	−12·9	55·7	56·3	−0·6	−1·0
Tower Hamlets	31·4	41·0	−9·6	−23·4	39·3	44·7	−5·4	−12·2
Wandsworth	57·7	54·9	2·8	5·1	60·7	58·7	2·0	3·4
Westminster	50·3	43·1	7·2	16·7	57·9	46·1	11·8	25·5

Local Authority	*Budget 1991-92*	*PSS SSA 1991-92*	*Difference £ million*	*Difference Per cent.*	*Budget 1992-93*	*PSS SSA 1992-93*	*Difference £ million*	*Difference Per cent.*
City of London	3·295	0·5	2·8	559·0	3·3	0·5	2·8	566·0
Barking and Dagenham	19·5	18·3	1·2	6·6	20·2	20·0	0·2	1·1
Barnet	32·6	29·2	3·4	11·6	36·6	31·6	5·0	15·7
Bexley	18·5	16·7	1·8	10·8	20·4	17·8	2·6	14·6
Brent	47·3	42·5	4·8	11·3	45·5	45·6	−0·1	−0·2
Bromley	23·4	25·6	−2·2	−8·6	25·7	27·1	−1·4	−5·2
Croydon	37·9	34·0	3·9	11·5	40·8	36·6	4·2	11·6
Ealing	38·7	37·7	1·0	2·7	39·2	40·8	−1·6	4·0
Enfield	30·3	26·7	3·6	13·5	32·1	28·7	3·4	11·9
Haringey	33·8	40·4	−6·6	−16·3	36·6	44·5	−7·9	−17·8
Harrow	20·5	16·0	4·5	28·1	21·5	17·3	4·2	24·2
Havering	21·0	17·2	3·8	22·1	24·9	18·5	6·4	34·4
Hillingdon	25·5	20·3	5·2	25·6	28·3	21·5	6·8	31·7
Hounslow	30·8	23·0	7·8	33·9	33·5	25·2	8·3	33·1
Kingston-upon-Thames	16·1	13·0	3·1	23·8	17·5	13·9	3·6	25·7
Merton	20·9	18·6	2·3	12·4	21·2	20·3	0·9	4·6
Newham	39·9	38·9	1·0	2·6	44·9	41·8	3·1	7·5
Redbridge	24·1	21·7	2·4	11·1	24·6	23·9	0·7	3·1
Richmond-upon-Thames	17·8	17·1	0·7	4·1	17·5	18·6	−1·1	−5·7
Sutton	17·6	15·3	2·3	15·0	18·4	16·4	2·0	12·0
Waltham Forest	37·2	33·2	4·0	12·0	40·5	35·5	5·0	14·0
Avon	83·6	76·4	7·2	9·4	92·8	81·5	11·3	13·9
Bedfordshire	42·2	38·7	3·5	9·1	44·6	41·6	3·0	7·2
Berkshire	60·6	51·8	8·8	16·9	68·1	55·7	12·4	22·2
Buckinghamshire	49·2	39·9	9·3	23·3	52·4	43·1	9·3	21·6
Cambridgeshire	50·7	44·6	6·1	13·7	53·6	48·1	5·5	11·3
Cheshire	73·3	65·9	7·4	11·2	77·7	70·3	7·4	10·5
Cleveland	53·3	52·4	0·9	1·7	57·8	55·3	2·5	4·5
Cornwall	33·0	33·4	−0·447	−1·3	34·8	36·1	−1·3	−3·6
Cumbria	36·9	37·4	−0·5	−1·3	40·5	39·7	0·8	2·0
Derbyshire	86·5	68·4	18·1	26·5	89·1	72·9	16·2	22·3
Devon	70·0	79·1	−9·1	−11·5	78·9	84·7	−5·8	−6·8
Dorset	39·7	53·5	−13·8	−25·8	42·3	57·4	−15·1	−26·2
Durham	42·5	50·9	−8·4	−16·5	45·8	53·3	−7·5	−14·2
East Sussex	59·0	69·2	−10·2	−14·7	67·1	73·3	−6·2	−8·4
Essex	112·8	111·2	1·6	1·4	123·4	120·8	2·6	2·2
Gloucestershire	34·5	38·7	−4·2	−10·9	38·7	42·1	−3·4	−8·2
Hampshire	90·0	111·7	−21·7	−19·4	99·2	119·6	−20·4	−17·1
Hereford and Worcester	45·9	44·4	1·5	3·4	50·7	47·2	3·5	7·4
Hertfordshire	74·4	69·8	4·6	6·6	82·5	77·2	5·3	6·9
Humberside	79·4	72·5	6·9	9·5	84·9	76·8	8·1	10·6
Isle of Wight	10·1	10·6	−0·5	−4·7	10·7	11·3	−0·6	−5·4
Kent	111·8	117·8	−6·0	−5·1	129·1	126·7	2·4	1·9
Lancashire	125·4	113·9	11·5	10·1	138·3	120·3	18·0	15·0
Leicestershire	70·7	69·4	1·3	1·9	74·4	75·5	−1·0	−1·4
Lincolnshire	38·3	41·2	−2·9	−7·0	40·2	45·0	−4·8	−10·6
Norfolk	48·1	56·2	−8·1	−14·4	54·3	59·6	−5·3	−8·9
Northamptonshire	44·1	42·0	2·1	5·0	47·9	45·3	2·6	5·7
Northumberland	25·9	21·9	4·0	18·3	26·9	23·2	3·7	16·0
North Yorkshire	45·0	49·1	−4·1	−8·4	48·7	52·2	−4·1	−7·8
Nottinghamshire	96·3	87·6	8·7	9·9	99·5	93·9	5·6	6·0
Oxfordshire	43·6	40·1	3·5	8·7	47·7	44·0	3·7	8·4
Shropshire	28·2	27·3	0·9	3·3	30·6	29·8	0·8	2·7
Somerset	32·1	33·0	−0·9	−2·7	34·2	35·5	−1·3	−3·8
Staffordshire	66·4	69·6	−3·2	−4·6	78·9	74·9	4·0	5·3
Suffolk	42·2	45·7	−3·5	−7·7	47·9	49·4	−1·5	−3·1
Surrey	58·3	71·4	−13·1	−18·3	70·2	78·4	−8·2	−10·5
Warwickshire	33·7	32·5	1·2	3·7	35·7	35·1	0·6	1·8
West Sussex	44·8	54·3	−9·5	−17·5	50·1	58·7	−8·6	−14·7
Wiltshire	38·7	37·2	1·5	4·0	41·9	40·1	1·8	4·5
Isles of Scilly	0·1	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·2	−0·1	−28·0

Notes:

It has been assumed that "budget" and "budget estimate" both refer to the budget submitted by authorities to central Government at the beginning of the financial year. It has also been assumed that "standard spending assessment" and "standard spending estimate" both refer to the final SSAs issued by DOE following the local authority settlement debate.

The difference shown is calculated by subtracting the SSA from the budget for each year.

Budget data has been adjusted to exclude expenditure directly funded by specific grants to make it comparable with the standard spending assessment.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the percentage change in *(a)* net and *(b)* gross expenditure on personal social services from 1985-86 to 1991-92 adjusted by the personal social services deflator.

Mr. Yeo: The latest estimates for revenue expenditure in 1991-92 represent real terms increases of 30·4 per cent. for net expenditure and 22·5 per cent. for gross expenditure over expenditure in 1985-86.

Treatment Costs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average cost in England in 1990-91 and 1991-92 of treating *(a)* an in-patient case in an acute hospital, *(b)* an out-patient in an acute hospital, *(c)* a day case in an acute hospital and *(d)* an accident and emergency patient in an acute hospital.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available in precisely the form requested. Expenditure on in-patients and day cases is no longer separately identified. Expenditure on day cases is now combined with that for in-patients to form a new category: patients using a bed. Expenditure is also identified by specialty rather than the type of hospital in which a patient is treated. Figures for 1990-91 are given in the table. Figures for 1991-92 are not yet available.

	1990-91 *£*
Acute in-patient and day case	815
Acute out-patient attendance	41
Accident and emergency attendance	24

Osteoporosis

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost to the NHS of treatment of osteoporosis patients, both in hospital and the community, in each year since 1985.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally. However, the office of health economics has estimated that hospital in-patient expenditure on osteoporosis was £128 million in 1985-86 in England and Wales. In 1991-92 prices, this figure would be of the order of £200 million. These estimates do not take into account the cost of out-patient treatment and the costs of general practitioner services, including the prescribing of hormone replacement therapy and other drugs.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of recorded cases of osteoporosis in the years 1985 to 1991.

Mr. Sackville: Information is not available in the form requested, as there is no requirement to record the diagnosis in general practice and many patients with osteoporosis will not be admitted to hospital. The estimated number of discharges and deaths with a main diagnosis of osteoporosis was 2,000 in England in 1985, according to the hospital in-patient inquiry. The estimated number of completed episodes, ordinary and day case admissions, with a main diagnosis of osteoporosis was 3,700 in England in 1989-90, according to the hospital episode statistics. The effect on the figures of the change in definition cannot readily be quantified, but it is believed to be of a relatively small order of magnitude.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the level of capital spending on hospital and community health services in net terms after deducing proceeds from land and property sales, in each year since 1974-75 *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* adjusted using the gross domestic product deflator and *(c)* adjusted using the relevant index of NHS prices;

(2) to ask the Secretary of State for Health, what was the level of *(a)* total NHS expenditure, *(b)* current expenditure on the hospital and community health services, *(c)* capital expenditure on the hospital and community health services, *(d)* expenditure on the family practitioner services, *(e)* expenditure on centrally funded NHS services and *(f)* expenditure on personal social services, in each year since 1974-75, (i) in cash terms, (ii) adjusted using the relevant pay and prices index and (iii) adjusted using the gross domestic product deflator.

Mr. Sackville *[pursuant to his reply, 18 November]*: I regret that there was an error in my previous reply. The last figure in the HCHS capital net table was incorrectly calculated. The revised table is as follows:

HCHS capital net expenditure (including trusts' capital expenditure)

	Cash		*Adjusted by GDP 1990-91 prices*		*Adjusted input unit costs 1990-91 prices*	
	A	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*
1974-75	—	242	—	1,100	—	1,043
1975-76	—	326	—	1,181	—	1,075
1976-77	—	355	—	1,133	—	1,046
1977-78	—	314	—	881	—	809
1978-79	—	357	—	904	—	824
1979-80	—	392	—	850	—	749
1980-81	—	536	—	983	—	814
1981-82	—	646	—	1,080	—	950
1982-83	—	676	—	1,055	—	979
1983-84	—	685	—	1,022	—	972
1984-85	—	760	—	1,080	—	1,035
1985-86	—	796	—	1,072	—	1,024
1985-86	888	—	1,195	—	1,142	—
1986-87	892	—	1,162	—	1,093	—
1987-88	902	—	1,115	—	1,051	—
1988-89	906	—	1,044	—	998	—
1989-90	1,191	—	1,288	—	1,202	—
1990-91	1,372	—	1,372	—	1,372	—
1991-92	1,427	—	1,331	—	—	—
1992-93	1,856	—	1,660	—	—	—

NHS Trusts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to extend to doctors working in trusts the existing rights that hospital doctors have in paragraph 330 of their terms and conditions of service to speak out in the interests of their patients' health; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is for national health service trusts to agree terms and conditions with doctors and other staff whom they employ. However, I am currently consulting widely on a proposal to issue guidance to the national health service—including NHS trusts—on the rights and responsibilities of managers and staff in this matter.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to allow trust hospitals to sell off pathology or related services to the private sector; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is for trusts themselves to decide whether it would be better to provide their own pathology services or to subcontract with other national health service or independent providers of such services. Whatever they decide, trusts must include pathology costs in the overall price of the relevant contract with their purchasers, and must not charge individuals for pathology services which are provided as part of national health service treatment.

NHS Pay

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing national health service pay expenditure in 1990-91, 1992-93 and her best estimate for 1993-94, showing the figures both in millions of pounds and current prices.

Dr. Mawhinney: The table shows the best available figures for expenditure on pay in the national health service in 1990-91, 1992-93 and 1993-94. The figure for 1992-93 is the latest esimate available and the range for 1993-94 is consistent with a zero to 1·5 per cent. pay increase in public sector pay, announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement.

£ billion

Financial year	*Nominal*	*1992-93*
1990-91[1]	13·9	15·6
1992-93[2]	17·0	17·0
1993-94[3]	17·0 to 17·3	16·5 to 16·8

[1] Best estimate from available data.

[2] Latest estimate.

[3] Provisional range to reflect the 0-1·5 per cent. range of pay increase for the public sector contained in the autumn statement.

Hospitals (Advertising)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make a statement on her plans to allow advertising in hospital out-patient departments; what guidelines she intends to issue on such advertising; and whether the advertising of certain products will be prohibited;

(2) what contracts have been negotiated in relation to the use of advertising in accident and emergency and out-patient departments; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Health authorities may allow commercial advertising in hospitals in order to generate additional income. General guidance on income generation activities by hospitals is included in a "guide to local initiatives" issued to health authorities in March 1989.

Responsibility for income generation schemes is for national health service managers. But the guidance advises health authorities that specific schemes should be congruent with the goals, culture and objectives of the health service and should certainly not contradict them. It would not be in an authority's interest to be involved in activities which are in conflict with its own aims or detract from its image in the community.

I do not intend issuing any specific guidance on advertising in hospitals.

Information on contracts for advertising in hospitals is not collected centrally.

Health Authorities (Property)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much, at current prices, was raised from the disposal of property in each regional health authority in each year since 1990; what is the current projection of funds to be raised by such disposals in 1992-93 and 1993-94; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on Wednesday 18 November at column *279*. Figures are not available for all regions beyond 1992-93. However, the national health service is expected to realise some £155 million from land and property disposals in 1993-94 which will be reinvested in patient care.

Health Survey

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement giving details of the health survey presently being carried out by the social survey division of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, including sample size and completion date.

Dr. Mawhinney: The health survey for England, currently being carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on behalf of the Department of Health, is a part of a continuing programme of surveys to monitor the nation's health. It is a central part of our health of the nation initiative and focuses on cardiovascular disease and associated risk factors.

The first survey took place in the autumn of 1991 and achieved a sample size of 3,100 adults. A report is due in mid-1993. The fieldwork for the 1992 survey is running from September to December. It is aiming for a sample size of 4,000 adults. The target sample size for 1993 is 17,000 adults. Results will be published annually.

Medical Audit Initiative

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 5 November, *Official Report*, column *349*, what guidance has been given to those involved in the medical audit initiative on *(a)* expenses to be claimed and *(b)* the standard of travel and hotel accommodation to be used consequent on their duties; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. Where national health service or Department of Health staff attend meetings or events which entails an overnight stay, expenses may be claimed in accordance with standard rates and conditions set by the Treasury which reflect the seniority of the staff involved.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she has taken to ensure *(a)* that there is available a sufficient supply of potassium iodate tablets for distribution to the population living within 25 miles of Sizewell A and B nuclear reactors for use in the event of there occurring a major accident and *(b)* that the tablets can be distributed within 24 hours of an accident occurring.

Mr. Sackville: The detailed emergency planning zone around the Sizewell nuclear power station extends to a radius of 2·5 km. The size of such zones is formally approved by the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate and is based on a "reference accident" for the reactor type in question. The reference accident is the maximum size of an accident that can reasonably be foreseen. While accidents worse than the reference accident could occur, this probability is so remote that detailed emergency planning against their consequences is not justified.

The provision of potassium iodate tablets is one of a number of countermeasures for which local emergency plans must make provision. Responsibility for the preparation and maintenance of arrangements for responding to nuclear emergencies in respect of particular nuclear installations currently rests with the operators, in consultation with local authorities, health authorities, the emergency services and other interests. The hon. Member may therefore wish to write to the chairman of Nuclear Electric for further information about the arrangements at Sizewell power station.

Smoking

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she proposes to take to tackle the incidence of smoking among children with special educational needs.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government are committed to the continuation of the existing programmes on teenage smoking and to developing material aimed at parents who smoke.

We are encouraging progress towards a situation in which all educational establishments have an effective smoking policy governing not only young people but staff and all other adults using the premises.

Education in schools on the harmful effects of smoking is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education.

Superannuation Branch

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on progress towards establishing her Department's NHS superannuation branch as an executive agency.

Mr. Sackville: We are pleased to announce that the NHS superannuation branch will be established as the NHS Pensions Agency on 20 November. The agency will administer the NHS occupational pension schemes for England and Wales. Its detailed objectives and functions are set out in a policy and resources framework document, copies of which are available in the Library.

The chief executive has been set the following key performance targets for the remainder of 1992-93:

1. Service Standards

a. Pension awards to be cleared:
   - (i) Within four weeks of receipt of application from employer: 89 per cent.*
   - (ii) Within eight weeks of receipt of application from employer 99 per cent.*

b. Pension age estimates for non-practitioners to be cleared:
   - (i) Within four weeks of request: 68 per cent.
   - (ii) Within eight weeks of request: 99 per cent.

c. Pensions age estimates for practitioners to be cleared:
   - (i) Within six weeks of request: 71 per cent.
   - (ii) Within eight weeks of request: 99 per cent.

d. Transfer payments to be made:
   - (i) Within eight weeks of application: 95 per cent.
   - (ii) Within 10 weeks of application: 99 per cent.

* for incapacity awards the periods start from confirmation of medical incapacity.

2. Efficiency improvements

To deliver at least 2 per cent. efficiency gains in keeping with agreed 1992-93 running costs budget.

3. New efficiency indicators

By January 1993, to develop at least one of the output measures needed to construct an overall corporate efficiency indicator for the agency.

4. New quality indicators

a. By 31 January 1993, to develop a statistical sampling method to provide a sound indicator of the level of accuracy in award and transfer calculations.

b. By 31 December 1992, to complete a customer satisfaction survey for major agency outputs.

5. Value for money review

By 31 January 1993, to undertake a review of agency activities, and services used by the agency, to determine a market testing programme for inclusion in the 1993-94 business plan.

6. Organisational effectiveness review

By 31 January 1993, to complete the first review of agency structure and organisation and to identify a preliminary programme for improving effectiveness for stakeholders in the Agency's services.

7. Support systems review

By 31 January 1993, to provide an information systems strategy to support the agency's corporate, business and management objectives.

8. Citizen's charter

By 31 March 1993, to propose new mechanisms for registering stakeholders' views on agency services.

Social Services Grants

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what personal social services specific grants will be made in 1993-94.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: For 1993-94 specific grants totalling £86·6 million will be available, which represents a £3·1 million or 3·7 per cent. increase, over the 1992-93 total. The specific grants for 1993-94 will be £34·4 million for mental illness, £31·8 million for social services training, £12·4 million for AIDS/HIV, £5·7 million for the guardian ad litem and reporting officer service and £2·3 million for alcohol and drugs misuse.

Abortion

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women in England and Wales in 1991 and the first half of 1992 chose medical abortion in the first nine weeks of pregnancy with Mifepristone and prostaglandin.

Mr. Sackville: Between July 1991, when Mifegyne (Mifepristone) was licensed, and December 1991, the latest period for which figures are available, the chief medical officers of England and Wales were notified of 109 abortions where the Mifepristone and prostaglandin method was used.

NHS Pay

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps she is taking to impose the 1·5 per cent. pay increase ceiling on senior and general managers in the national health service, from what date the pay ceiling will be effective; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what plans she has to impose the public sector pay ceiling of 1·5 per cent. in NHS trusts; and if she will make a statement;

(3) what steps she is taking to enforce the 1·5 per cent pay increase ceiling on all provider units in the national health service; and if she will make a statement;

(4) what account will be taken of the earnings of those who work in the national health service on performance-related pay in imposing the 1·5 per cent. pay increase ceiling; and if she will make a statement;

(5) how she intends to impose the 1·5 per cent. pay increase ceiling on dentists.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has written to the chairmen of all health authorities and NHS trusts setting out the arrangements for implementing the policy of restricting public sector pay settlements to a maximum of 1·5 per cent. in the coming year.

As the hon. Member is aware, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has written to the chairmen of the NHS review bodies amending their remits and asking them not to make recommendations on overall levels of pay, fees and allowances for 1 April 1993. For other staff whose pay and conditions are determined by our approval following negotiations in the Whitley councils and other central negotiating bodies the settlement remit will be restricted to between zero and 1·5 per cent. for each group. For those staff whose pay is not subject to central arrangements, chairmen have been asked to ensure that all settlements are restricted to between zero and 1·5 per cent. in the coming year with the pay bill increase being held as near zero as possible.

Payments under existing peformance pay schemes will continue and, under the existing pay arrangements for NHS general and senior managers, the policy will be implemented by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's direction with effect from the next review point —1 September 1993.

The dental rates study group will, as usual, be asked to recommend general dental practitioners' fees, using the target average net income (TANI) determined by Government which will be subject to the 1·5 per cent. maximum. This will take account of the recommendations of Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's fundamental review of dental remuneration which is due to be presented to Ministers by the end of the year.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 20 November 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what figures he has for the number of people receiving legal aid in Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Legal Aid Board publishes statistics on the number of acts of assistance provided under the legal aid fund in its annual reports. The most recent figures appear on page 84 of the Legal Aid Board's annual report (1991/92). In criminal (Crown court) proceedings the number of defendants represented under the legal aid scheme is given each year in the Department's annual publication "Judicial Statistics". The most recent information is given in table 10.6 on page 95 of the 1991 edition. In neither instance is it possible to distinguish between assisted persons residing in Wales or England.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what information he maintains on the percentage of people receiving legal aid in Wales who went on to win their court case.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Legal Aid Board publishes figures on the results reported in legal aid cases in its annual reports. The most recent figures are on page 56 of the Legal Aid Board annual report (1991/92). These figures can be broken down by legal aid area office. Wales, however, is served by two legal aid area offices situated in Cardiff and Chester respectively. The Chester area office also serves parts of north west England and the west midlands and it is not possible to distinguish between assisted persons residing in Wales or England.

Judges

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what procedures are followed by his Department to monitor the competence of judges; and under what circumstances the Lord Chancellor would initiate the process required for dismissal of a judge.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor attaches the highest importance to the constitutional principle of judicial independence. He has established no procedures for monitoring the competence of the full-time judiciary. Recourse from a judicial decision properly lies through the normal appeal process. Judges, however, exercise their functions, for the most part, in public. The Lord Chancellor considers with great care any complaints made to him about the conduct of a judge. Under the existing legislation governing the tenure of the judiciary, Supreme Court judges hold office during good behaviour, subject only to a power of removal by the Crown on an address presented by both Houses of Parliament; the Lord Chancellor may if he thinks fit remove a circuit judge from office on the grounds of incapacity or misbehaviour. The Lord Chancellor considers each complaint fully on its merits. He will consider the removal of a judge from office only if and when he is satisfied that the relevant statutory criteria have been fully met and that such a course is in the public interest.

Visas

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department why the application for an entry clearance visa by Mr. Umar Iqbal to join his wife Shabnim Sattar in Ilford has been refused; and why the appeal will not be heard until March 1993.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I understand that the application was refused on the grounds that the ECO was not satisfied that (1) the marriage had not been entered into primarily to obtain admission to the United Kingdom and (2) on the evidence available, adequate arrangements for maintenance and accommodation, as required under the Immigration Rules, was available without recourse to public funds. Umar Iqbal's appeal against this decision was received on 30 December 1990.

The first hearing of the appeal was held on 8 July 1991. The case was adjourned for two months to enable the appellant to arrange legal representation. At a second hearing in September the appellant's representative requested an adjournment.

At a hearing on 20 December 1991 the representative requested a further adjournment to obtain additional documentary evidence. The case was heard again on 22 June 1992 but adjourned to enable the Home Office to consider if there were now grounds to grant Mr. Iqbal an entry clearance. The Home Office have since told the appellant's representative that they do not intend to rely on the primary purpose ground for refusal but that maintenance and accommodation remain issues.

The case was listed for 25 March 1993 the next available date at the time but it may be possible to bring the hearing forward if the appellant so requests and an earlier date becomes available.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when his Department will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Ilford, South of 5 October, concerning Shabnim Sattar and her husband Mr. Umar Iqbal.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I replied to the hon. Member on 6 November 1992.

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what use his Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department has used a private detective twice during the last five years. The first occasion, in January 1990 was at a cost of £905; and the second, in February 1991, was at a cost of £776. The firm involved on both occasions was Sabrewatch Ltd.

Debtors (Guidelines)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the guidelines that are issued to bailiffs and court officers when dealing with cases where a debtor is an in-patient at a mental illness hospital.

Mr. John M. Taylor: When a bailiff learns that a debtor is a patient at a mental illness hospital he refers the matter to his manager so that guidance can be sought from the district judge as to what action, if any, should be taken. No written guidelines have been issued about either the service of documents or enforcing warrants in such circumstances. The existing procedure for service is set out in order 10 rule 4 of the County Court Rules 1981, which provides that, in the case of a mental patient, documents should be served on the person (if any) who is authorised under part VII of the Mental Health Act 1983 to conduct proceedings on the patient's behalf. If there is no such person authorised, documents should be served on the person with whom the patient resides or in whose care the patient is.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what use his Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Mr. Jackson: There has been no use of private detective firms by my Department in the last five years.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Community Care Grants

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications for *(a)* community care grants and *(b)* budgeting loans there have been in Northern Ireland from April 1991 to the latest available date; and of these how many he has (i) granted and (ii) refused.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. Wylie to Mr. William Ross, dated 18 November 1992:

As I am now responsible for social security operational matters your recent Parliamentary Question about Social Fund applications for Community Care Grants and Budgeting Loans has been passed to me for reply.

Information about the number of applications for Community Care Grants and Budgeting Loans from April 1991 is available in the Library under Social Fund Data and this is updated on a monthly basis. The details derived from this data are as follows:

From 1 April 1991 to 31 October 1992	*Number of applications*	*Number awarded*	*Number refused*
Community Care Grants	126,886	46,201	80,685
Budgeting Loans	154,590	92,086	62,504

I hope you find this information helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report and copies will be placed in the Library.

Holding Centres

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will now name the independent commissioner for Castlereagh and other holding centres in Northern Ireland, and publish the codes of practice and terms of reference for the commissioner.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I hope to be in a position soon to announce the appointment of the independent commissioner for the holding centres. The commissioner's terms of reference will be published at the same time.

The draft codes of practice covering the detention, treatment, questioning and identification of those detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act will be issued for public consultation shortly, with a view to laying them before Parliament as early as possible in the new year.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits Agency

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the cost, to date, of providing corporate dress within the Benefits Agency *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Wakefield.

Mr. Burt: The provision of corporate dress is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 19 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the cost, nationally and in Wakefield, of providing corporate dress within the Benefits Agency.

Corporate clothing, as part of the customer service initiative, enables local Benefits Agency staff to present a better and more professional image to their customers. This clothing is worn, voluntarily, by front-line staff such as receptionists, Social Fund officers and those members of staff running exhibitions and talks for outside bodies.

The corporate dress contract was awarded on 11 December 1991. The national cost of corporate dress ordered to date is almost £1·4 million. I should explain that funding for this clothing comes from office running costs, and not out of the budgets allocated to benefits.

The cost of corporate dress in the Agency's Wakefield District, which comprises offices at Wakefield, Castleford, Hemsworth, Pontefract and a full time caller office at Normanton, is approximately £12,100.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many Benefits Agency "Have Your Say" leaflets were *(a)* published and *(b)* completed; and if information from analysis of completed leaflets is included in the national customer survey for 1992.

Mr. Burt: The provision of service to customers is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the

Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 19 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many Benefits Agency "Have Your Say" leaflets were *(a)* published and *(b)* completed; and if information from analysis of completed leaflets is included in the National Customer Survey for 1992.

The "Have Your Say" leaflet provides a simple and effective method for customers to set out grievances. There have been two editions of this leaflet. 450,000 of the first edition were printed. The revised version is larger in size and has an altered design. Since April 1992 15,000 have been printed.

Information about the number of "Have Your Say" leaflets completed is not kept centrally and is therefore not available except at disproportionate cost. I should explain that the leaflet is designed to be used locally by customers and to enable Districts to respond to the points made and identify any local trends. As there is no national analysis, no statistics relating to it will be included in the National Customer Survey for 1992.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the production and distribution costs for the 1991-92 Benefits Agency annual report.

Mr. Burt: The 1991-92 Benefits Agency business plan is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 19 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security concerning the Publication of the Benefits Agency's Annual Report for 1991-92.

Ten thousand (10,000) copies of the Annual Report have been produced at a cost of £13,200. So far 3,500 copies have been distributed both within the Department of Social Security and to outside organisations. The cost of external distribution to date is £1,687. All the above costs are exclusive of VAT.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will undertake an inquiry into cases of special rules disability living allowance applications where payment was not made within six months of the application.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 19 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking if an inquiry into cases of Special Rules Disability Living Allowance applications where payment was not made within six months of the application would be undertaken.

I have introduced several measures in the Benefits Agency to deal with the numbers of outstanding claims under normal and special rules and I detailed these in my letter to all MPs on 19 October.

The Agency has recently been considering a revision of procedures for processing of Special Rules cases. A number of recommendations have been made which will ensure that processing times are improved and that claims are dealt with consistently. Revised procedures have been written and will be issued shortly. Extended delays will not normally then occur.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Social Fund

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for loans or grants under the social fund were made in his Newcastle office in the first six months of 1992, compared to the similar period in 1991; and what was the percentage of refusals in each case.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 19 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about Social Fund applications and refusals in Newcastle.

In the first six months of the financial year 1991-92, 9,704 applications for Social Fund loans were made at Newcastle District, of which 36 per cent. were refused. Of the 4,926 community care grant (CCG) applications made in the same period, 75 per cent. were refused. In the first six months of 1992-93, 37 per cent. of the 11,686 loan applications made at Newcastle District were refused as were 75 per cent. of the 5,912 CCG applications.

I should explain that most CCG refusals are because the basic eligibility conditions are not satisfied. Nationally, in the year 1991-92, 86 per cent. of CCG refusals were because the basic eligibility criteria, such as receipt of Income Support, were not satisfied. The number of CCG and loan awards in Newcastle District made since April 1992 is over 25 per cent. higher than for the same period last year.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

European Court

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 16 November, *Official Report*, column 77, if he will provide more information regarding the case currently before the European Court of Justice referred to in the answer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Details of the case (C-328/91) are in the *Official Journal of the European Communities*, dated 11 February 1992, a copy of which is in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Salmon Stocks

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now invite his advisory committee on salmon stocks to discuss with the National Rivers Authority how best to monitor the impact of the north east drift net fishery on salmon stocks under the proposed new Net Limitation Order.

Mr. Curry: We have no plans to ask the salmon advisory committee to do this. The National Rivers Autority is responsible for the management and monitoring of the drift net fisheries off the north east coast of England.

EMPLOYMENT

Discrimination

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on Government policy in relation to employers discriminating on the ground of age.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave him on 19 November 1992.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will arrange for public telephone facilities to be made available at the premises of industrial tribunals.

Mr. McLoughlin: Public telephones are provided in the majority of industrial tribunal offices. Where they are not, the tribunal staff arrange access to an official telephone for parties, their representatives or witnesses if they need this in connection with the tribunal hearing. The central offices of the industrial tribunals in England and Wales and Scotland have been asked to review the arrangements with a view to ensuring that the public have access to a telephone.

Wages Inspections

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Eltham of 13 November, *Official Report*, column *984*, on rates of low payment found by wages inspectors, if she will list the levels of low payment for which prosecutions have taken place, or are in progress, for 1991-92.

Mr. McLoughlin: In 1991 there were 14 prosecutions for failing to pay at least the statutory minimum rate. The hourly rates of payment discovered in these cases are as follows:

£1·25; £1·50; £1·50; £1·63; £1·85; £1·875; £2·01; £2·18; £2·33; £2·33; £2·48; £2·48; £2·48; £2·50.

In 1992 there have been 10 prosecutions to date for failing to pay at least the statutory minimum rate. The hourly rates of payment discovered in these cases are as follows:

£1·70; £1·87; £2·00; £2·00; £2·00; £2·30; £2·60; £2·64; £2·68; £2·70.

There are three cases currently in progress, that have yet to come to court. The hourly rates of payment in these cases are as follows:

£1·60; £1·70; £2·03.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many wages inspectors there were in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1990.

Mr. McLoughlin: The average number of wages inspectors in post was as follows:

1979—158 inspectors
1990— 66 inspectors

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of firms covered by the wages councils received a visit from the wages inspectors in 1990-91.

Mr. McLoughlin: In 1990-91, 4·4 per cent. of establishments covered by wages councils were visited by wages inspectors.

Equal Opportunities

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the recommendations made by the Equal Opportunities Commission to strengthen the equal pay and sex discrimination Acts.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Equal Opportunities Commission's recommendations for changes to the sex discrimination and equal pay legislation are receiving careful consideration by the Department.

Head Protection Regulations

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will grant exemption from the compulsory wearing of head protection on the lines of the Construction (Head Protection) Regulations 1989, to turban-wearing Sikhs in the non-construction industries to be covered by proposed legislation discussed in the consultative document CD38 issued by the Health and Safety Commission.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to arrange for a general exemption for turban-wearing followers of the Sikh religion from the requirement to wear head protection in the proposed regulations to implement the European directive on the Use of Personal Protective Equipment at Work.

EDUCATION

Assisted Places

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he intends to take further to promote the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Forth: The scheme is receiving wide publicity in the parents charter, copies of which have been made available to all parents. The publication from next year of tables showing the comparative performance of all local schools, including independent schools, will also bring to the attention of parents everywhere the excellent results achieved by assisted places schools, among others. The Department also distributes 175,000 leaflets a year explaining the benefits of the scheme to parents. Schools offering assisted places are best placed to promote the scheme in their area and they are continuing to do so with excellent results. Take-up of new assisted places is at record levels and the scheme is now more popular than ever with parents.

Appointments (Women)

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many women would need to be appointed to meet his Department's plans to have 50 per cent. of appointments to bodies concerned with school matters and 30 per cent. of those to non-school bodies to be women by 1996.

Mr. Forman: It is difficult to give accurate figures since overall total membership of our public bodies is subject to change. Assuming that the overall membership of the Department's public bodies remains until 1996 at the level indicated in the document "Public Appointments and Equal Opportunities" recently released through the Cabinet Office, we shall have to appoint 23 more women to bodies concerned with school matters and 25 more women to non-school bodies in order to achieve our published goals.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list his Department's bodies concerned with school matters and non-school bodies; and if he will list the number of women, and the total number of members, appointed to each body.

Mr. Forman: The details requested are as follows:

Public Bodies concerned with school matters

Name of body	*Number of women*	*Total number of members*
Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges	4	16
Centre for Information on Language Teaching	4	12
Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education	4	16
Education Assets Board	2	11
National Council for Education Technology	8	19
National Curriculum Council	5	14
National Youth Agency	4	7
School Examinations and Assessment Council	4	14
Teaching as a Career Board	1	9
Business and Technology Education Council	3	15
Council for National Academic Awards	3	27
Further Education Funding Council (England)	4	14
Further Education Unit Board of Management	2	9
Fulbright Commission	1	6
Higher Education Funding Council for England	2	13
Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council	2	15
University Commissioners	0	5
Universities Funding Council	3	14
Visiting Committee of the Cranfield Institute of Technology	0	7
Visiting Committee of the Royal College of Art	1	8

Lunchtime Supervisors

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the number of lunchtime supervisors employed by each local education authority for 1980, 1985 and 1990.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not available centrally.

Pupils (Exclusions)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to ensure that *(a)* proper records are kept on exclusions of pupils from schools and *(b)* reliable data are available on an annual basis for both indefinite and permanent exclusion of pupils from schools.

Mr. Forth: The Department has been collecting information on permanent exclusions from LEA and grant-maintained schools over a two-year period starting with the summer term 1990 under the national exclusions reporting system (NERS). The purpose of NERS is to provide a basis on which to review the working of the existing statutory procedures on exclusions. The information received is currently being analysed. The need for any further monitoring will be considered in the context of the overall review.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General what use his Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

The Solicitor-General: The records of the legal secretariat to the Law Officers, the Crown prosecution service and the Serious Fraud Office do not disclose any use of inquiry agents in the last five years. The litigation division of the Treasury Solicitor's Department makes frequent use of inquiry agents to ascertain the addresses of parties against whom court proceedings are to be issued, and as process servers. It would not be possible to ascertain the exact level of use or cost, or the names of all firms involved without disproportionate expense. However, the cost for each case usually does not exceed £100.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Satellite TV (Encryption Services)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will refer the monopoly of encryption services in satellite television to the Office of Fair Trading; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: No. The Director General of Fair Trading is required under statute to keep the operation of commercial services in the United Kingdom under review. Allegations of abuses of market power are usually made directly by those affected to the Office of Fair Trading.

Compulsory Repair Orders

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what progress his Department has made with the compulsory repairs order issued on Buxton crescent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 19 November 1992]*: Contacts between English Heritage and the owners are continuing. Meanwhile, my officials are making final preparations for the service of a repairs notice.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Albania

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance has been provided to Albania *(a)* through the know-how fund and *(b)* otherwise.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The know-how fund was extended to Albania in July 1992. We are currently working up a programme of assistance: initial projects are concentrating on the privatisation of state farms and the health management sector. We have provided £1·3 million of bilateral humanitarian assistance through grants to British non-governmental organisations. Our contribution to EC humanitarian assistance is some £12 million.

Rhinoceros Conservation

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much is currently allocated by her Department towards the world-wide conservation of rhinoceros.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There is no sectoral allocation for rhinoceros conservation within the aid programme.

In 1991-92 we spent £100,000 on a project specifically related to rhinoceros conservation in Kenya and more than £1 million on projects designed to promote the conservation of areas where the rhinoceros is found.

Bosnia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many lorries for use in carrying humanitarian relief in Bosnia have arrived in Bosnia to date; how many more lorries from the United Kingdom are to be sent; and what representations have been made for more lorries to be made available.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 17 November 1992]*: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees office in Zagreb stated on 18 October that they had a trucking capacity of 110 trucks and were expecting a further 126 vehicles to arrive by mid-late November. Of the vehicles in operation at the time of the report, we had provided 21 trucks with a total capacity of 231 tonnes. Since then we have provided 10 more trucks with trailers to increase their carrying capacity, to enhance UNHCR's operations, and a further 12 trucks, with 10 trailers, left Felixstowe yesterday, carrying around £1 million of medical supplies destined for the World Health Organisation, to join the distribution operation. We have received no representations from UNHCR to make more vehicles available.

Global Environmental Assistance

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has of the consequences of the projected cut in global environmental assistance.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 18 November 1992]*: There is no projected cut. The planned provision for global environmental assistance covers only expected expenditure to meet existing commitments to the global environment facility and the Montreal protocol fund. We have agreed to provide new and additional resources for replenishment of the global environment facility. We shall make provision when the level and the timing of our contribution to the replenishment are known.

Aid Target

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the effect of the Overseas Development Administration budget announced in the autumn statement on the achievement of the UN target of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product for overseas aid budgets.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 18 November 1992]*: Performance against the 0·7 per cent. target is based on actual expenditure and by calendar year. It is not useful, therefore, for the Government to make forecasts of future aid/GNP ratios based on planning figures by financial year.

Aid Reductions

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will explain the reasons behind the proposed reduction in aid for developing countries from 1993-94 to 1995-96.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 18 November 1992]*: The future levels of the aid programme have been considered, along with other public expenditure programmes, during the public expenditure survey. The public expenditure survey allows for a detailed consideration of all public expenditure priorities against the available resources. The results of this year's survey, announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 12 November, reflect the Government's firm commitment to a continuing substantial aid programme for developing countries. The aid programme to developing countries is planned to increase from 1992-93 to 1993-94 by 1 per cent. in real terms to £1,900 million and to be maintained at that level in cash in 1994-95 and 1995-96.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Banknotes

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been prosecuted for forgery of banknotes during each of the past five years for which records are available.

Mr. Jack: Data collected centrally does not distinguish between offences involving coins or notes. The table shows the number of prosecutions for forgery of coins and notes from 1986 to 1990. Provisional 1991 data will be available before the end of 1992.

Number of persons prosecuted in England and Wales under the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981 Sections 14 to 19.

Year	*Prosecutions*
1986	314
1987	195
1988	99
1989	67
1990	169

Voting

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many expatriate votes were cast at the last general election; and how they were distributed by constituency.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Details of the number of overseas electors registered in each constituency were published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in 1992 Electoral Statistics (EL no. 19), a copy of which is in the Library. Information on the number of proxies who voted on behalf of overseas electors at the general election is not collected centrally.

Staff Vetting

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many requests were received by police authorities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, from local authority education departments seeking vetting of prospective staff working with children for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Exact figures are not available but during the period 1 September 1990 to 31 August 1991 519,325 checks were made by police forces in England and Wales under the child protection arrangements, of which 192,410 were known to have come from local authority education departments. Corresponding figures for the two previous years were 489,266 (193,526) to 31 August 1990 and 464,112 (189,304) to 31 August 1989.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time the Metropolitan police take to process a police check on the suitability of local authority job applicants who work with children, such as teachers and social workers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The average length of time is currently 12½ weeks, including 9½ weeks waiting time before work on applications can begin. There has been a 42 per cent. increase in the number of criminal record check requests made to the Metropolitan police this year compared with last. Figures for the three months ending mid-November 1992 show an increase of 75 per cent. over the same period last year. Six extra staff have been loaned to the unit in an effort to reduce the backlog.

Drugs (Prisons)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison inmates at each of the London prisons have been put on report for being in possession of drugs during the period 1 January to 1 November.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of inmates held in London prisons placed on report for being in possession of drugs between 1 January and 1 November 1992 is as follows:

	Number
Belmarsh	69
Brixton	51
Holloway	58
Pentonville	72
Wandsworth	226
Wormwood Scrubs	120

Strangeways Prison

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will apply the transfer of undertakings regulations to the market testing of Strangeways prison; if he will make a statement on the advice provided in his Department's market testing guidelines; and if he will outline the considerations leading to his decision.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The applications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to market testing in the prison service is a complex matter which we are currently considering. I will write to the hon. Member when conclusions have been reached.

Private Security Firms

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what monitoring his Department carries out of the employment policies of private security firms.

Mr. Jack: We are supporting the development of self-regulation within the private security industry. As part of this policy we encourage adherence to the relevant British Standards covering technical and managerial competence.

On 20 October my right hon. and learned Friend attended the launch of the inspectorate of the security industry, which will inspect guarding firms against these standards. Inspection will not be compulsory, but British Standards provide the industry's users with a benchmark for deciding whether firms are suitable.

Police (Sick Leave)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officer work days are lost in each year since 1987 in each police authority *(a)* due to injuries incurred on duty and *(b)* other sickness.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Figures relating to the total number of days absent from duty due to sickness as a result of assault on duty, and other sickness, are published each year in the annual report of Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary. The corresponding totals on a force by force basis between 1987 and 1989 are not totally readily available. Those for 1990 and 1991 are as follows:

	1990		*1991*	
Force	*Days lost due to assault-related sick leave*	*Total days sick leave not due to assaults*	*Days lost due to assault-related sick leave*	*Total days sick leave not due to assaults*
Avon and Somerset	1,402	31,116	840	30,357
Bedfordshire	582	13,788	831	12,719
Cambridgeshire	213	14,731	589	12,518
Cheshire	1,109	20,136	921	22,041
City of London	37	10,023	6	8,899
Cleveland	731	28,963	610	23,384
Cumbria	169	13,425	358	12,125
Derbyshire	648	19,323	1,135	23,358
Devon and Cornwall	865	27,202	986	28,131
Dorset	406	9,665	325	13,749
Durham	1,191	15,876	1,129	15,825
Dyfed Powys	622	10,325	223	10,801
Essex	629	36,518	454	32,540
Gloucestershire	259	11,790	338	13,148
Greater Manchester	3,708	99,694	3,618	86,936
Gwent	330	10,937	126	13,627
Hampshire	2,170	33,156	930	43,295
Hertfordshire	650	22,318	640	22,647
Humberside	895	27,059	856	20,096
Kent	542	29,459	190	20,324
Lancashire	1,371	52,507	2,422	47,516
Leicestershire	644	24,224	678	24,466
Lincolnshire	670	16,361	758	17,206
Merseyside	4,086	79,416	4,264	87,094
Metropolitan Police	792	360,689	1,669	320,907
Norfolk	381	17,688	157	15,314
North Wales	623	18,318	810	22,055
North Yorkshire	274	16,321	419	18,948
Northamptonshire	132	14,320	65	15,276
Northumbria	4,296	36,309	3,993	30,281
Nottinghamshire	1,302	28,236	1,081	26,879
South Wales	2,422	43,370	2,874	46,868
South Yorkshire	1,297	36,362	600	36,728
Staffordshire	1,120	32,816	1,096	34,892
Suffolk	443	9,331	333	8,649
Surrey	811	15,419	641	18,664
Sussex	1,026	30,164	1,708	38,921
Thames Valley	1,144	26,992	761	35,728
Warwickshire	438	12,357	275	13,874
West Mercia	487	24,936	405	25,873
West Midlands	Not known	48,785	1,279	64,594
West Yorkshire	2,455	57,615	2,880	61,815
Wiltshire	456	10,285	400	9,293

Police (Structure and Funding)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which organisations he intends to consult on any proposals for changes in the arrangements for the structure and funding of police authorities and police forces in England and Wales;

(2) when he proposes to make an announcement on the future arrangements for the structure and funding of police authorities and police forces in England and Wales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We will consult on our proposals as soon as we have completed our consideration of these issues. Our consultations will include the Association of Chief Police Officers and the local authority associations.

Prisoners

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convicted or remand category inmates from prisons have been transferred to each of the special hospitals in each of the past five years; and how many of these were category A prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 6 November 1992]:* The available information is given in the table.

Prisoners transferred to special hospitals by hospital and type of prisoner/transfer: 1987-1991

	Hospital							
					Of which Category 'A'			
Year	*Broadmoor*	*Rampton*	*Ashworth*[4]	*Total*	*Broadmoor*	*Rampton*	*Ashworth*[4]	*Total*
1987								
Sentenced[1]	6	14	24	44	2	2	3	7
Remand[2]	7	2	6	15	2	—	1	3
Remand[3]	26	11	38	75	1	1	3	5
1988								
Sentenced[1]	9	8	17	34	6	2	1	9
Remand[2]	5	4	—	9	1	—	—	1
Remand[3]	39	21	15	75	1	—	2	3
1989								
Sentenced[1]	10	9	28	47	4	1	2	7
Remand[2]	3	3	11	17	1	1	8	10
Remand[3]	27	16	27	70	1	2	3	6
1990								
Sentenced[1]	9	11	21	41	1	1	—	2
Remand[2]	7	8	4	19	—	—	1	1
Remand[3]	12	18	20	50	2	1	2	5
1991								
Sentenced[1]	14	14	19	47	2	1	2	5
Remand[2]	10	6	11	27	3	—	1	4
Remand[3]	13	21	10	44	—	1	—	1

[1] Sentenced prisoners transferred from prison to special hospitals under Section 47/49 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

[2] Remand prisoners transferred direct from prison to special hospitals under Section 48/49 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

[3] Remand prisoners discharged from prison to court then admitted to special hospitals under Section 37/41 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

[4] Moss Side and Park Lane hospitals merged on 18 February 1990 to become Ashworth.

Health and Safety

Mr. John McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place a copy in the Library of the health and safety policy of each of the agencies within his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the agencies concerned: the Forensic Science Service, the United Kingdom Passport Agency and the Fire Service College. I have asked the chief executive of each of these agencies to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. Hayzelden to Mr. John McAllion, dated 12 November 1992:

The Home Secretary has asked me to respond to your Parliamentary Question about the health and safety policy of the United Kingdom Passport Agency. We give a very high priority to health and safety matters in the Passport Agency and we have separate statements to cover each of the buildings that we occupy. I have arranged for a copy of these documents to be placed in the Library of the House.

Letter from A. Salisbury to Mr. John McAllion, dated 16 November 1992:

The Secretary of State for the Home Department has asked the chief executives of the executive agencies for which he is responsible to write to you directly in response to your Parliamentary Question about health and safety policies. I am replying as the Deputy Commandant of the Fire Service College agency on behalf of the Chief Executive, Mr. Brian Fuller, who is currently abroad on business.

A copy of the College's existing health and safety policy will be placed in the Library of the House. The policy is currently under review in the light of new health and safety at work regulations which will be coming into force at the beginning of 1993 and which are required in order to implement European Community directives on health and safety at work.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executives' replies to written Parliamentary Questions will be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Letter from J. Thompson to Mr. John McAllion, dated 17 November 1992:

You recently tabled a Parliamentary Question asking for a copy of the Health and Safety Policy of each of the agencies to be placed in the Library. As you know, the arrangement now is that the Chief Executive of an Executive Agency, with the agreement of the Minister, replies to Members of Parliament on operational matters. I am therefore replying on behalf of the Forensic Science Service (FSS).

A copy of the current health and safety policy has been placed in the Library as you requested. You will see from the introduction that the policy continues to operate within the overall umbrella of the Home Office Health and Safety Policy. The document represents a second level policy statement, operating within the 3 tier Home Office policy. Third level local policy documents for each laboratory set out the local application of the policy and procedures.

TRANSPORT

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those agencies in his Department which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My right hon. Friend announced proposals for the privatisation of DVOIT on 19 October, *Official Report*, column *209*. A consultation document on the future of the vehicle inspectorate was published on 14 September; it invited comments by 30 November on options for the future of the agency's testing activities. As part of the normal three year reviews of the framework documents for the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, the Driving Standards Agency and the Vehicle Certification Agency, which need to be completed by 1 April 1993, we shall be looking at the alternative options. in accordance with the procedures for agencies described in the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Office of Public Service and Science on 17 November, *Official Report*, column *104*.

Fires on Ships

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the details of fires on board ships investigated by his Department for each of the last 10 years, giving details of *(a)* temperature and *(b)* length of fire.

Mr. Norris: A list of investigations carried out into fires on board vessels since the establishment of the marine accident investigation branch in July 1989 is attached.

It is not generally practicable to measure the temperature of a fire, and the statistics maintained do not include details of duration.

The information on all investigations into fires carried out by the Department between mid-1982 and mid-1989 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Date of Accident	*Name of Vessel*	*Type of Vessel*	*Flag*	*Size*
18 July 1989	Seaboard Invincible	Offshore Support	United Kingdom	1,276 grt
30 July 1989	Welsh Princess	Yacht	Cayman Islands	—
2 August 1989	Naticia	Passenger	United Kingdom	288 grt
12 August 1989	Llanishen	Cargo	St. Vincent	446 grt
31 August 1989	Eclipse	FV	United Kingdom	23·5 m
11 September 1989	Lyrawa Bay	Ro-Ro	United Kingdom	101 grt
12 September 1989	Kevella	FV	United Kingdom	19·8 m
13 September 1989	L'Oiseau Migrateur	FV	Guernsey	16·5 m
24 October 1989	Esperans	FV	—	—
25 October 1989	Nanna	FV	—	—
30 November 1989	Strathisla	FV	United Kingdom	18·9 m
22 December 1989	Marino Torre	Ro-Ro/Cargo	Italy	2,644 grt
10 January 1990	Sound of Seil	Ferry	United Kingdom	363 grt
13 January 1990	Churchill	Container	United Kingdom	22,635 grt
31 January 1990	St. Columbia	Ro-Ro	United Kingdom	7,.836 grt
3 March 1990	Luminence	Cargo	United Kingdom	1,596 grt
26 March 1990	Lowland Cavalier	Offshore Support	United Kingdom	1,396 grt
6 April 1990	Norrona	Ro-Ro	Denmark	7,839 grt
10 April 1990	Reine Matilde	Ro-Ro	France	5,465 grt
7 July 1990	Success	FV	United Kingdom	16·2 m
10 July 1990	Rocquaine	Cargo	Bahamas	985 grt
27 August 1990	Sea Venture	FV	United Kingdom	16·31 m
29 August 1990	Island Traveller	Cargo	United Kingdom	424 grt
16 September 1990	Sue Rita	Passenger Launch	United Kingdom	67·11 grt
19 September 1990	St. Anselm	Ro-Ro	United Kingdom	7,405 grt
3 October 1990	Earl Granville	Ro-Ro	United Kingdom	4,657 grt
9 October 1990	St. Cybi	Ro-Ro	Bahamas	2,353 grt
9 October 1990	Canberra	Passenger	United Kingdom	43,975 grt
24 October 1990	Suffolk Ventarer	Offshore Support	United Kingdom	255 grt
1 November 1990	Emerald	Cargo	Isle of Man	1,583 grt
4 December 1990	Comar	Tug	United Kingdom	37 grt
24 February 1991	Breydon Merchant	Cargo	United Kingdom	425 grt
23 March 1991	Eurosun	Passenger Ro-Ro	Bermuda	12,343 grt
23 May 1991	Luminence	Cargo	United Kingdom	1,596 grt
17 June 1991	Autostrada	Vehicle Carrier	United Kingdom	610 grt
18 July 1991	David John	FV	United Kingdom	23·9 m
19 July 1991	Matco Avon	Tanker	United Kingdom	43,622 grt
24 July 1991	Valulla	Class V Passenger Launch	United Kingdom	112·06 grt
1 August 1991	Geestcape	Refrigerated Cargo	United Kingdom	8,030 grt
5 August 1991	Kedarost	FV	United Kingdom	23·41 m
5 August 1991	Emerald	Cargo	Isle of Man	1,583 grt
18 September 1991	Arran Lass	FV	United Kingdom	15·24 m

Date of Accident	*Name of Vessel*	*Type of Vessel*	*Flag*	*Size*
14 October 1991	Freedom	FV	United Kingdom	22·61 m
20 October 1991	Sally Star	Passenger Ro-Ro	Bahamas	9,120 grt
31 October 1991	Rix Eagle	Dry Cargo Barge	United Kingdom	292 grt
5 November 1991	Stora Korsnas Link I	Ro-Ro Cargo	Sweden	5,018 grt
15 January 1992	Geestbay	Cargo	United Kingdom	7,729 grt
8 April 1992	Kasan	FV	United Kingdom	17·52 m
15 May 1992	Grampian Otter	Supply Vessel	United Kingdom	652 grt
28 May 1992	Tor Anglia	Ro-Ro Other Cargo	Sweden	13,652 grt
21 June 1992	Sibon	FV	United Kingdom	33·66 m
29 September 1992	Sky Princess	Cruise	United Kingdom	43,692 grt
15 October 1992	Our Lady Patricia	Passenger	United Kingdom	312 grt

Merchant Ships

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents world wide involving United Kingdom registered merchant vessels over 100 gross tonnes were reported in 1991.

Mr. Norris: A total of 140 accidents were recorded.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account he has taken of the effect of hydrocarbon fuels and lengths of journey on ship fire safety standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Ship safety standards, including fire safety standards relating to the carriage and use of hydrocarbon fuels, are prescribed in the international convention for the safety of life at sea (SOLAS) for ships engaged on international voyages, both long and short. Those standards, together with similarly appropriate standards for ships not engaged on international voyages, are implemented by merchant shipping legislation.

Passenger Ferries

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* collisions, *(b)* collisions leading to capsize, *(c)* floodings and *(d)* serious fires involving United Kingdom registered passenger ferries have been recorded in each year since 30 April 1988.

Mr. Norris: Information on incidents broken down by the specified categories is only available in statistical form for vessels over 100 grt from 1 January 1989 grouped under related accident types; statistics for part years could not be produced without considerable effort. The figures concern all United Kingdom passenger ships and all ro-ro vessels including those which do not carry passengers; and they are not confined to serious accidents but include all cases where material damage was caused:

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	[1]*1992*
Collisions and contacts	11	22	22	9
Capsizings	—	—	—	—
Floodings	—	1	1	—
Fire and explosions	19	14	11	17

[1] To 31 October.

Concessionary Fares

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will establish a Government survey to evaluate the possibility of a United Kingdom-wide concessionary fare scheme for pensioners on public transport.

Mr. Freeman: We have no plans to change the present arrangements for concessionary fares schemes operated by local authorities. Both British Rail and long-distance coach operators have their own commercial travel concessions for elderly people. There is therefore no need to carry out a survey as suggested by the hon. Member.

Jubilee Line

Mr. Beadall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the time scale of the construction of the Jubilee line extension in the light of the statement made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 12 November.

Mr. Norris: We shall be able to give the go-ahead for construction only when a formal agreement is concluded with the administrators on the detailed terms upon which they are to contribute to the cost of the extension. Thereafter, the line is planned to be built in 53 months.

Shipping and Seamen (Records)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the standards of record maintenance and the help given to academic and other inquirers by the General Register and Record Office of Shipping and Seamen.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend is aware that there have been few complaints about the standard of record keeping and a steady flow of expressions of appreciation about the services provided. We shall want to ensure that this continues in the future.

Parking

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to give powers to local authorities to deal with vehicles which are illegally, obstructively or dangerously parked; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Under the Road Traffic Act 1991 local authorities are able to assume responsibility for all permitted parking controls throughout their areas on application to us. They can also apply to have special parking areas designated in which they will be able to enforce virtually all parking restrictions. While the police will retain powers to enforce endorsable offences such as obstruction and dangerous parking, local authorities will in practice be able to deal with the vehicle concerned if it is also parked in contravention of a parking regulation.

Skye Bridge

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether the difficulties associated with the lighting and stability of safety buoys, in the vicinity of the Kyle of Lochalsh/Kyleakin crossing, relevant to the construction work on the bridge to Skye, breach the original conditions of consent; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure that the safety provisions at the Kyle of Lochalsh/Kyleakin crossing, relevant to the construction work on the bridge to Skye, are satisfactory with specific regard to the lighting and stability of surface buoys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The consent to the Skye bridge works, issued by the Department of Transport under section 34 of the Coast Protection Act 1949, requires the works to be marked and lit as specified by the Northern Lighthouse Board. The consent also provides for the broadcast of natigational warnings to mariners and for the use of guardships in connection with any emergency arising from the works including the displacement of buoys and the failure of lights. The contractors are also required to advise the hydrographer of the Navy of any hazard to navigation arising from the works.

Technically, any failure of navigational safety equipment represents a breach of the conditions of consent. On the occasions when the Northern Lighthouse Board has reported failures of navigational equipment. The Department of Transport has contacted the contractors and ensured that immediate action was taken to correct the failure. At the Department's request, the contractors are taking steps to ensure that problems with the navigational aids are minimised, including the replacement of the existing battery powered lights with solar powered buoys.

Coastal and Short Sea Shipping

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he will be taking to develop British coastal and short sea shipping; and what discussions he has had with the National Union of Marine, Aviation and Shipping Transport Officer.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* It is primarily for the industry to develop coastal and short sea freight services in response to market demands. However, the Government are keen to encourage the use of waterborne freight alternatives where this is both economically and geographically viable.

We meet with officials from NUMAST periodically when we discuss a whole range of issues.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what initiatives he is planning to assess the potential for shifting freight away from roads and on to coastal ships and other vessels.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* I refer the hon. member to the answer that I gave on 3 November 1992, *Official Report*, c. *159-60*.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made on the relative energy efficiency of coastal and short sea trips in terms of energy consumption per tonne per mile in comparison with freight-carrying road lorries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* The energy efficiency of ships and lorries is discussed in a report produced by the Department of Energy in 1989 on "Energy Use and Energy Efficiency in UK Transport up to the year 2010" and published by HMSO.

I have no current plans to carry out any further assessement of the comparative energy efficiency of roads and wateborne freight.

WALES

Birds of Prey (Poisoning)

Mr. Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many protected birds of prey have been found poisoned in Wales in each of the last five years; and if he will indicate numbers of poisonings according to bird species and type.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

1987—None
1988—1 buzzard
1989—4 buzzards, 6 red kites
1990—2 buzzards
1991—2 buzzards, 1 red kite, 1 peregrine falcon
1992—To date 1 buzzard and 3 red kites

NHS Administration

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what percentage of South Glamorgan health authority's budget is spent on administrative costs not directly related to the provision of health care;

(2) what percentage of national health service Wales' overall budget is spent on administrative costs not directly related to the provision of health care.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: All NHS expenditure in Wales is related to the provision of health and personal social services. The information necessary to identify administrative costs across all fields of health and social care is not available centrally. However, provisional annual accounts data for 1991-92 does yield for district health authorities the proportion of the authority's own revenue expenditure on administrative costs not directly related to the provision of health care during the last financial year. This figure for South Glamorgan is 3·3 per cent. and is taken to be that covering authority administration and purchasing expenses and expenditure on administering "other services"—for example, emergency bed service, registration and inspection of nursing homes, and joint finance expenditure, care in the community and grants to voluntary bodies. It excludes any further administrative expenditure accounted for within the small surplus on trading attributable to the non-ambulance services of the South Glamorgan health authority's common services units which cannot be allocated centrally between the various clients of those units.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those agencies in his Department which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science on 17 November, at column *104*.

Appointments

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 30 October, *Official Report*, columns *866-908*, if he will list the number of days per week that each appointee is expected, or contracted, to serve in respect of his or her appointment.

Mr. David Hunt: As the information requested is some 30 pages in length, I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Wages Councils

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning Government proposals to abolish wages councils.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received around a dozen representations, from members of the public who are not in favour of the proposal.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many men and how many women are in employment in each wages council industry in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is not available in the format requested.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated net effect on unemployment in Wales of the proposed abolition of wages councils.

Mr. David Hunt: By reducing barriers to employment, as well as reducing unnecessary bureaucracy, the abolition of wages councils will improve job prospects in Wales.

Agricultural Wages Board

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated net effect on employment in agriculture in Wales of abolishing the Agricultural Wages Board.

Mr. David Hunt: There is no proposal to abolish this board.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on abolishing the Agricultural Wages Board.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received no such representations.

Recycling

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the local authorities in Wales that plan to *(a)* fulfill and *(b)* exceed Government targets for local authority recycling of 25 per cent. of all household waste by 2000.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information will not be available until local authorities have finalised their waste recycling plans.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will establish a cash-incentive scheme for local authorities in Wales to *(a)* invest in recycling collections, *(b)* raise the costs of landfill and *(c)* build up the markets for recycled materials.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government are investigating the possible use of economic instruments to provide incentives to increase, re-use, recycle or minimum waste. Our White Paper, "This Common Inheritance—The Second Year Report" commits us to announcing conclusions about the use of economic instruments early in the new year.

Landfill Gas Explosions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many properties have been destroyed by explosions caused by landfill gas in Wales; and how many people have been killed or injured in such explosions in each year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Local authorities are responsible for controlling landfill sites under planning and waste management legislation. Information relating to landfill gas should be available from the relevant local authority.

Shellfish

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all shellfish fisheries in Wales, indicating the type and number of shellfish collected in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will indicate which shellfish fisheries are classified in categories A, B, C and D.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Data on fish catches are compiled by port of landing. The 1991 figures for cockles and mussels are as follows:

		(tonnes)
Port	*Cockles*	*Mussels*
Conwy	—	100
Penclawdd	816	—
Llanelli	1,798	15
Three Rivers area	—	10
Bangor	—	1,071

The oyster catch amounted to less than one tonne in total.

The preliminary classifications of shellfish waters in Wales under the terms of the EC directives are as follows:

Area	*Bed name*	*Species*	*Classification*
Porthcawl		**Native oysters**	**Further data being obtained**
Swansea	**Swansea and Nash Banks**	**Native oysters**	
Burry Inlet	**North**	**Cockles**	**C/D**
	South	**Cockles**	**B**
	Machynys	**Cockles**	**C/D**
	Whiteford Point	**Mussels**	**A**
	Pwll	**Mussels**	**D**
	Burry Port	**Mussels**	**C**
Three Rivers	**Wharley Point, St. Ishmaels and Gwendraeth**	**Cockles and mussels**	**B**
	Ginst Point	**Cockles**	**B/C**
Milford Haven	**Above Woodhouse Spit**	**Mussels, Native oysters, Cockles**	**D**
	Woodhouse Spit to Garron Pill	**Mussels, Native oysters, Cockles**	**B**
	Garron Pill to Neyland (excluding Ferny Pits and Carew)	**Mussels, Native oysters, Cockles**	**C**
	Ferny Pits	**Mussels, Native oysters, Cockles**	**B**
	Carew	**Pacific oysters**	**B/C**
	Below Neyland	**Cockles and Mussels**	**B**
Fishguard	**Goodwick**	**Mussels**	**B**
Dovey	**Aberdyfi and Coed y Gofer**	**Mussels and Cockles**	**C**
	Dovey/Leri	**Mussels**	**B**
Mawddach	**Mawddach Crescent**	**Mussels**	**C**
	All other areas	**Mussels and Cockles**	**B**
Menai Strait-West	**Abermenai, Barras, Traeth, Melynog and Llanidan**	**Mussels and Cockles**	**B**
Menai Strait-East	**Bangor sites 5/6/7 (area 1) and Lavan Sands**	**Mussels and Cockles**	**C**
	Gallows Point, Gannet and Wilsons (area 4)	**Mussels**	**B**
	Bangor sites 9/10/11/12 (areas 2 and 5)	**Mussels**	**B**
Malreath Bay	**All areas**	**Mussels and Cockles**	**B**
Inland Sea	**Holyhead (area 1)**	**Pacific oysters**	**A**
	Cymyran (area 3)	**Pacific oysters**	**B**
Red Wharf Bay	**All areas**	**Cockles**	**C**
Conwy	**All estuary areas**	**Mussels**	**C**
	Llandudno	**Mussels**	**B**
Colwyn Bay	**Rhos and Llanddulas**	**Mussels**	**C**
Dee	**All areas**	**Cockles**	**C**

Conservation Sites

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many special protection areas and Ramsar sites there are in Wales; and what assessment he has made of the number of such sites which are threatened by developments associated with *(a)* industry, *(b)* recreation, *(c)* tourism, *(d)* roads, *(e)* minerals and *(f)* agricultural reclamation and flood prevention.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In Wales there are eight special protection areas—SPAs—designated under the EC birds directive and six sites designated under the convention on wetlands of international importance, the Ramsar convention. These figures include two sites which are both SPAs and Ramsar sites, one of which is also a cross-border site with England. I am not aware of any developments which would be in danger of destroying the value of any of these sites.

Public Record Office

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond), *Official Report*, 13 November, columns *990-91*, if he will set out in the *Official Report* why each document was withdrawn from the Public Record Office.

Mr. David Hunt: The documents concerned are required for routine administrative purposes.

Teachers

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the local education authorities in Wales who currently run disability awareness training programmes for their teachers.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is not available. However, all local education authorities in Wales receive support from the Welsh Office under the grants for educational support and training programme for the training of teachers of the deaf, the blind, children with severe learning difficulties and designated special needs teachers in ordinary schools.

Farm Buildings

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many successful applications have been made to convert farm buildings into second homes in each local authority area of Wales in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not available centrally.

Small Schools

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how future standard spending assessments will affect small schools currently enjoying protection under the formula; what steps are being taken to base the formula on an objective and professional assessment of Wales's needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Standard spending assessments for Welsh authorities are not hypothecated to individual services. The distribution formulae for county authority SSAs take into account the effect of population sparsity in the provision of primary and secondary education. The formulae are reviewed annually with the local authority associations and ratified by the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance.

Caesium-137

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what inquiries have been made by his Department into the loss of a Caesium-137 source by British Coal from the Marine colliery.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The loss of a caesium-137 source from Marine colliery came to light during an investigation by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in the second half of 1991, into British Coal's registered holdings of radioactive materials at their sites in Wales. HMIP required the company to comply with a condition in their certificate of registration under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, to take all reasonably practicable measures to recover the source, but it was not found. British Coal was subsequently fined a total of £20,000.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those agencies in his Departments which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Mr. Nelson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on 17 November, at column *104*. The procedure outlined in that reply will, of course, apply to the three executive agencies for which I am responsible—the Royal Mint, launched 2 April 1990, the Valuation Office, launched 30 September 1991, and the Central Statistical Office, launched 19 November 1991. An announcement about the future status of each agency will be made at the appropriate time.

Officials (Resignations)

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many officials at principal level and above have resigned from the Treasury in the last two years who have joined the private sector financial services sector.

Mr. Nelson: Since November 1990, there have been four officials at grade 7 level and above who have resigned from the Treasury and have informed the Department that they would be joining the private sector financial services sector.

Small Firms (Loans)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the amount of money lent by clearing banks to small firms at interest rates linked to a base rate subject to a minimum level independent of base rate; and how many small firms currently have loans of this type.

Mr. Nelson: I have not made any such estimate. But it is one fact of bank practice which the Bank of England will cover in the study I have asked it to carry out.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will meet the chairmen of the clearing banks to urge them to amend their loan agreements so that small firms receive the full benefit of a reduction in the official base rate.

Mr. Nelson: As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer told the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee at its hearing on 16 November, he plans to meet the bank chairmen when he has the total opportunity. In the meantime, as the hon. Member will be aware, National Westminster bank reduced its minimum interest rate for commercial customers from 8 to 6 per cent. on 11 November. Barclays bank reduced its floor from 7 to 6 per cent. on 13 November.

Autumn Statement

Mr. Jack Straw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assumptions and calculations underlie the projection used in the Autumn Statement for capital receipts from the sale of local authorities' assets *(a)* in aggregate and *(b)* for each local authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The projection in paragraph 2.36 of the Autumn Statement is on a United Kingdom basis. It was based as usual on information about local authorities' recent asset sales and forecast outturn in the current year, taking account of the expected effect of the receipts measure announced in the Autumn Statement and of past experience in forecasting receipts. The Government have made no projections of asset sales at the level of individual local authorities.

Royal Family (Taxation)

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the members of the royal family who are not liable to personal taxation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lamont: Her Majesty the Queen, though the Prince of Wales's income from the Duchy of Cornwall is also exempt.

EC Budget Council

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent meeting of the European Community's Budget Council.

Sir John Cope: The Budget Council met in Brussels on 16 November. As President of the Council, I chaired the meeting. The Council rejected most of the European Parliament's amendments and modifications to its first reading draft budget, establishing a second reading draft budget for 1993 totalling 65,863 mecu—£53,735 million[1] —in commitment appropriations, compared with the total after the first reading of 65,704 mecu—£53,605 million. This represents an increase over 1992 of 3·06 per cent. against a Commission bid of 8·4 per cent. and the Parliament's proposed 9·8 per cent. Payment appropriations represent 1·08 per cent. of Community GNP, compared to a ceiling of 1·2 per cent. in the own resources decisions, leaving a cash margin of around 6·735 billion ecu—£5·5 billion.

The negotiations on the 1993 budget will continue and the Council has confirmed its intention to agree a complete budget on time in December. The budget will, therefore, need to give budgetary effect to decisions to be taken at the Edinburgh European Council on the Delors II proposals; and, in particular, to fulfil the political commitment to set up a cohesion fund early in 1993.

The European Parliament will consider the draft budget at its plenary session in December. The Parliament is expected to vote on the 1993 budget on 17 December, which if accepted would be formally adopted later in the month to take effect from 1 January.

[1] Converted at the rate of £1 = 1·2257 ecu, the rate notified in the *Official Journal* as prevailing on the last working day of last month (30 October).

Privatised Companies

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the auction of part of the Government's holding of privatised companies' debt and loan stock.

Mr. Dorrell: I am pleased to report that the auction was successfully completed on 20 November when the Treasury accepted bids totalling £1·337 billion for the redemption or sale of the following series of electricity and BT bonds:

	£ million	*per cent.*	*series*
BT	150	12·25	2000
BT	170	12·25	2002
BT	180	12·25	2003
PowerGen	150	11·869	2005
Scottish Hydro-Electric	116	11·457	2001
Scottish Power	142	11·856	2005
BT	229	12·25	2006

Payment, with accrued interest, will be made to the Exchequer on 15 December 1992. The costs of the auction are expected to amount to some £0·5 million or less than 0·04 per cent. of proceeds. The proceeds will contribute towards the target of £8 billion privatisation proceeds for 1992-93 announced first in the 1991 autumn statement.

I am satisfied that the auction has secured good value for the taxpayer.

Aggregates (Definitions)

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to alter the definition of public expenditure and Government borrowing as currently used by the Treasury.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 18 November 1992]:* I have no plans to change from the present definitions of these aggregates.

DEFENCE

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for defence what use his Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am not aware of any.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions since 1979 his Department has engaged private detective agencies to investigate the activities of British citizens; and if he will list the date and purpose of each investigation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* I am not aware of any.

Weapons, Norway

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communications he has had with his Norwegian counterpart on preventing the supply of weapons from Norway to terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Rifkind: None.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on Government policy on *(a)* monitoring and *(b)* preventing the supply of weapons from Norway to terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government are committed to combating terrorism in all its forms throughout the United Kingdom. This includes seeking to prevent the supply of weapons to terrorist organisations from whatever source.

Iraq

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now make it his policy to release information on all of the meetings that considered the export of defence equipment to Iraq at any part of their proceedings, including details of the persons present; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: It is not our policy to release the names of those officials involved, nor to release details of the proceedings of such meetings.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communications he has had with his NATO counterparts relating to the exports of British defence equipment to Iraq.

Mr. Aitken: There have been general discussions between my Department and the defence departments of some NATO allies on the question of Iraqi military procurement.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the *(a)* meetings with representatives of the Iraqi Government and *(b)* visits to Iraq by (i) Ministers and (ii) officials from his Department since 1985, giving the date, location and names of individuals involved, and subjects discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: This information is not held centrally. I will write to the hon. Member.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what weight was given in assessing the acceptability, in relation to his Ministry's responsibilities, of applications for export of goods to Iraq of that country's use of chemical weapons.

Mr. Aitken: This was one of the factors taken into account in the application of the guidelines governing exports to Iraq.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what precautions were taken by his Ministry to ensure that British military secrets were not revealed to the Iraqi Government as a result of the export of British goods that could be used to manufacture munitions or other types of military equipment.

Mr. Aitken: Equipment and technologies with a security classification are invariably subject to particularly close assessment before their export is permitted.

Gulf War

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the weapons and equipment that were confiscated by allied forces during the Gulf war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: No comprehensive record was kept of the large quantities of Iraqi equipment captured by the allies during the Gulf conflict.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the estimated cost to the United Kingdom of the Gulf war.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current estimate of the cost of military involvement in the Gulf conflict, spread over several years, is around £2·5 billion. The bulk of the costs are offset by generous cash contributions from other Governments totalling some £2 billion.

Iran

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the *(a)* meetings with representatives of the Iranian Government and *(b)* visits to Iran by (i) Ministers and (ii) officials from his Department since 1985 giving the date, location, subjects discussed and names of individuals involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: This information is not held centrally. I will write to the hon. Member.

Pay Statistics

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what amount of money was spent on the pay of *(a)* civilians in his Department, *(b)* armed forces personnel covered by the pay review body and *(c)* armed forces personnel covered by the Top Salaries Review Body in 1991-92; and what are the corresponding estimates for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested for 1991-92 and 1992-93 is:

	£ million *1991-92*	*1992-93*
(a) Civilian pay[1]	2,708	[2]2,776
(b) Armed forces personnel covered by the pay review body	5,208	5,317
(c) Armed forces personnel covered by the top salaries review body	11	12

[1] Figures for 1991-92 and 1992-93 include £409 million and £349 million respectively for locally employed civilians overseas.

[2] Excludes 1992-93 redundancy costs which are borne on civilian pay sub-heads.

Plans for 1993-94 are still under consideration. Detailed figures will be available when the 1993-94 Supply Estimates are published.

Service Personnel

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the figures for the proportion of service personnel leaving by premature voluntary release for the different categories of personnel for each year since 1989-90, and also the most recent figures available for 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The proportions of officers and non-commissioned personnel (male and female) in each of the three services leaving by premature voluntary release in each of the years since 1989-90 are as follows:

	Per cent. *1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*[1]
Royal Navy/Royal Marines				
Officers	3·0	3·2	2·7	2·2
Ratings	6·1	6·8	5·5	4·7
Army				
Officers	4·7	4·3	3·6	2·6

	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93[1]
Soldiers	9·9	9·0	7·4	7·1
Royal Air Force				
Officers	3·0	2·5	2·2	2·2
Airmen/Airwomen	5·4	4·7	3·8	3·2

[1] As at 1 September 1992.

The numbers of personnel leaving by premature voluntary release have declined steadily in recent years and are now at their lowest level since 1986-87.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was spent by Ministers in his Department on official entertainment in the year 1991-92.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The total amount spent directly by Ministers' private offices in the year 1991-92 was some £4,500. This does not include expenditure incurred by the Department on occasions arranged through the departmental protocol Office when Ministers were the principal host.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the final figure for his Department's expenditure on official entertainment in the financial year 1991-92.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The amount spent by the Ministry of Defence on official entertainment for the financial year 1991-92 was £4·1 million. This figure includes expenditure incurred by the Ministry of Defence itself, by formations and establishments of the armed forces at home and abroad, and by individual officers occupying appointments for which entertainment allowances are payable.

W. H. Mackay and Sons

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the sums outstanding to W. H. Mackay and Sons Ltd. of Fearn, Ross-shire, as a result of work carried out on various Property Services Agency contracts at the Faslane site, to be paid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to his copy of my letter dated 31 October to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall). Property Services Agency, with the agreement of all parties, have been acting as honest brokers in this matter. I am well aware of the hon. Member's concern about the urgency of this situation and I will shortly write to him.

Correspondence

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to reply to the letter dated 24 June sent to his Department by the hon. Member for Aylesbury on behalf of his constituent Mrs. I. R. T. and which his Department acknowledged on 31 July.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State has written to the hon. Member today.

ENVIRONMENT

Superstore, Greenwich

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he is satisfied that the public interest requires a public inquiry into superstore plans in Eltham, London SE9;

(2) when a decision has to be made by him as to whether to call in or to have an inquiry or to allow the breaking of covenants and the granting of development permission at Well Hall, London SE9;

(3) when he expects to receive conclusions by the inspector hearing objections to the proposal by the London borough of Greenwich to grant planning permission for a superstore in exchange for £4 million;

(4) when the London borough of Greenwich advised his Department that they no longer objected to a superstore at Well Hall, London SE9.

Mr. Baldry: The London borough of Greenwich referred to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State on 4 November one planning application for a superstore at Well Hall. He has until 29 November to consider whether or not to call in for a public inquiry, but a power is available to the Secretary of State to extend the time. I understand that another application, for a superstore at Shooter's hill, will also be referred to the Secretary of State if the London borough of Greenwich resolves to grant planning permission. If the Secretary of State decides to cause public inquiries to be held, we expect to receive the inspector's conclusions when the report has been completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received *(a)* in favour and *(b)* opposing the proposal by the London borough of Greenwich to determine the applications on Well Hall playing field, London SE9.

Mr. Baldry: Of 74 representations to my right hon. and learned Friend, all but two have opposed the proposed superstore development.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what price was received by the London residuary body for the sale of the Greater London supplies organisation.

Mr. Robin Squire: This is a matter for the London residuary body.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the formal wind-up of the London residuary body.

Mr. Robin Squire: The timing of the wind-up of the London residuary body will depend on progress with the disposal of the County Hall site.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of *(a)* the emoluments received and *(b)* the hours worked by each board member of the London residuary body in 1992-93.

Mr. Robin Squire: As at 1 April 1992 the salaries and the time inputs of the chairman and members of the London residuary body were as follows:

Member	*Time input*[1]	*Salary £*
Sir Godfrey Taylor	5	73,070
Mr. Wallace Mackenzie	1	8,830
Mr. Michael Roberts	1	8,830
Mr. Jack Wolkind	1	8,830
Sir Peter Bowness[2]	1	8,830
Mr. Jack Easling[2]	1	8,830
Mr. Reg Hartles[2]	1	8,830

[1] Days per week.

[2] Appointment terminates 5 January 1993.

As from 1 December 1992, Sir Godfrey Taylor's time input will be reduced to one day/week. As from this date, his salary will be reduced accordingly to £14,615.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what costs were associated with the office of chairman of the London residuary body in 1991-92 other than that of his personal emolument.

Mr. Robin Squire: The provision of appropriate support for the chairman is a matter for the London residuary body.

Playing Fields

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what circumstances local councils are permitted to accept cash for lifting covenants against development of playing fields.

Mr. Baldry: An authoritative answer to the question can be given only by the courts. The general powers of local authorities to dispose of their interests in land do not extend to removal of binding covenants, except in relation to open space which is former public trust land, i.e. land held in trust for enjoyment by the public in accordance with section 164 of the Public Health Act 1875 or section 10 of the Open Spaces Act 1906. The Lands Tribunal may, however, modify or discharge covenants under section 84 of the Law of Property Act 1925. The Audit Commission may be asked to investigate alleged irregularities in local authority land transactions. The Secretary of State, however, has no jurisdiction.

Battersea Power Station

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the former Battersea power station was last inspected on his behalf.

Mr. Baldry: The building was last inspected by English Heritage on Wednesday 7 October.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he expects to publish the draft of the new "Minerals Planning Guidance on Opencast Mining."

Mr. Baldry: We hope to be in a position to issue draft revised guidance for public consultation following the outcome of the recently announced coal review.

Council Tax

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each region the number of households in each of the council tax property bands.

Mr. Redwood: The number of dwellings in each council tax band in each region shown in advance valuation lists sent to billing authorities on 28 August 1992, is given in the table.

Number of dwellings in each council tax band in each region shown in advance valuation lists

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*Total*
North	751,440	186,539	179,834	91,716	46,130	22,605	13,582	1,667	1,293,513
North West	1,185,088	486,183	454,364	229,635	128,209	66,832	50,061	6,336	2,606,708
Yorkshire and Humberside	972,926	395,495	332,689	157,629	97,243	51,338	33,015	4,977	2,045,312
West Midlands	706,560	525,626	405,543	211,166	128,111	72,226	47,707	5,337	2,102,276
East Midlands	660,292	376,429	305,471	157,070	85,863	44,400	30,983	2,946	1,663,454
East Anglia	198,096	243,858	202,248	110,552	61,451	32,178	20,514	5,469	874,366
South West	332,486	489,344	474,304	309,277	204,133	111,775	74,411	4,708	2,003,437
South East	359,187	719,011	1,216,145	890,045	578,717	340,382	273,664	37,725	4,414,876
London	85,824	380,952	785,392	743,466	469,379	232,183	195,542	53,123	2,945,861
England	5,251,899	3,803,437	4,355,989	2,900,556	1,799,236	973,919	739,479	125,288	19,949,803

Source: Valuation Office Agency.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 16 November to the hon. Member for Ealing North, *Official Report*, column *56*, what significant changes to a property between 1 April 1991 and April 1993 will be ground for a change in a council tax valuation; what changes in value of the property will be ground for such a change; and what publicity has been given by Ministers to these provisions.

Mr. Howard: The banding of each dwelling shown in a valuation list compiled on 1 April 1993 will be based on its estimated sale price on 1 April 1991, but reflecting its size, layout and character and the physical state of its locality on 31 March 1993. Any change in the dwelling's size, layout and character or in the physical state of its locality which occurs after it has been banded but before 1 April 1993 may therefore be reflected by a change in the banding.

These principles are illustrated on page three of the booklet, "Council Tax—a guide to the new tax for local government", a copy of which has been sent to each household, and on page 6 of the booklet on valuation and banding, which is available to householders on request.

County Hall, London

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the current situation in respect of the disposal of County Hall, London SE1.

Mr. Robin Squire: The agreement between the London residuary body and the Shirayama Company provides for the sale of the riverside building to be completed in October 1993. The residuary body is pursuing the question of the disposal of the remainder of the County Hall site in accordance with its statutory responsibilities.

Capital Receipts

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each county council in England the total amount of unapplied capital receipts.

Mr. Robin Squire *[pursuant to the answer given on 5 November 1992, Official Report, column 371]:* The total usable receipts for each county council in England as at 31 March 1992 are shown in the table.

	£000s
Avon	9,488
Bedfordshire	204
Berkshire	566
Buckinghamshire	1,765
Cambridgeshire	296
Cheshire	0
Cleveland	13
Cornwall	0
Cumbria	822
Derbyshire	6,930
Devon	0
Dorset	0
Durham	139
East Sussex	3,096
Essex	726
Gloucestershire	240
Hampshire	52
Hereford and Worcester	1,318
Hertfordshire	853
Humberside	5,369
Isle of Wight	0
Kent	4,432
Lancashire	1,961
Leicestershire	2,519
Lincolnshire	0
Norfolk	2,409
North Yorkshire	651
Northamptonshire	11,829
Northumberland	496
Nottinghamshire	358
Oxfordshire	0
Shropshire	1,029
Somerset	140
Staffordshire	125
Suffolk	386
Surrey	605
Warwickshire	963
West Sussex	0
Wiltshire	350

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each housing authority in England the amount of unapplied capital receipts from *(a)* housing sales and *(b)* other capital sales.

Mr. Robin Squire *[pursuant to his reply, 5 November 1992, c. 371]:* I have arranged for the revised information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Separate figures for housing receipts and other capital receipts are not available.

SCOTLAND

Self-governing Hospital Trusts

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if self-governing hospital trusts are exempt from compulsory competitive tendering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The Government's position on market testing is set out in the White Paper, "Competing for Quality", and trusts have been asked to take account of this. The Government will be monitoring the position to ensure that the benefits of obtaining best value for money are realised in order to improve patient care.

Superannuation Division

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he plans to establish the superannuation division of the Scottish Office as an executive agency.

Mr. Lang: I announced on 6 March, *Official Report*, col. *335*, that under the Next Steps initiative the Scottish Office superannuation division was to be designated an executive agency. I have now decided that the change in status should take effect from the start of the next financial year, on 1 April 1993. The agency will be known as the Scottish Office Pensions Agency (SOPA). Following open competition Mr. Norman MacLeod, currently head of the Scottish Office superannuation division, has been appointed chief executive of the new agency.

HCFC22

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what quantity of HCFC22 is purchased by his Department per annum.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* The information required could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give an undertaking to purchase only ozone-friendly fridges that do not contain chlorofluorocarbons or hydrochlorofluorocarbons for his Department.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* The Scottish Office will purchase fridges which do not contain CFCs or HCFCs when they are available in the market place and provided that they offer good value for money.

PRIME MINISTER

Libya

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on what Libya has done to comply with Security Council resolutions 731 and 748 and Her Majesty's Government's policy to bring Libya to compliance.

The Prime Minister: It is our policy that Libya should implement in full the two SCRs to which the hon. Member has referred. Neither we nor the other co-sponsors of the resolution in question, France, and the United States, will be satisfied with less. Unfortunately, I cannot report more than limited success at this stage.

During the summer the Libyan authorities closed, and in some cases dismantled, many of the camps previously used to house or train terrorists. They have also given us information on their links with the Provisional Irish Republican Army which we believe may prove useful. We welcome both these developments as steps towards demonstrating that Libya has renounced terrorism called for in SCR 731 and 748.

But the Libyans must take further steps in order to comply fully with those resolutions. In particular, it is necessary for them to surrender for trial in Scotland or the United States the two accused of responsibility for the Lockerbie bombing and for them to satisfy the French demands for co-operation on the investigation into the UTA bombing. Libya can be sure that a trial in Scotland will be fair, and in accordance with normal Scottish procedures, including trial by jury. If the Libyans convince us that they have decided to surrender the two suspects, then we would be willing to meet them to discuss the mechanics of handing them over.

We have no hidden agenda, and we are not seeking to use this issue to undermine the regime in Libya. But it is now a year since the warrants for the two accused of Lockerbie were issued. There can be no question of any relaxation of United Nations sanctions, complete or in part, until Libya has surrendered the two accused of Lockerbie and satisfied French requirements on UTA. If they do, this situation will be transformed. If they do not, the consequences for Libya are bound to be increasingly serious.

Iraq (Exports)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the letter, reference 000399, dated 20 June 1990, from the principal private secretary to the noble Lord, Lord Ridley, then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, to the private secretary to the chairman of Customs and Excise, under the heading "Exports to Iraq" which was copied to him as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the previous letter, reference 000395, copies of which have been sent to him.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* The first document to which the hon. Member refers relates to consultations between Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and the Department of Trade and Industry prior to a fact-finding visit by Customs officers to the premises of Matrix Churchill. A reply from Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to the Department of Trade and Industry dated 22 June 1990 made it clear that decisions about any follow-up action would rest with the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in accordance with their statutory responsibilities. These documents were copied to my Private Secretary in the Treasury. Treasury records do not reveal whether I saw this correspondence, but I have no recollection of having done so. The then Paymaster General was responsible in the first instance for matters involving Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

The second document is an internal submission dated 14 June 1990 to the right hon. Lord Ridley, then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, concerning the implications of the visit by customs officers to Matrix Churchill. It was not copied to other Ministers. It will be for Lord Justice Scott to consider the relevance of this document to the implementation of Government policy on the export of defence equipment to Iraq.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iraq

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the United Nations special inspection commission investigating Iraqi chemical weapons production sites at Ramadi, Fallujah, Saad-16, Salman Pak, Muthanna and Samara, respectively, found any United Kingdom origin technology or chemicals at any of these sites.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations Special Commission has provided information on United Kingdom supplied materials and equipment discovered in Iraq. Any evidence of breaches of export controls are urgently investigated, and if substantiated would be a matter for the courts.

Kashmir

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed with the Government of India the current situation in Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs last discussed the situation in Kashmir with the Indian Government during his visit to New Delhi on 15 to 18 January 1992. Ministers and officials have discussed Kashmir with the Indian authorities on a number of occasions since then.

China

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assurances he has received from the Chinese ambassador concerning the well-being and treatment of prisoners at the Lingyuan No. 2 labour reform detachment in Liaoning province of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Goodlad: None. We take every opportunity to put on record with the Chinese authorities our serious concerns about human rights, including the treatment of prisoners detained at the Lingyuan No. 2 labour reform detachment.

Hong Kong

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment has been made of the consistency with the Basic Law of the proposals for democracy in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We and the Governor took full account of the provisions of the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law in developing the proposals that he announced on 7 October. We have pressed the Chinese side to change the Basic Law to allow for an increase in the number of directly-elected seats in the Legislative Council for 1995. In view of their position that this is not possible, the Governor has set out in parallel an alternative approach. That is the approach on which we are concentrating at present. We consider that the Governor's proposals are within the terms of the Basic Law.

Export Controls

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution his Department will make to the seminar planned by the Export Control Organisation on the practical guide to United Kingdom export controls.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Foreign Office officials regularly contribute to seminars organised by the Export Control Organisation on United Kingdom export controls. They will next do so on 1 December 1992.

Albania

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his latest estimates are for food supplies in Tirana; and what plans he has to provide food aid to Albania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: An EC mission to Albania earlier this year estimated Albania's additional food needs until the autumn of 1993 at around US $84 million. In June, the EC agreed a food aid grant worth 45 mecu ($59 million). A further 40 mecu ($53 million) was subsequently approved in October.

South Africa

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *90*, when he now expects to receive a further report from the South African Government on the agents mentioned.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have been kept fully abreast of the South African investigation as it proceeded. During his visit last weekend President de Klerk handed over a letter on this matter to the Prime Minister. This issue was also covered in their talks on 14 November.

Sarawak

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Malaysian Government to prevent further deforestation of the Sarawak region.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development held discussions on 15 May 1992 with a delegation led by the Malaysian Minister of Primary Industries, Dr. Lim Keng Yaik. The two Ministers signed a memorandum of understanding on co-operation for the conservation, management and development of forest resources, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

We have regular contact with the Malaysian Government on policies in this area as on many other issues. It is clear from these contacts that the Malaysians are very much aware of international concern about such matters.

The Sarawak state authorities have made a number of important undertakings to the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) Council. At a meeting in November 1991, they reaffirmed their commitment to sustainable forest management and declared their intention to reach sustainability before the year 2000. They also announced measures to bring extraction levels down within two years to those recommended by the 1990 ITTO mission led by Lord Cranbrook. We, like many other countries, consider this to be a welcome statement of intent.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Assisted Areas

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what additional funding for assisted areas status provision will be made available *(a)* for Barnsley, Doncaster and Mansfield and *(b)* elsewhere.

Mr. Sainsbury: Assisted area status determines eligibility for Great Britain regional measures, primarily regional selective assistance. In all assisted areas spending on regional assistance depends upon the demand for the schemes and will be met from the schemes' agreed funding provision.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many delegations he has met arising from the assisted areas review;

(2) how many submissions he has received as a result of the assisted areas review.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 18 November 1992]*: My ministerial colleagues and I have met 52 delegations and received 1,550 formal written responses to the assisted area map review public consultation document issued on 9 June 1992.

British Coal

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total cost of directors' emoluments incurred by British Coal in each year since 1987.

Mr. Eggar: The total emoluments of the members of the corporation, including payments in kind and pensions to former members or their dependants, were as follows:

Year ending March	£
1987	647,495
1988	574,697
1989	657,955
1990	745,687
1991	819,742
1992	1,138,608

Clothing Quotas

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will promote discussions among clothing manufacturers about the possible advantages of extra import quotas under the outward-processed system from averaging the prices of home-produced and outward-processed clothing to make their United Kingdom production more price-competitive.

Mr. Needham: It is for the relevant trade associations to promote discussion among clothing manufacturers on the economic merits of outward processing trade. However, my Department has gone to great lengths to explain to individual manufacturers the procedures and rules governing this scheme and the benefits which can accrue to companies from its application.

Coal Review

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what terms of reference have been given to the consultants appointed to assist in the coal review which he announced on 26 October.

Mr. Heseltine: I announced on 26 October that it was my intention to appoint consultants to report on the prospects for British Coal, including any alternative markets that may exist for coal and to comment generally on the competitiveness of British Coal as an organisation.

Following evaluation of proposals from a number of companies invited to bid to undertake this work, CAminus Energy Ltd have been appointed to conduct a study of markets for coal, and Ernst and Young will be carrying out a study of the competitiveness of British Coal as an organisation.

Boyds have already begun work, starting their programme of pit visits on 5 February. Boyds will examine historical operating data, mine plans, coal reserves, and other relevant information supplied by British Coal Corporation to develop an independent assessment of the future production costs of each of the 21 pits at different potential levels of output, within the context of British Coal's operations.

Their conclusions will be based on an evaluation in respect of each mine of

(i) the available coal reserve base,
(ii) near-term capital requirements, and
(iii) estimated future potential operating costs and likely costs under current mine plans.

Boyds will also provide general technical consultancy to the DTI as required, including technical evaluation of evidence provided during the review period as necessary.

Caminus will examine the short-term and longer term markets for coal in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. They will consider the market opportunities available to British Coal both at its current prices and at lower prices, if these could be achieved, in the context of future energy markets more widely and of the likely future availability of energy supplies. Caminus will also, on request by DTI, examine the prospects for alternative new electricity generation options identified in the course of the review.

Ernst and Young will consider British Coal's organisations and cost structure and advise on possible improvements to British Coal's competitiveness which could be achieved through changes in this area. They will not consider the technical aspects of British Coal's work, nor the competitiveness of individual pits.

In addition to these studies, PIMS Associates Ltd have been appointed to provide an overview of British Coal's cost structure and productivity in relation to international comparators.

The conclusions of each of these studies will be published. I expect the reports to be available early in 1993.

I may wish to commission other studies in due course.

Iraq (Machine Tools)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will list those companies that sought export licences for machine tools to Iraq between 1985 and 1991 which were wholly or partly owned by Iraqis; and what the equipment was for which the licences were applied;

(2) on what occasions and for what equipment export licences for machine tools for Iraq were granted between 1985 and 1991 after it was known that a licence for a similar product had been turned down by another country;

(3) if he will publish a list of export licences for machine tools granted to British companies for equipment destined directly or through a third country to Iraq between 1987 and 1991, stating the name of the company, the equipment concerned and its end use.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* For reasons of commercial confidentiality, it has been the practice of successive Administrations not to disclose such information about individual export licences. However, I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the Minutes of Evidence to the Trade and Industry Select Committee, 26 November 1991, pages 37 to 106.

Arms Fairs

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy in future not to grant temporary export licences for equipment destined for such events as arms or other equipment fairs, without there being a definite guarantee that the equipment will be returned to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on the current procedures.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* Applications for licences for temporary exports are considered on their merits. Licences for international exhibitions include legally binding conditions requiring the exporter at all times to retain sufficient control of the goods to ensure their safe return to the United Kingdom within a specified period.

Royal Ordnance

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many licences were granted between 1987 and 1990 to Royal Ordnance for the export of strip propellant or other similar forms of propulsive material.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* It has been the practice of successive administrations not to reveal details of individual export licences which exporters submit in confidence to my Department.

HEALTH

Drug and Alcohol Services

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are currently receiving drug and alcohol services residentially in London; and what is the number of applicants for such a service.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

NHS Capital Schemes

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital and community health services capital schemes in each regional health authority in England *(a)* were completed in 1991-92 and *(b)* are planned for completion in 1992-93 at costs of (i) £1 million to £2 million, (ii) £2 million to £5 million, (iii) £5 million to £15 million and (iv) £15 million and over.

Mr. Sackville: The number of HCHS capital schemes completed in England by each regional health authority during 1991-92 is as follows:

£ million

Regional Health Authority	*1-2*	*2-5*	*5-15*	*Over 15*
Northern	1	1	0	2
Yorkshire	1	2	3	0
East Anglia	3	2	0	0
South East Thames	2	1	2	1
Wessex	3	1	1	1
Oxford	2	3	2	0
South Western	2	2	1	0
West Midlands	9	4	3	1
Mersey	1	4	1	0
North Western	1	2	1	0
Trent	0	5	3	1
North East Thames	0	2	3	0
North West Thames	0	0	1	0
South West Thames	0	0	1	0
TOTALS	25	29	22	6

The number of HCHS capital schemes planned for completion in 1992-93 by each regional health authority, based on the last notified anticipated completion date is as follows:

million

Regional health authority	*1 to 2*	*2 to 5*	*5 to 15*	*Over 15*
Northern	0	2	0	1
Yorkshire	0	2	0	1
East Anglia	3	3	0	0
South East Thames	2	3	1	0
Wessex	2	2	1	1
Oxford	1	2	0	0
South Western	6	3	1	3
West Midlands	3	2	3	1
Mersey	0	1	0	0
North Western	3	5	0	1
Trent	2	3	2	1
North East Thames	1	1	1	1
North West Thames	2	0	0	1
South West Thames	1	1	1	0
Totals	26	30	10	11

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the level of capital spending on hospital and community health services in each year since 1979-80 in *(a)* gross and *(b)* net terms, after deducting proceeds from land and asset sales (i) in cash terms, (ii) adjusted using the gross domestic product deflator and (iii) adjusted using the hospital and community health services capital deflator.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is given in the table. In addition, a net increase of £57 million was announced in the autumn statement—a cash increase of 3·1 per cent. over 1992-93.

	HCHS capital: gross spending						*HCHS capital: net spending*					
	A	[1]*B*	*A*	[2]*B*	*A*	[3]*B*	*A*	[1]*B*	*A*	[2]*B*	*A*	[3]*B*
1979-80	—	402	—	872	—	768	—	392	—	850	—	749
1980-81	—	552	—	1,012	—	838	—	536	—	983	—	814
1981-82	—	666	—	1,113	—	980	—	646	—	1,080	—	950
1982-83	—	695	—	1,085	—	1,006	—	676	—	1,055	—	979
1983-84	—	718	—	1,071	—	1,019	—	685	—	1,022	—	972
1984-85	—	810	—	1,151	—	1,104	—	760	—	1,080	—	1,035
1985-86	—	881	—	1,186	—	1,133	—	796	—	1,072	—	1,024
1985-86	964	—	1,298	—	1,240	—	888	—	1,195	—	1,142	—
1986-87	1,041	—	1,357	—	1,275	—	892	—	1,162	—	1,093	—
1987-88	1,103	—	1,363	—	1,286	—	902	—	1,115	—	1,051	—
1988-89	1,186	—	1,367	—	1,307	—	906	—	1,044	—	998	—
1989-90	1,423	—	1,539	—	1,436	—	1,191	—	1,288	—	1,202	—
1990-91	1,551	—	1,551	—	1,551	—	1,372	—	1,372	—	1,372	—
1991-92	1,635	—	1,524	—	—	—	1,427	—	1,331	—	—	—
1992-93	2,001	—	1,790	—	—	—	1,856	—	1,660	—	—	—

[1] Cash.

[2] Adjusted by GDP 1990-91 prices.

[3] Adjusted input unit costs 1990-91.

Notes:

All figures have been adjusted to reflect the transfer of Public Health Laboratory Services from the HCHS to CHMS.

Figures in column A have been adjusted to reflect the transfer of the Family Health Service administration, the Family Health Services cash limited spending and the Disablement Services Authority partly to the HCHS and partly to CHMS, (and also take account of changes since 1990-91 relating to the NHS reforms). Figures in column B do not reflect these transfers and are therefore not comparable with those for later years.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of national health service staff employed in each region for each of the last three years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 9 November 1992]*: The requested information is given in the table.

National health service staff employed in each region at 30 September 1989, 1990 and 1991 (whole-time equivalents)

Regional health authority	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Northern	53,612	52,967	53,677
Yorkshire	58,063	58,344	58,468
Trent	75,284	75,675	75,883
East Anglian	31,018	31,402	31,769
North West Thames	51,099	50,559	50,171

Regional health authority	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
North East Thames	66,295	66,440	66,537
South East Thames	59,691	60,223	59,952
South West Thames	43,084	41,993	42,326
Wessex	43,746	44,458	44,965
Oxford	33,043	33,569	32,671
South Western	51,046	51,889	52,777
West Midlands	83,566	83,852	83,977
Mersey	41,664	40,607	40,038
North Western	71,946	70,700	71,896
Special Health Authorities	10,611	10,817	15,118
Family Health Service Authorities	4,511	5,131	5,607
Other Statutory Authorities	8,894	9,021	9,062
Totals	787,172	787,655	794,894

Ambulance Service Staff

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* officers and *(b)* ambulance men and women were in post per thousand resident population in April 1992 in each regional health authority.

Mr. Sackville: The latest information available centrally is given in the table. The 1992 data will not be available until spring 1993.

Ambulance staff whole-time equivalent (WTE) per 1,000 population in each region[2] September 1991

	Estimated[3] population (provisional) thousand	*Ambulance Men and Women*		*Ambulance Officers*	
		WTE	*Per 1,000 population*	*WTE*	*Per 1,000 population*
Northern	3,084·2	1,588·3	0·51	245	0·08
Yorkshire	3,661·5	1,339	0·37	222	0·06
Trent	4,700·4	1,581·12	0·34	278	0·06
East Anglian	2,091·9	669·5	0·32	126·5	0·06
North West Thames[1]	1,521·9	423	0·28	40	0·03
North East Thames[1]	1,477·9	487	0·33	74	0·05
South East Thames[1]	2,255·2	786	0·35	123	0·05
South West Thames[1]	1,759·4	554	0·31	96	0·05
Wessex	2,983	814	0·27	136	0·05
Oxford	2,559·9	702	0·27	127	0·05
South Western	3,298	1,252	0·38	223	0·07
West Midlands	5,254·9	1,575	0·30	257	0·05
Mersey	2,407·5	727	0·30	94	0·04
North Western	4,000·7	1,312	0·33	202	0·05
London Ambulance Service	7,012	1,970	0·28	168	0·02
Total	48,068·4	15,779·92	0·33	2,411·5	0·05

[1] Thames district outside the area covered by the London ambulance service.

[2] Including data for NHS trusts in each region.

[3] Population figures at 30 June 1991.

Source: OPCS

Health Authority Debts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the regional health authorities which carried capital debts over into the 1992-93 financial year; and what was the size of the debt in each case.

Mr. Sackville: The format of the 1991-92 annual accounts of regional and district health authorities does not provide for the separate identification of year-end creditors relating to capital expenditure and such information is not otherwise collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairmen of regional health authorities for details. Capital creditors will be separately identifiable in the annual accounts from 1992-93.

Green Issues

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who in her Department has been appointed to oversee and develop green issues; how many civil servants have been allocated new or additional responsibilities to deal with the management and development of green issues; and what additional allocation of resources has been made to support programmes related to green issues in her Department.

Mr. Sackville: My noble Friend Baroness Cumberlege, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, is responsible for oversight of the Department's response to the Environment White Paper, "This Common Inheritance".

A whole-time equivalent of some 7·8 officials have specific responsibilities for oversight and development of "green issues" within the Department; this includes matters such as energy and waste management and the Department's contribution to follow up the environment White Paper.

Insulin

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to arrange for an inquiry by the committee on the safety of medicines, or independently, into the safety of human insulin.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have no plans at present to arrange for an independent inquiry into the safety of human insulin. The Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) has monitored closely adverse effects occurring with human insulins since their introduction and continues to do so. Concerns raised in relation to the safety of human insulins have been reviewed by CSM on several occasions.

Skin Cancer

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the current procedures for recording numbers of skin cancer cases in the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The national cancer registration scheme in England and Wales records the incidence of cancers, including all skin cancers combined, and also separately for malignant melanoma and other skin cancers.

At the time of diagnosis, basic data, including individual patient identification, sex, age, permanent residence, site of the cancer, and date of diagnosis, are recorded and sent to regional cancer registries. Regional data are collected and published by the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys.

Information for Scotland, and Northern Ireland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Cigarettes

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on how many new brands of cigarettes were launched in Britain in 1991-92; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have been informed of 35 new brands supplied in the United Kingdom in 1991-92, as required under section 9(2)(b) of the Tobacco Products Labelling (Safety) Regulations 1991.

Qa Business Services

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will offer financial assistance to the members of the former Qa Business Services similar to that given to civil servants transferred to TICC Ltd. on the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency;

(2) what representations she has received regarding compensation by her Department for deferred pensioners of the former Qa Business Services; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: A number of representations have been received citing financial assistance given to ex-employees of TICC Ltd. However, different circumstances led to the collapse of these companies and the ex gratia payments made in respect of TICC Ltd. does not set a precedent for similar payments to former employees of Qa Business Services.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 23 November 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Access to Children

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to improve the operation of access to children by their fathers where mothers and children have moved away from the area where the families lived before divorce; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The law relating to access to children was comprehensively reformed in the Children Act 1989 and the Government have no current plans for further change. The arrangements enabling children to see a parent who lives in another area are primarily matters to be worked out by those concerned.

ACCOMMODATION AND WORKS COMMITTEE

Department of the Official Report

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee at what level the expenditure on *(a)* new carpets, *(b)* new lighting and *(c)* new desks and chairs was approved for the rooms occupied by the Department of the Official Report; what was the cost; and which company in which EC country was the manufacturer and supplier.

Mr. Ray Powell: Detailed operational responsibility for these matters lies with the Director of Works. I shall ask him to write to the hon. Member.

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Glasses

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he will make a statement on the reasons for the purchase of French-made glasses for use in Standing Committee rooms.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: This is a matter for the Serjeant at Arms. I shall ask him to write to the hon. Member.

EDUCATION

School Governors

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the percentage of school governors nationally from the ethnic minorities.

Mr. Forth: A survey carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research in 1990 found that just over 1 per cent. of school governors were from ethnic minority groups. A further survey is currently being carried out, the results of which should be available in March.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what measures he has taken to increase the percentage of school governors from ethnic minorities.

Mr. Forth: Throughout this year's "Schools Need Governors" campaign we have made clear that we would like people from the ethnic minorities to put themselves forward to be school governors. Our publicity leaflet and poster were translated into eight ethnic minority languages. Of the six individual governors featured in the leaflet, two were from the ethnic minorities.

Textiles and Home Economics

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what provisions will be made under the national curriculum to ensure that textiles and home economics will be taught.

Mr. Forth: Aspects of home economics are covered in a number of national curriculum subjects, including mathematics, science and technology. My right hon. Friends, the Secretaries of State for Education and for Wales are currently considering the recommendations of the National Curriculum technology review group and will make a full statement when their joint proposals are published for consultation towards the end of the year. There are no changes proposed to the national curriculum mathematics or science orders.

School Field Trips

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the number of school field trips by local education authority for each year since 1985 and the number of pupils/students that have attended them; and what assessment he has made of the effects charges have had upon school field trips.

Mr. Forth: Information on the number of school trips and the number of pupils attending them is not collected centrally. The Government have, however, been monitoring the effects of the legislation on charging contained in the Education Reform Act 1988. A survey of schools undertaken by the National Foundation for Educational Research, published in 1991 showed that the law had not led to any significant change in the number of school field trips.

Language Teachers

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the general availability of language teachers in the United Kingdom; and what measures he will take to increase their number.

Mr. Forth: For England and Wales, in January 1992 secondary schools reported that only 1·2 per cent.—162—of teaching posts in modern foreign languages were vacant.

A £1,500 tax-free bursary has been offered since 1990 to encourage graduates to undertake initial teacher training in modern foreign languages. Recruitment to such training rose in 1990 and 1991 by 30·3 per cent. and 35·2 per cent. respectively, and 1992 is expected to show a further increase.

Information in respect of Scotland and Northern Ireland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

School Governors (Interviews)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will issue guidelines to school governors on interviewing practice in respect of interviewing disabled applicants.

Mr. Forth: No. Governor training is an LEA responsibility and most provide training on appointing staff, which will include interviewing skills.

Disabled People

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will make it his policy to amend the draft medical questionnaire distributed to initial teacher trainees so as to reflect a more positive attitude to disablement and disabled people;

(2) if he will consult the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation in connection with the draft medical questionnaire sent out to prospective teachers;

(3) if he will make it his policy to issue guidelines to local education authorities to secure the retention of disabled teachers.

Mr. Forth: Officials from the Department have recently met representatives from the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation to discuss these matters. Further representations from RADAR have been invited. I shall consider them carefully.

"Choice and Diversity"

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which teacher unions he or his Ministers met to discuss the White Paper "Choice and Diversity"; and which organisations otherwise representing teachers were consulted.

Mr. Forth: The main teacher unions and organisations representing teachers were invited to comment on the White Paper. Their comments along with close to 1,000 other responses received, were carefully considered. My noble Friend the Minister of State addressed a conference for the Professional Association of Teachers on the subject of the White Paper.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the criteria used to determine the spending levels on education for grant-maintained *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools; what was the total spending in each category for each of the last two years; and if he will divide these figures by region.

Mr. Forth: Grant-maintained schools receive the bulk of recurrent funding in annual maintenance grant—AMG. This is based on the levels of funding that schools could have expected to have received if still maintained by the relevant local education authority, including elements for spending on central services and school meals. The level of AMG for each school reflects spending decisions by individual local education authorities, from whom the grants are recouped.

Grant-maintained schools are eligible to receive transitional, special purpose and capital grants direct from the Department. The level of these grants is fixed each year, taking account of the level of funding schools need to meet their particular responsibilities as self-governing schools. Most of this funding is allocated on a simple formula basis with no differentiation between primary and secondary schools. Allocations for major capital projects are based on an assessment of school bids against a set of priorities notified to schools in advance.

Total spending on grant-maintained primary schools was nil in 1990-91 and £3 million in 1991-92. Total spending on grant-maintained secondary schools was £68 million in 1990-91 and £179 million in 1991-92. The table shows how these totals break down by region:

£ million

	1990-91	*1991-92*	
	Secondary	*Primary*	*Secondary*
North	0·0	0·0	1·4
North West	11·7	0·4	14·0
Yorkshire and Humberside	2·3	0·1	7·3
West Midlands	7·5	0·0	18·8
East Midlands	9·2	1·2	21·1
East Anglia	0·5	0·8	2·3
South East	29·2	0·6	97·1
South West	8·1	0·0	16·6

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many letters of complaint he has received from parents in Nottinghamshire about the county council's approach to opt-out ballots.

Mr. Forth: Nottinghamshire county council has made plain its opposition to parents seeking grant-maintained status for their children's schools, including through letters to parents which may be misleading. The Department has not so far received letters of complaint from parents about the council's approach to ballots, though informal complaints are made through a number of channels including in correspondence with hon. Members.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his reply of 12 November, *Official Report*, column *893*, what was the number of formal complaints made to his Department from parents alleging misconduct by a headteacher or a governing body during the holding of a parental ballot on grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: The information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what level of grant was given in 1991-92 to the Grant Maintained Schools Trust.

Mr. Forth: No grant has been given to the Grant Maintained Schools Trust. Grant of £600,000 was paid to the Grant Maintained Schools Centre in 1991-92.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his reply of 12 November, *Official Report*, column *893*, how many formal complaints have been made to his Department from parents alleging misconduct by a local education authority during the holding of a parental ballot on grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: The information is not available in the form requested.

Hearing-impaired Children

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps are currently being undertaken by his Department to encourage more young people to become qualified teachers of hearing-impaired children.

Mr. Forth: The Department assists local education authorities in England with the costs of training qualified teachers to become teachers of pupils with special educational needs. It does this through the grants for education support and training programme which supports the training of hearing-impaired pupils. The amount of LEA expenditure to be supported for this training is being raised from £7·2 million in 1992-93 to £10 million in 1993-94.

Police Vetting

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance has been issued during the past 12 months to local education authorities who because of staff shortages may need to employ persons not yet cleared by the established police vetting procedure.

Mr. Forth: None.

Rising-Fives

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those local education authorities in England and Wales which have a policy of once a year entry to school for rising five-year-olds; what entry procedures the remaining authorities employ; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Information on Welsh practice is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Wales. The term "rising fives" usually relates to children who are still four at the outset of a school term but will reach five before the term is over. A policy of admitting "rising fives" is thus one involving termly admissions to primary school. This practice has been widespread in England for years. We are aware that, more recently, numbers of local education authorities have adopted, or moved towards, a single entry date at the start of the school year in which a child becomes five, but records of individual authorities' practices are not kept centrally.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance he gives to local education authorities about the timing of entry into schools of rising five-year-olds; and if he has any plans to change the current arrangements.

Mr. Forth: Local education authorities are required to secure that all children receive schooling from the start of the term following their fifth birthday. The admission of younger children is a matter for local discretion. My right hon. Friend has issued no guidance on the arrangements that might be made in this discretionary area and has no plans to do so.

Teacher Training

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what measures he is taking to ensure the viability of enlarged in-school initial training for teachers in small primary schools;

(2) what information he has received on the effect of his proposals for changes in teacher education for the primary sector on teacher supply.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has made no proposals for changes in the training of primary school teachers. He intends to introduce changes to primary training, to improve its quality by making it more school-based and more closely related to what schools will need to achieve the higher standards envisaged in "Choice and Diversity", by no later than September 1994.

Sandwich Courses

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will take steps to collect information in respect of students undertaking sandwich courses in higher education who are having difficulty in securing the required industrial placements.

Mr. Forman: I am aware of the difficulty higher education institutions are having at present in securing industrial placements for some of their sandwich course students. This is essentially a matter for the institutions themselves, in conjunction with employers.

Undergraduates (Fees)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total expenditure in respect of tuition fees for undergraduate courses in universities and polytechnics in the latest year for which figures are available; and how much of this was for students not qualifying for a mandatory maintenance grant on grounds of high parental income.

Mr. Forman: Tuition fee expenditure on mandatory awards for first degree students in universities, polytechnics and colleges in England and Wales was £680 million in the academic year 1990-91. Information on fee expenditure for students receiving a nil maintenance grant because of high parental or other income is not available. However, 27·4 per cent. of students in receipt of mandatory awards received nil maintenance.

Discretionary Awards

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will set out for each local education authority in rank order the expenditure on major discretionary awards per head of adult population for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Forman: The available information is given in the table and excludes awards made to students by the London residuary body. Trafford and Isles of Scilly, included with Cornwall, made no full value awards.

Local authority	*Total expenditure on full value discretionary awards per head of the adult population[1] 1990-91 (£)*
North Yorkshire	13·63
Knowsley	9·97
Wandsworth	9·83
Liverpool	7·82
Powys	7·53
Cheshire	6·96

Local authority	*Total expenditure on full value discretionary awards per head of the adult population[1] 1990-91 (£)*
Leicestershire	6·91
Walsall	6·45
Wirral	6·41
Cumbria	6·38
Suffolk	5·78
Devon	5·56
Humberside	5·52
Gloucestershire	5·33
Kirklees	5·26
Lambeth	5·21
Hampshire	5·19
Dorset	5·16
Barnsley	5·13
Redbridge	4·83
Shropshire	4·75
Lancashire	4·73
City of London	4·67
Lewisham	4·50
Hackney	4·37
South Glamorgan	4·34
Gateshead	4·30
Bradford	4·26
Somerset	4·17
Richmond	4·12
Bolton	4·08
Clwyd	4·06
Southwark	4·06
Brent	4·05
Cleveland	4·05
Durham	3·94
Sefton	3·89
Kingston	3·85
Kent	3·83
South Tyneside	3·80
Ealing	3·74
North Tyneside	3·70
West Glamorgan	3·58
Waltham Forest	3·50
Norfolk	3·49
Isle of Wight	3·39
Bury	3·36
Nottinghamshire	3·35
Cambridgeshire	3·33
Tower Hamlets	3·33
Kensington	3·31
Wakefield	3·22
Calderdale	3·19
Bromley	3·11
Lincolnshire	3·03
Wiltshire	2·89
Cornwall/Isles of Scilly[2]	2·83
Newham	2·79
Northumberland	2·68
Hereford and Worcester	2·66
Leeds	2·66
Oxfordshire	2·63
Northamptonshire	2·56
Hammersmith	2·49
Harrow	2·39
Havering	2·35
Sandwell	2·34
Buckinghamshire	2·33
Gwent	2·32
Birmingham	2·31
Rochdale	2·25
Essex	2·21
Barking	2·15
Enfield	2·15
Bexley	2·09
Greenwich	2·09
Croydon	2·04
Doncaster	1·96
Sutton	1·91
Mid Glamorgan	1·91
Newcastle	1·81
Staffordshire	1·81
Bedfordshire	1·80
Solihull	1·76
Hertfordshire	1·70
Hillingdon	1·68
Westminster	1·64
Oldham	1·64
Surrey	1·62
Derbyshire	1·56
Merton	1·55
Stockport	1·51
Dyfed	1·50
Warwickshire	1·42
East Sussex	1·40
St. Helens	1·39
Tameside	1·39
Rotherham	1·29
Hounslow	1·28
Manchester	1·21
Wolverhampton	1·14
Dudley	1·12
Wigan	1·07
Coventry	1·05
West Sussex	1·01
Sheffield	1·00
Salford	0·84
Haringey	0·72
Barnet	0·56
Islington	0·41
Gwynedd	0·21
Trafford	0·00
Sunderland[3]	n/a
Camden[3]	n/a
Berkshire[3]	n/a
Avon[3]	n/a

Notes:

[1] Mid 1989 projections of mid 1991 population aged 16 and over.

[2] Cornwall and Isles of Scilly combined because separate population data not available (Isles of Scilly made no full value awards during 1990-91).

[3] LEAs unable to supply appropriate information.

Choice in Education

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what official contact Ministers and officials in his Department have had with Choice in Education in the last 12 months.

Mr. Forth: Officials from the Department meet representatives of Choice in Education from time to time. Choice in Education receives no grant from the Government.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what use the Church Commissioners have made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Mr. Michael Alison: The Commissioners have used private detectives over the last five years to trace and to serve legal documents on debtors. Information on the cost in each case is held on a case by case basis and the total cost is not, therefore, readily calculable. The firms involved are Andersons; Barrington Investigations; D-Tech; Finlay's Bureau of Investigations Ltd.; Lewis and Elliott; MacNab and Co; Madagans; M. J. Kane and Associates; Nicholas Linden and Pinkertons.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those agencies in his Department which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Mr. Goodlad: The scope for privatisation or contractorisation of Wilton Park and the Natural Resources Institute is considered as part of each agency's three-year review. The three-year review of the Natural Resources Institute is currently being undertaken. It will consider, inter alia, the strategic options.

Iran

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will lodge a formal complaint with the Iranian Government over recent breaches of human rights in Iran.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The abuse of human rights in Iran continues to cause us deep concern. We have made this clear on many occasions, both bilaterally and together with our EC partners, and will continue to do so.

Iraq

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what United Kingdom origin equipment or material was found by the United Nations special inspection team in Iraq at *(a)* the Al-Musayyib high explosive test site, *(b)* the Al-Atheer facility for manufacture of implosion bomb detonation devices, *(c)* the Al-Furat centrifuge factory for uranium enrichment or *(d)* the Akaswat phosphate mine and uranium extraction plants.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence those monitoring the United Nations sanctions against Iraq found of United Kingdom-manufactured computer equipment playing any part in Iraqi nuclear, chemical or biological weapon plans.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are aware that the inspections in Iraq by the United Nations special commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency have revealed the names of many companies around the world which have traded with Iraq, including some from Britain. It is possible that more names will be revealed as time goes on. It is not our practice to comment in detail on the information given to us by the IAEA or UNSCOM.

Any evidence of wrongdoing will be urgently investigated and, if appropriate, will be a matter for the courts. However, it would be quite wrong to conclude, without further analysis, that the companies named have behaved wrongfully. Until the invasion of Kuwait, trade with Iraq was not illegal provided strategic export controls were not breached.

UNESCO

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much has been spent in monitoring the progress of UNESCO since the United Kingdom's withdrawal from membership.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It would involve disproportionate cost to detail all the costs incurred in following developments at UNESCO since 1985. The main charges are those of a first secretary in Paris and another in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 50 per cent. of whose duties are devoted to UNESCO; and a locally-engaged member of staff in Paris. The estimated 1991-92 cost of these staff is £143,630.

Cambodia

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking towards curtailing the activities of armed Khmer Rouge in Cambodia in breach of the 1991 peace accord.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Kingdom has provided 120 personnel to the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia—UNTAC—military component, including military observers and a mine clearance training unit. We, together with our partners in the United Nations Security Council, will shortly be considering what steps should be taken in the light of the Khmer Rouge's refusal to co-operate with UNTAC.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to initiate legal or diplomatic action in relation to infringements by Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge of international law.

Mr. Goodlad: No international criminal court now exists with jurisdiction over the offences in question. Under the terms of the Genocide convention, the only national courts with jurisdiction over Pol Pot would be those in Cambodia. If the new, legitimate Cambodian Government formed after elections next year wished to bring Pol Pot and his associates to trial, we would have no regrets.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy with regard to the continued participation of the Khmer Rouge in the peace process in Cambodia.

Mr. Goodlad: Our aim is to see the agreements on a comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodia conflict implemented fully. The United Nations Security Council will again be addressing this question shortly. If the Khmer Rouge exclude themselves from the free and fair elections due to take place in April/May 1993, that is their choice.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on compliance with the Cambodian peace accord of October 1991.

Mr. Goodlad: We deplore the refusal of the Khmer Rouge to cooperate with the United Nations Transitional

Authority in Cambodia—UNTAC—and to respect its obligations under the Paris agreements. There has been considerable progress towards the implementation of the comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodia conflict. Despite occasional ceasefire violations, peace has returned to most of Cambodia. More than 170,000 refugees formerly in the camps on the Thai-Cambodian border have returned to Cambodia without a single fatality as a result of mines; and preparations are well in hand for the holding of free and fair elections in April/May 1993, with more than 1·5 million Cambodians now registered.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for each month from January 1991 the number of *(a)* visa applications, *(b)* successful visa applications and *(c)* unsuccessful visa applications made by citizens of each republic of the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Nationals of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have required visas for the United Kingdom only since 7 November 1992. To obtain the information required for the period of 7 November to date would require a special exercise to consult all visa-issuing posts overseas and would result in disproportionate cost.

I will, however, ensure that the hon. Member receives the information he requires when it is to hand.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many visa applications from citizens of each of the former Yugoslav republics have been refused on the ground that the applicant does not have leave of absence from an employer.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information is not at present available. Such statistics are normally provided monthly by posts abroad: since the visa regime was not applied on former Yugoslavia until earlier this month, to obtain them now would involve disproportionate cost.

I will, however, ensure that the hon. Member receives the information he requires when it is to hand.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the fees charged to visa applicants from the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Visa applicants from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are required to pay the same fees as all other visa applicants. Current visa fees are listed in the Consular Fees Order 1989—SI (1989) 152—a copy of which is available in the Library.

Kurdish People

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his Turkish counterpart on the treatment of Kurds in north Kurdistan, and the denial of parliamentary rights to Kurdish Members of Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Turkish Government are well aware of our concern about the human rights situation in Turkey. We welcome Prime Minister Demirel's commitment to introducing further human rights reforms.

It is not the case that the parliamentary rights of any Members of the Turkish Grand National Assembly of Kurdish origin have been withdrawn. But the public prosecutor has requested the removal of parliamentary immunity from some members of the People's Labour Party—HEP—so that they can be tried for charges arising out of alleged co-operation with terrorist organisations. The request for removal of immunity is currently under review by the parliamentary justice committee.

The HEP members concerned are all of ethnic Kurdish origin. There is no question of lifting the immunity of other Kurdish members of the Grand National Assembly. We are following this issue closely.

Bosnia and Slovenia

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the posts in Bosnia and Slovenia where visa applications can be made for entry to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are none.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the number of visa applications that have been refused from Bosnian citizens who are *(a)* parents, *(b)* grandparents, *(c)* siblings and *(d)* other relatives of people in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information is not at present available. Such statistics are normally provided monthly by posts abroad: since the visa regime was not applied to Bosnian citizens until earlier this month, to obtain them now would involve disproportionate cost.

I will, however, ensure that the hon. Member receives the information he requires when it is to hand.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Yugoslavia

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made with the provision of humanitarian assistance to the former Yugoslavia since the Birmingham summit.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Good progress has been made in a number of areas. We have now committed more than £70 million in humanitarian assistance to the former Yugoslavia: approximately £41 million as our share of the EC's relief programme and over £29·5 million bilaterally.

We have played a leading role in establishing the European Community task force, an initiative which stems from the Birmingham summit. We have been the first member state to provide trucks and staff—including the leader for the task force. As also envisaged at Birmingham, member states have now appointed special representatives to oversee their humanitarian assistance to the former Yugoslavia: they meet shortly under the chairmanship of the United Kingdom special representative, Tim Lankester, the Permanent Secretary of the Overseas Development Administration.

In the meantime, we have also gone forward with direct action mainly in central Bosnia where the suffering is greatest. There are now 43 British trucks together with trailers, support vehicles and maintenance back up working on relief convoys. There are 75 British civilian personnel working on the convoys or seconded as technical experts to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. They will be joined by another 20 construction workers this week who will work on a major shelter programme designed to make existing buildings weather proof for around 20,000 people this winter in some of the worst affected areas. This is in addition to our substantial financial support for UNHCR, the World Health Organisation, the Red Cross and other non-governmental organisations. It is also in addition to the cost of providing 2,400 British troops for the UN protection force.

Commonwealth

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will consider raising with the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, and the member states, the possibility of an invitation to join the Commonwealth being extended to the Irish Republic, on the same basis enjoyed by other members of the Commonwealth that are republics.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No. We do not intend to approach the Commonwealth Secretary-General or other Commonwealth members of this matter; it is for the Irish Republic to apply if it wishes.

Somalia

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much assistance was given by the United Kingdom to Somalia in each of the last 10 years *(a)* in humanitarian aid whether by cash grant or in kind, *(b)* in development aid whether by cash grant or in kind, *(c)* in loans and *(d)* in any other form.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The table sets out figures showing United Kingdom gross bilateral development and humanitarian assistance to Somalia for each of the past 10 years. We have made no loans or given any other form of aid to Somalia during this period.

Somalia: United Kingdom bilateral aid

Year	*Development Aid (£,000)*	*Humanitarian Aid (£,000)*
1981	1,117	1,324
1982	1,492	1,036
1983	2,400	86
1984	2,011	47
1985	1,728	9
1986	3,686	255
1987	6,859	433
1988	6,490	124
1989	5,143	152
1990	1,678	—
1991	707	1,988

Chakufwa Chihana

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for an official from the United Kingdom mission in Malawi to attend the trial of Chakufwa Chihana on charges of sedition and publish a report of the proceedings.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Chakufwa Chihana's trail ended on 12 November. The judge has now withdrawn to consider the evidence. Members of the high commission staff together with representatives from other diplomatic embassies in Lilongwe took it in turns to ensure a continuous diplomatic presence at the trial. Transcripts of the proceeding are expected to be available through the high court in Blantyre. We do not propose to prepare an independent report of the proceedings.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government about the imprisonment and criminal charges brought against Chakufwa Chihana in Malawi; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We made formal representations in April and August this year calling on the Malawian Government to release Mr. Chihana pending formal committal proceedings. We have told them that we considered his arrest and subsequent indictment to be a flagrant violation to his right to freedom of speech.

PRIME MINISTER

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what is his policy towards introducing comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in favour of the rights of disabled people;

(2) what plans he has to prohibit discrimination on the ground of physical disability; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We continue to work to eliminate discrimination against disabled people on the ground of their disability. We believe that this is best achieved by a combination of legislation targeted on clearly identified needs and a programme of education and encouragement.

Additionality and Transparency

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions Her Majesty's Government have had with the EC in the last three years in relation to the definition, interpretation or implementation of the principles of additionality and transparency; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: There have been a number of discussions at ministerial and official level. An announcement was made by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 17 February. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry on 30 June at columns *525-26.*

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister how Her Majesty's Government currently define and interpret the principles of *(a)* additionality and *(b)* transparency in relation to EC funding; in which ways these differ from those used by each of the other member states; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Article 9 of regulation 4253/88 requires that the structural funds have an additional economic impact in the regions concerned; and result in at least an equivalent increase in the amount of official structural aid in the member state concerned. The

Government fully support these principles, which are reflected in our public expenditure arrangements, details of which were set out in the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry on 30 June.

How other member states interpret the additionality and transparency requirement is a matter for the member state concerned and the Commission.

Import and Export Control Act 1990

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what plans Her Majesty's Government have to bring forward legislation to amend the Import and Export Control Act 1990.

The Prime Minister: Her Majesty's Government have no plans to amend the Import and Export Control Act 1990 which repealed section 9(3) of the Import, Export and Customs Powers (Defence) Act 1939. The Government intend, however, to introduce a new Export of Goods (Control) Order in the near future.

China

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his meeting with the Vice-Premier of the People's Republic of China.

The Prime Minister: My meeting with the Vice-Premier offered an important opportunity to reaffirm to the Chinese leadership the Government's strong support for the Governor's proposals for constitutional development in Hong Kong and to urge the Chinese to proceed through constructive discussion rather than confrontation. I also discussed commercial issues and human rights, including the visit of Lord Howe's delegation to China in December.

Iraq

Mr. Bendall: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the cost of the inquiry by Lord Justice Scott into the sales of equipment to Iraq.

The Prime Minister: It is not possible at this stage to make such an assessment.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister what specific measures have been taken to prevent the unauthorised removal, destruction of and tampering with all documents relating to the sale of arms and components to Iraq, held within Government Departments and elsewhere, which might be required by Lord Justice Scott's inquiry.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* Instructions have been issued to ensure that all papers relevant to Lord Justice Scott's inquiry are kept in safe custody and are made available to the inquiry when required.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement about his response to firms other than Matrix Churchill about the conditions of arms sales to Iraq.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 18 November 1992]:* Arms sales to Iraq were considered under Her Majesty's Government's guidelines for the sale of defence equipment to Iran and Iraq until August 1990, when the United Nations embargo on trade with Iraq, including all arms sales, came into effect.

European Central Bank

Mr. Darling: To ask the Prime Minister what steps he has taken to persuade his EC colleagues that the European central bank be situated in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have consistently drawn the attention of my EC colleagues to the advantages for the Community in establishing the new monetary institutions in the United Kingdom. I shall continue to do so.

Child Labour, Colombia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Prime Minister when he will be in a position to reply to the letter of 26 October from the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby in respect of child labour in the Colombian coal mines.

The Prime Minister: I will respond to the hon. Member's letter shortly.

Militarily Sensitive Equipment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what armaments and military sensitive equipment, and in what quantity, were licensed by Her Majesty's Government for export to *(a)* Iraq and *(b)* Yugoslavia since 1979.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* Details of export licence applications for Iraq were included in a Department of Trade and Industry memorandum supplied to the Trade and Industry Select Committee and published in the minutes of evidence, 26 November 1991, pages 37-106. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will write to the hon. Member about exports licensed for supply to Yugoslavia.

Party Conferences (Security)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what amounts have been claimed from central funds by each political party for security costs associated with conferences in each of the last three years.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* Claims have been made only by the Conservative and Labour parties. The figures are as follows:

	Conservative party £	*Labour party* £
1989	274,500	70,500
1990	270,500	76,900
1991	330,000	90,500

On each occasion the expenditure was certified by the chief constable concerned as being necessary in the light of the assessed threat.

Drug and Alcohol Services

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Prime Minister what review Ministers have made of the effects of the ending of Government funding for health education co-ordination and of ring fencing of funding for residential drug and alcohol services; and if he will review the working of the Cabinet sub-Committee on drugs misuse.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* Support for drugs and health education has received specific grant funding for seven years and aspects of health education are now included in the national curriculum; schools and local education authorities now have a firm basis on which to build their provision for preventative health education.

The community care special transitional grant of £539 million in 1993-94 will ring fence resources for the whole of community care; within this local authorities will be expected to allocate an amount for alcohol and drug services appropriate to their needs.

The establishment of a special ministerial sub-committee reflects our firm commitment to tackling drugs misuse. We will continue to co-ordinate, and keep under review, our strategy in this area.

Staff References

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to provide new guidelines to all Welsh non-departmental public bodies concerning the obligation to insist on a minimum of two references from previous employers for all applicants for senior appointments and for each reference to be taken up and checked before any appointee commences employment; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* Welsh non-departmental public bodies have been sent the "Practitioners Guide for Civil Service Recruitment" as guidance; it includes a range of pre-appointment checks to be undertaken before a permanent appointment is made. It is the responsibility of the individual bodies to decide on the most suitable processes for making these checks.

Ministerial Appointments

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to amend paragraph 52 of the guidelines on public appointments set out in "Questions of Procedure" for Ministers so as to debar Ministers from appointing their own employees to be members of the boards of public bodies for which they are responsible.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 12 November 1992]:* Under paragraph 52 of the guidelines set out in "Questions of Procedure", Ministers, having made such inquiries as they think appropriate, may, subject to public accountability and the requirements of the law, appoint those considered best qualified for each appointment. I have no plans to change the paragraph in question, which seems to me to be adequate and appropriate for its purpose.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Violent Crimes (Compensation)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve the arrangements for compensating the victims of violent crimes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government are anxious to improve services to all victims of crime. For those seeking compensation under the criminal injuries compensation scheme we shall be making available an additional £180 million to meet compensation claims over the next three years. These resources are over and above the current substantial provision of £530 million. In addition we wish to improve and speed up the service to those making claims, especially in the light of the increasing volume of applications.

Some of the main barriers to progress in this area were outlined in last year's wide ranging management review of the CIB. Copies of the report entitled "Management Review of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board—Home Office Management Advisory Services with Capita Management Consultancy: June 1991", were placed in the Library of the House. Against that background and after careful consideration we have decided that a simplified procedure based on a tariff structure offers the best prospect of providing quicker payments to claimants through a means that is fair, straightforward and understandable.

Further work is needed to develop the practical aspects of these new arrangements. This work should be completed by the first half of next year when a White Paper will be published setting out the details of the proposed new arrangements. We would expect these to come into operation early in 1994.

Claims already lodged, and those submitted before the new tariff scheme takes effect, will be dealt with by the board under the existing arrangements.

Drug-related Offences

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests in connection with drugs-related offences were made in Blyth Valley in each year since 1981.

Mr. Jack: Information on arrests is not collected centrally. The table shows the number of prosecutions at Blyth Valley petty sessional division for drug-related offences from 1981 to 1991, which is provisional.

Number of prosecutions at Blyth Valley magistrates' court for drug related offences 1981-91[1]

	Drug offences	
	Indictable	*Summary*
1981	3	—
1982	3	—
1983	2	—
1984	3	—
1985	4	—
1986	3	—
1987	6	—
1988	4	—
1989	6	—
1990	14	—
1991[1]	23	—

[1] Provisional.

Prison Officers' Accommodation

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present number of prison officers working at each of the London prisons who are listed as waiting to be allocated a prison officer quarter.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since the introduction of the fresh start agreement in 1987, prison officers are not entitled to the provision of a prison service quarter. Consequently there are no records kept at any of the London prisons for officers waiting to be allocated a prison service quarter.

This is because when official quarters become available, they are advertised by the governor within the establishment. All applications are considered by him, and factors such as the length of service, seniority and compassionate grounds, are taken into account in making an allocation.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what survey has been undertaken by his Department as to how prison officers newly posted to work in London prisons find suitable affordable accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No survey has been undertaken by the prison service as to how prison officers newly posted to London prisons find suitable accommodation. Since fresh start, prison officers are no longer quarters entitled.

However, in recognition of the difficulties experienced by new prison officers, whose first posting, like that of other newly recruited civil servants, does not constitute a public expense transfer, officers who are purchasing property in high cost areas, and those posted to establishments in the south-east of England, including London, have since 1989 been able to claim up to £5,000 relocation expenses.

Officers who are transferred to London prisons on permanent compulsory transfer terms are entitled to reimbursement of the expenses incurred in moving home. If they own a property, its sale at the current market value is guaranteed through a Home Office scheme operated by the Black Horse Relocation Company. Financial assistance to officers transferring at public expense from a cheaper to a more expensive area and whose outgoings have necessarily increased is available in the form of additional housing cost allowance. Officers may apply for an advance of salary for house purchase which is repayable, free of interest, over a 10-year period.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the total amount of revenue received by his Department from the sale of prison officers' quarters in England and Wales in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The total amount of receipts from the sale of prison officers quarters in England and Wales in each of the past 10 years were as follows:

	Receipts £ million
1982-83	6·8
1983-84	16·1
1984-85	16·6
1985-86	11·1
1986-87	12·1
1987-88	6·7
1988-89	61·0
1989-90	44·0
1990-91	22·0
1991-92	16·8
[1]1992-93	5·6
Total	218·8

[1] (To date).

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers' quarters have been purchased or built for prison officers *(a)* in Greater London and *(b)* in England and Wales in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The numbers of quarters built or purchased in each of the last 10 years were as follows:

Year	*Built*	*Purchased*
1982-83	—	—
1983-84	—	—
1984-85	—	160
1985-86	100	—
1986-87	—	—
1987-88	80	—
1988-89	58	—
1989-90	—	13
1990-91	—	13
1991-92	—	16
1991-93 (to date)	—	6
Totals	238	208

Following the introduction of fresh start in 1987, prison officers were no longer entitled to quarters and quarters purchased since then have been for chaplains, farm managers and agricultural workers at the new prisons. The only quarters provided in the Greater London area were seven purchased for HM prison Belmarsh, Woolwich, in 1990-91.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of prison officers' quarters that have been sold in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The total number of prison officers quarters sold in each of the last 10 years were as follows:

	Number sold
1982-83	463
1983-84	779
1984-85	739
1985-86	441
1986-87	455
1987-88	250
1988-89	2,260
1989-90	1,502
1990-91	698
1991-92	538
[1]1992-93	152
Total	8,277

[1] to date

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officer quarters at each of the London prisons are still owned by his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of prison officers' quarters owned by the Department at each of the London prisons is as follows:

	Number
Belmarsh	9
Brixton	172
Feltham	91
Holloway	150
Latchmere House	22
Pentonville	92
Wandsworth	144

	Number
Wormwood Scrubs	182
Total	862

Prison Chaplains

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison chaplains were working within prisons in England and Wales on 16 November.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 16 November 1992 there were 397 chaplains working in prisons in England and Wales. These comprised:—

	Number
Anglican	
Full-time	109
Part-time	56
Methodist	129
Roman Catholic	103

In addition, the prison service employs 114 substitutes who stand in as required, when a full-time chaplain is on leave or undertaking training. 567 visiting ministers have also been appointed under section 10 of the Prison Act 1952 to meet the needs of prisoners of other faiths.

Genital Mutilation

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how may prosecutions were brought against medical practitioners who carried out illegal female genital mutilation operations in 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Jack: Records available centrally show no prosecutions in England and Wales from 1986 to 1991—provisional—under the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985.

Race Relations Act 1976

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the proposals from the Commission for Racial Equality for changes to the Race Relations Act 1976.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Commission for Racial Equality has put forward wide-ranging recommendations in its second review of the Race Relations Act 1976. The Government are now giving these careful consideration.

Prison Officers (Assaults)

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many assaults on prison officers took place between June and November; and at what prisons they occurred.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information relates to offences of assault and attempted assault on a prison officer which were punished under the prison discipline system and is given in the table. Data for offences punished in October and November are not yet available.

Offences[1] of assaulting a prison officer proved at adjudications in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales in June to September 1992: by establishment at which punished

Establishment at which punished	*Offence* *Assault*	*Attempted assault*[2]	*Total*
ALL ESTABLISHMENTS	591	56	647
All male establishments	538	53	991
Remand Centres	59	12	71
Brinsford	6	1	7
Cardiff	1	—	1
Dorchester	1	—	1
Exeter	1	1	2
Feltham	18	2	20
Glen Parva	4	1	5
Hindley	3	3	6
Moorland	16	1	17
Stoke Heath	1	1	2
Swansea	1	—	1
Local prisons	205	17	222
Bedford	3	—	3
Belmarsh	23	4	27
Birmingham	22	3	25
Bristol	1	—	1
Brixton	6	—	6
Bullingdon	8	—	8
Canterbury	4	—	4
Cardiff	6	1	7
Chelmsford	8	1	9
Durham	10	—	10
Elmley	6	—	6
Exeter	2	—	2
Gloucester	1	—	1
Hull	3	—	3
Leeds	13	—	13
Leicester	2	2	4
Lincoln	8	—	8
Liverpool	6	—	6
Manchester	4	—	4
Norwich	3	—	3
Pentonville	15	1	16
Preston	3	1	4
Reading	4	—	4
Shrewsbury	3	—	3
Swansea	2	—	2
Wandsworth	8	3	11
Winchester	16	—	16
Wolds	4	—	4
Wormwood Scrubs	11	1	12
Open Prisons	6	1	7
North Sea Camp	2	—	2
Standford Hill	1	1	2
Sudbury	3	—	3
Closed Training Prisons	192	16	208
Acklington	5	—	5
Albany	4	1	5
Blundeston	17	1	18
Camp Hill	3	—	3
Channings Wood	1	—	1
Coldingley	5	—	5
Dartmoor	10	1	11
Erlestoke	2	—	2
Featherstone	1	1	2
Frankland	5	1	6
Full Sutton	33	1	34

Establishment at which punished	Assault	Offence Attempted assault[2]	Total
Garth	13	—	13
Haverigg	2	—	2
Highpoint	2	—	2
Lancaster	1	—	1
Lindholme	3	—	3
Littlehey	1	—	1
Long Lartin	10	1	11
Maidstone	4	—	4
Norwich (Britannia)	1	—	1
Nottingham	4	—	4
Parkhurst	2	—	2
Portsmouth (Kingston)	1	—	1
Risley	1	—	1
Rochester	1	—	1
Shepton Mallett	4	—	4
Stafford	13	1	14
Stocken	5	—	5
Swaleside	14	1	15
The Verne	1	—	1
Wakefield	3	1	4
Wayland	4	—	4
Wellingborough	1	—	1
Whitemoor	12	6	18
Wymott	3	—	3
Closed young offender institutions	71	7	78
Aylesbury	13	2	15
Castington	8	—	8
Deerbolt	3	1	4
Dover	7	—	7
Feltham	9	1	10
Glen Parva	6	1	7
Hollesley Bay	3	—	3
Moorland	7	—	7
Northallerton	3	—	3
Onley	7	1	8
Stoke Heath	5	1	6
Short sentenced institutions	3	—	3
Hollesley Bay	1	—	1
Werrington	2	—	2
Juvenile institutions	2	—	2
Onley	2	—	2
All female establishments	53	3	56
Local prisons	37	3	40
Holloway	15	—	15
Low Newton	1	—	1
New Hall	2	—	2
Pucklechurch	3	2	5
Risley	16	1	17
Closed prisons	9	—	9
Bullwood Hall	2	—	2
Cookham Wood	1	—	1
Styal	6	—	6
Closed young offender institutions	7	—	7
Bullwood Hall	5	—	5
Styal	2	—	2

[1] Provisional figures.

[2] Including attempting, inciting or assisting.

Vehicle Crime

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* thefts of a motor vehicle, *(b)* unauthorised takings of a motor vehicle, *(c)* thefts from a motor vehicle and *(d)* total vehicle crimes were committed in each police force area in each calendar year since 1979 inclusive, and in the 12 months ending June 1992.

Mr. Jack: The available information is for offences recorded by the police and is given in the tables. It is not possible to separate offences of unauthorised taking from thefts of a motor vehicle.

Notifiable offences of vehicle crime by police force area England and Wales 1979

Police force area	Theft of a motor vehicle	Theft from vehicle	Total vehicle crime
Avon and Somerset	7,320	5,373	12,693
Bedfordshire	3,701	2,360	6,061
Cambridgeshire	1,809	2,620	4,429
Cheshire	3,521	2,909	6,430
Cleveland	3,344	2,932	6,276
Cumbria	1,620	2,060	3,680
Derbyshire	3,253	3,796	7,049
Devon and Cornwall	3,726	3,395	7,121
Dorset	2,072	2,613	4,685
Durham	2,278	3,231	5,509
Essex	6,830	6,838	13,668
Gloucestershire	1,449	1,813	3,262
Greater Manchester	27,181	17,613	44,794
Hampshire	6,477	6,567	13,044
Hertfordshire	4,295	4,752	9,047
Humberside	3,261	3,816	7,077
Kent	8,212	5,574	13,786
Lancashire	6,619	5,440	12,059
Leicestershire	3,692	3,031	6,723
Lincolnshire	1,006	1,404	2,410
City of London	536	623	1,159
Merseyside	16,865	11,283	28,148
Metropolitan Police District	76,188	77,402	153,590
Norfolk	1,659	2,662	4,321
Northamptonshire	2,789	2,007	4,796
Northumbria	13,515	11,186	24,701
North Yorkshire	1,615	2,190	3,805
Nottinghamshire	6,650	6,399	13,049
South Yorkshire	6,368	5,478	11,846
Staffordshire	2,876	4,415	7,291
Suffolk	1,213	1,853	3,066
Surrey	2,270	2,993	5,263
Sussex	3,685	4,144	7,829
Thames Valley	10,244	7,945	18,189
Warwickshire	1,400	1,508	2,908
West Mercia	2,940	3,408	6,348
West Midlands	25,658	15,713	41,371
West Yorkshire	14,571	13,619	28,190
Wiltshire	1,709	2,287	3,996
Dyfed-Powys	783	1,087	1,870
Gwent	2,057	2,183	4,240
North Wales	2,161	2,059	4,220
South Wales	9,827	7,768	17,595
Total	309,245	278,349	587,594

Notifiable offences of vehicle crime by police force area
England and Wales 1980

Police force area	*Theft of a motor vehicle*	*Theft from vehicle*	*Total vehicle crime*
Avon and Somerset	7,950	6,706	14,656
Bedfordshire	3,781	2,682	6,463
Cambridgeshire	1,760	2,891	4,651
Cheshire	3,911	3,571	7,482
Cleveland	3,046	3,434	6,480
Cumbria	1,305	2,075	3,380
Derbyshire	3,177	4,175	7,352
Devon and Cornwall	3,846	4,128	7,974
Dorset	2,037	2,799	4,836
Durham	2,414	4,004	6,418
Essex	6,622	7,307	13,929
Gloucestershire	1,456	1,901	3,357
Greater Manchester	27,776	21,538	49,314
Hampshire	6,502	6,939	13,441
Hertfordshire	4,378	4,115	8,493
Humberside	3,217	4,281	7,498
Kent	8,652	6,121	14,773
Lancashire	6,042	5,010	11,052
Leicestershire	4,025	3,498	7,523
Lincolnshire	1,020	1,639	2,659
City of London	504	543	1,047
Merseyside	16,125	12,918	29,043
Metropolitan Police District	88,112	69,033	157,145
Norfolk	2,051	2,983	5,034
Northamptonshire	2,721	2,216	4,937
Northumbria	14,229	13,955	28,184
North Yorkshire	1,540	2,258	3,798
Nottinghamshire	6,850	7,674	14,524
South Yorkshire	7,115	6,328	13,443
Staffordshire	3,325	4,186	7,511
Suffolk	1,208	1,757	2,965
Surrey	2,283	2,967	5,250
Sussex	3,864	4,302	8,166
Thames Valley	9,454	7,975	17,429
Warwickshire	1,522	1,740	3,262
West Mercia	3,215	4,245	7,460
West Midlands	26,197	19,308	45,505
West Yorkshire	14,486	15,523	30,009
Wiltshire	1,426	2,474	3,900
Dyfed-Powys	823	1,143	1,966
Gwent	1,913	2,330	4,243
North Wales	2,164	2,243	4,407
South Wales	10,310	8,033	18,343
Total	324,354	294,948	619,302

Notifiable offences of vehicle crime by police force area
England and Wales 1981

Police force area	*Theft of a motor vehicle*	*Theft from vehicle*	*Total vehicle crime*
Avon and Somerset	7,874	9,216	17,090
Bedfordshire	3,765	3,560	7,325
Cambridgeshire	1,863	3,678	5,541
Cheshire	4,021	4,872	8,893
Cleveland	2,887	4,694	7,581
Cumbria	1,314	2,764	4,078
Derbyshire	3,387	5,869	9,256
Devon and Cornwall	3,901	6,415	10,316
Dorset	2,150	3,206	5,356
Durham	2,173	4,810	6,983
Essex	6,269	8,810	15,079
Gloucestershire	1,548	2,412	3,960
Greater Manchester	28,203	26,610	54,813
Hampshire	6,950	9,626	16,576
Hertfordshire	4,190	5,331	9,521
Humberside	3,203	5,965	9,168
Kent	7,449	6,632	14,081
Lancashire	5,909	7,200	13,109
Leicestershire	4,103	4,761	8,864
Lincolnshire	960	2,503	3,463
City of London	498	641	1,139
Merseyside	18,308	16,897	35,205
Metropolitan Police District	94,064	84,258	178,322
Norfolk	2,377	4,260	6,637
Northamptonshire	2,538	2,897	5,435
Northumbria	15,069	16,442	31,511
North Yorkshire	1,530	3,317	4,847
Nottinghamshire	7,252	10,548	17,800
South Yorkshire	6,634	8,305	14,939
Staffordshire	3,248	5,968	9,216
Suffolk	1,188	2,333	3,521
Surrey	2,222	3,192	5,414
Sussex	3,717	5,162	8,879
Thames Valley	8,848	11,093	19,941
Warwickshire	1,495	2,367	3,862
West Mercia	3,182	6,038	9,220
West Midlands	28,191	25,951	54,142
West Yorkshire	14,753	19,651	34,404
Wiltshire	1,626	3,114	4,740
Dyfed-Powys	626	1,479	2,105
Gwent	1,813	2,798	4,602
North Wales	2,144	3,698	5,842
South Wales	9,148	10,306	19,454
Total	332,590	379,640	712,230

Notifiable offences of vehicle crime by police force area
England and Wales 1982

Police force area	*Theft of a motor vehicle*	*Theft from vehicle*	*Total vehicle crime*
Avon and Somerset	8,994	10,353	19,347
Bedfordshire	4,149	4,084	8,233
Cambridgeshire	2,234	4,210	6,444
Cheshire	3,962	4,968	8,930
Cleveland	3,162	5,732	8,894
Cumbria	1,379	2,769	4,148
Derbyshire	3,415	6,399	9,814
Devon and Cornwall	3,785	8,337	12,122
Dorset	2,620	4,263	6,883
Durham	2,473	4,833	7,306
Essex	6,618	10,779	17,397
Gloucestershire	1,664	3,269	4,933
Greater Manchester	28,979	28,790	57,769
Hampshire	7,333	11,801	19,134
Hertfordshire	4,134	6,134	10,268
Humberside	3,828	6,660	10,488
Kent	8,267	9,631	17,898
Lancashire	6,122	8,051	14,173
Leicestershire	4,107	5,168	9,275
Lincolnshire	1,140	2,736	3,876
City of London	476	679	1,155
Merseyside	18,472	18,260	36,732
Metropolitan Police District	98,099	104,504	202,603
Norfolk	2,807	5,604	8,411
Northamptonshire	3,082	4,219	7,301
Northumbria	17,867	19,079	36,946
North Yorkshire	2,070	3,874	5,944
Nottinghamshire	6,765	10,261	17,026
South Yorkshire	7,083	9,548	16,631
Staffordshire	3,130	5,842	8,972
Suffolk	1,351	2,944	4,295
Surrey	2,477	3,850	6,327
Sussex	4,157	7,278	11,435
Thames Valley	9,583	13,831	23,414
Warwickshire	1,703	3,010	4,713
West Mercia	3,457	7,260	10,717
West Midlands	28,262	31,423	59,685
West Yorkshire	15,894	22,958	38,852
Wiltshire	1,485	3,874	5,359
Dyfed-Powys	790	1,675	2,465
Gwent	1,783	3,163	4,946
North Wales	2,074	3,832	5,906

Police force area	*Theft of a motor vehicle*	*Theft from vehicle*	*Total vehicle crime*
South Wales	9,998	13,102	23,100
Total	351,230	449,037	800,267

Notifiable offences of vehicle crime by police force area England and Wales 1983

Police force area	*Theft of a motor vehicle*	*Theft from vehicle*	*Total vehicle crime*
Avon and Somerset	7,723	9,688	17,411
Bedfordshire	4,187	3,924	8,111
Cambridgeshire	2,210	4,034	6,244
Cheshire	3,774	5,107	8,881
Cleveland	2,832	5,539	8,371
Cumbria	1,363	3,080	4,443
Derbyshire	2,887	5,925	8,812
Devon and Cornwall	3,873	7,637	11,510
Dorset	2,557	4,212	6,769
Durham	2,296	4,456	6,752
Essex	6,178	10,132	16,310
Gloucestershire	1,583	3,168	4,751
Greater Manchester	29,451	27,430	56,881
Hampshire	7,276	11,478	18,754
Hertfordshire	3,598	5,100	8,698
Humberside	3,265	6,415	9,680
Kent	7,544	8,694	16,238
Lancashire	5,745	8,063	13,808
Leicestershire	3,784	4,981	8,765
Lincolnshire	1,160	2,726	3,886
City of London	451	714	1,165
Merseyside	15,737	17,283	33,020
Metropolitan Police District	86,465	96,342	182,807
Norfolk	2,473	5,023	7,496
Northamptonshire	3,145	3,981	7,126
Northumbria	17,572	18,559	36,131
North Yorkshire	1,998	3,522	5,520
Nottinghamshire	5,785	9,812	15,597
South Yorkshire	6,784	9,933	16,717
Staffordshire	3,224	6,082	9,306
Suffolk	1,338	3,184	4,522
Surrey	2,527	3,932	6,459
Sussex	3,729	7,363	11,092
Thames Valley	9,451	13,576	23,027
Warwickshire	1,711	2,893	4,604
West Mercia	2,803	6,506	9,309
West Midlands	27,343	29,405	56,748
West Yorkshire	14,398	19,740	34,138
Wiltshire	1,638	3,616	5,254
Dyfed-Powys	694	1,478	2,172
Gwent	1,793	3,139	4,932
North Wales	1,724	3,864	5,588
South Wales	9,630	12,502	22,132
Total	325,699	424,238	749,937

Notifiable offences of vehicle crime by police force area England and Wales 1984

Police force area	*Theft of a motor vehicle*	*Theft from vehicle*	*Total vehicle crime*
Avon and Somerset	8,244	10,640	18,884
Bedfordshire	4,415	3,960	8,375
Cambridgeshire	1,950	4,302	6,252
Cheshire	3,696	4,849	8,545
Cleveland	3,390	6,707	10,097
Cumbria	1,265	3,237	4,502
Derbyhire	2,853	5,964	8,817
Devon and Cornwall	4,231	7,642	11,873
Dorset	2,831	4,422	7,253
Durham	2,447	5,370	7,817
Essex	6,394	9,784	16,178
Gloucestershire	1,673	3,416	5,089
Greater Manchester	32,424	30,006	62,430
Hampshire	7,316	12,263	19,579
Hertfordshire	4,183	4,645	8,828
Humberside	3,323	6,139	9,462
Kent	8,112	8,962	17,074
Lancashire	5,614	7,527	13,141
Leicestershire	4,046	5,473	9,519
Lincolnshire	1,212	2,982	4,194
City of London	413	762	1,175
Merseyside	17,253	19,631	36,884
Metropolitan Police District	87,563	105,637	193,200
Norfolk	2,640	5,235	7,875
Northamptonshire	3,078	4,287	7,365
Northumbria	19,379	20,893	40,272
North Yorkshire	1,972	3,570	5,542
Nottinghamshire	6,399	11,785	18,184
South Yorkshire	7,905	11,611	19,516
Staffordshire	3,081	6,181	9,262
Suffolk	1,284	3,255	4,539
Surrey	2,508	3,932	6,440
Sussex	4,686	7,716	12,402
Thames Valley	10,004	15,113	25,117
Warwickshire	1,946	3,025	4,971
West Mercia	3,073	6,293	9,366
West Midlands	29,745	30,009	59,754
West Yorkshire	15,475	21,622	37,097
Wiltshire	1,654	3,756	5,410
Dyfed-Powys	621	1,758	2,379
Gwent	1,845	3,190	5,035
North Wales	1,969	3,660	5,629
South Wales	10,694	13,732	24,426
Total	344,806	454,943	799,749

Notifiable offences of vehicle crime by police force area England and Wales 1985

Police force area	*Theft of a motor vehicle*	*Theft from vehicle*	*Total vehicle crime*
Avon and Somerset	8,972	11,753	20,725
Bedfordshire	4,143	4,433	8,576
Cambridgeshire	2,328	4,310	6,638
Cheshire	4,241	5,307	9,548
Cleveland	3,520	6,304	9,824
Cumbria	1,387	3,000	4,387
Derbyshire	2,927	5,873	8,800
Devon and Cornwall	4,477	8,566	13,043
Dorset	3,193	4,491	7,684
Durham	2,911	5,748	8,659
Essex	7,028	9,395	16,423
Gloucestershire	2,131	3,734	5,865
Greater Manchester	37,703	32,921	70,624
Hampshire	7,636	12,521	20,157
Hertfordshire	3,725	4,920	8,645
Humberside	4,229	7,398	11,627
Kent	8,966	9,472	18,438
Lancashire	6,429	7,564	13,993
Leicestershire	4,991	6,509	11,500
Lincolnshire	1,492	3,376	4,868
City of London	420	660	1,080
Merseyside	18,131	20,178	38,309
Metropolitan Police District	88,076	111,701	199,777
Norfolk	3,127	5,570	8,697
Northamptonshire	3,937	5,264	9,201
Northumbria	19,310	22,213	41,523
North Yorkshire	2,103	4,431	6,534
Nottinghamshire	6,282	11,829	18,111
South Yorkshire	7,384	10,407	17,791
Staffordshire	3,394	6,423	9,817
Suffolk	1,440	3,273	4,713
Surrey	2,613	4,239	6,852

Police force area	Theft of a motor vehicle	Theft from vehicle	Total vehicle crime
Sussex	5,009	8,238	13,247
Thames Valley	11,178	15,986	27,164
Warwickshire	1,845	3,062	4,907
West Mercia	3,244	6,924	10,168
West Midlands	32,954	33,966	66,920
West Yorkshire	16,099	21,000	37,099
Wiltshire	1,833	3,481	5,314
Dyfed-Powys	773	1,777	2,550
Gwent	1,894	3,365	5,259
North Wales	2,040	3,667	5,707
South Wales	11,911	13,719	25,630
Total	367,426	478,968	846,394

Notifiable offences of vehicle crime by police force area England and Wales 1986

Police force area	Theft of a motor vehicle	Theft from vehicle	Total vehicle crime
Avon and Somerset	11,244	16,444	27,688
Bedfordshire	5,352	6,403	11,755
Cambridgeshire	2,439	4,299	6,738
Cheshire	4,725	6,756	11,481
Cleveland	5,549	7,238	12,787
Cumbria	1,728	4,037	5,765
Derbyshire	3,171	5,795	8,966
Devon and Cornwall	5,400	10,674	16,074
Dorset	3,838	5,111	8,949
Durham	3,874	5,114	8,988
Essex	8,579	11,762	20,341
Gloucestershire	2,348	4,646	6,994
Greater Manchester	43,200	47,277	90,477
Hampshire	8,566	14,270	22,836
Hertfordshire	4,303	5,875	10,178
Humberside	4,762	8,242	13,004
Kent	9,959	10,116	20,075
Lancashire	7,868	9,145	17,013
Leicestershire	5,325	6,915	12,240
Lincolnshire	1,790	3,659	5,449
City of London	351	1,033	1,384
Merseyside	18,312	27,416	45,728
Metropolitan Police District	91,331	134,458	225,789
Norfolk	3,605	6,037	9,642
Northamptonshire	4,931	5,597	10,528
Northumbria	19,693	27,105	46,798
North Yorkshire	2,599	4,486	7,085
Nottinghamshire	6,638	12,892	19,530
South Yorkshire	9,477	12,230	21,707
Staffordshire	4,640	7,386	12,026
Suffolk	1,629	4,028	5,657
Surrey	2,854	5,119	7,973
Sussex	5,290	8,870	14,160
Thames Valley	13,365	18,065	31,430
Warwickshire	2,149	3,449	5,598
West Mercia	3,982	7,385	11,367
West Midlands	37,322	42,537	79,859
West Yorkshire	16,727	25,059	41,786
Wiltshire	1,991	3,911	5,902
Dyfed-Powys	888	1,803	2,691
Gwent	2,012	3,336	5,348
North Wales	2,526	4,315	6,841
South Wales	14,728	17,119	31,847
Total	411,060	577,414	988,474

Notifiable offences of vehicle crime by police force area England and Wales 1987

Police force area	Theft of a motor vehicle	Theft from vehicle	Total vehicle crime
Avon and Somerset	10,945	21,457	32,402
Bedfordshire	5,068	7,996	13,064
Cambridgeshire	2,512	4,746	7,258
Cheshire	5,441	7,818	13,259
Cleveland	5,832	7,247	13,079
Cumbria	1,603	4,062	5,665
Derbyshire	2,967	6,731	9,698
Devon and Cornwall	5,073	11,356	16,429
Dorset	4,037	6,091	10,128
Durham	4,311	5,260	9,571
Essex	8,404	14,125	22,529
Gloucestershire	2,539	5,443	7,982
Greater Manchester	37,936	57,319	95,255
Hampshire	8,453	16,074	24,527
Hertfordshire	4,017	6,904	10,921
Humberside	5,396	9,902	15,298
Kent	9,248	11,887	21,135
Lancashire	7,867	12,906	20,773
Leicestershire	4,931	8,318	13,249
Lincolnshire	1,929	4,322	6,251
City of London	296	807	1,103
Merseyside	18,873	28,735	47,608
Metropolitan Police District	77,642	133,033	210,675
Norfolk	3,964	6,896	10,860
Northamptonshire	4,821	6,582	11,403
Northumbria	19,488	31,961	51,449
North Yorkshire	2,817	5,278	8,095
Nottinghamshire	7,038	15,885	22,923
South Yorkshire	9,312	13,821	23,133
Staffordshire	4,376	8,333	12,709
Suffolk	1,863	4,455	6,318
Surrey	2,922	5,485	8,407
Sussex	5,262	9,167	14,429
Thames Valley	13,996	20,785	34,781
Warwickshire	2,638	4,899	7,537
West Mercia	3,875	8,340	12,215
West Midlands	34,206	57,461	91,667
West Yorkshire	16,363	31,268	47,631
Wiltshire	1,916	4,011	5,927
Dyfed-Powys	994	2,122	3,116
Gwent	2,134	4,212	6,346
North Wales	2,275	4,845	7,120
South Wales	13,996	20,232	34,228
Total	389,576	658,577	1,048,153

Notifiable offences of vehicle crime by by police force area England and Wales 1988

Police force area	Theft of a motor vehicle	Theft from vehicle	Total vehicle crime
Avon and Somerset	10,189	18,653	28,842
Bedfordshire	5,046	7,379	12,425
Cambridgeshire	2,812	4,911	7,723
Cheshire	5,342	6,548	11,890
Cleveland	5,846	8,701	14,547
Cumbria	1,372	4,050	5,422
Derbyshire	2,851	6,822	9,673
Devon and Cornwall	5,318	11,574	16,892
Dorset	3,261	5,672	8,933
Durham	4,091	5,931	10,022
Essex	7,607	13,095	20,702
Gloucestershire	2,388	6,225	8,613
Greater Manchester	38,196	48,171	86,367
Hampshire	7,543	15,038	22,581
Hertfordshire	4,103	6,407	10,510
Humberside	5,565	10,950	16,515
Kent	8,919	12,233	21,152
Lancashire	8,100	13,178	21,278
Leicestershire	4,745	8,979	13,724
Lincolnshire	2,055	3,949	6,004

Police force area	*Theft of a motor vehicle*	*Theft from vehicle*	*Total vehicle crime*
City of London	217	634	851
Merseyside	17,033	22,260	39,293
Metropolitan Police District	67,968	124,575	192,543
Norfolk	3,955	7,682	11,637
Northamptonshire	4,816	6,210	11,026
Northumbria	18,726	29,261	47,987
North Yorkshire	2,615	5,342	7,957
Nottinghamshire	6,739	15,849	22,588
South Yorkshire	8,503	14,033	22,536
Staffordshire	4,859	9,287	14,146
Suffolk	1,779	3,965	5,744
Surrey	2,493	5,002	7,495
Sussex	5,497	10,065	15,562
Thames Valley	11,659	19,310	30,969
Warwickshire	2,525	3,679	6,204
West mercia	3,933	7,859	11,792
West Midlands	28,802	48,007	76,809
West Yorkshire	16,058	29,597	45,655
Wiltshire	1,919	3,886	5,805
Dyfed-Powys	1,119	2,260	3,379
Gwent	1,864	3,856	5,720
North Wales	2,260	4,360	6,620
South Wales	16,025	25,178	41,203
Total	366,713	620,623	987,336

Notifiable offences of vehicle crime by police force area England and Wales 1989

Police force area	*Theft of a motor vehicle*	*Theft from vehicle*	*Total vehicle crime*
Avon and Somerset	12,373	16,891	29,264
Bedfordshire	5,360	7,190	12,550
Cambridgeshire	3,007	4,920	7,927
Cheshire	5,840	6,131	11,971
Cleveland	7,190	9,135	16,325
Cumbria	1,815	3,877	5,692
Derbyshire	3,690	8,035	11,725
Devon and Cornwall	5,250	12,424	17,674
Dorset	3,886	6,527	10,413
Durham	4,678	5,680	10,358
Essex	8,209	13,885	22,094
Gloucestershire	2,756	6,451	9,207
Greater Manchester	39,933	48,202	88,135
Hampshire	8,206	15,305	23,511
Hertfordshire	4,022	5,709	9,731
Humberside	6,144	11,825	17,969
Kent	10,418	12,216	22,634
Lancashire	8,229	14,202	22,431
Leicestershire	5,933	9,386	15,319
Lincolnshire	2,035	4,124	6,159
City of London	214	794	1,008
Merseyside	15,915	20,850	36,765
Metropolitan Police District	66,895	126,578	193,473
Norfolk	4,136	7,694	11,830
Northamptonshire	4,604	6,618	11,222
Northumbria	21,475	33,117	54,592
North Yorkshire	2,798	5,066	7,864
Nottinghamshire	9,116	17,855	26,971
South Yorkshire	9,418	16,055	25,473
Staffordshire	5,960	8,946	14,906
Suffolk	1,938	3,820	5,758
Surrey	2,779	5,185	7,964
Sussex	6,226	11,051	17,277
Thames Valley	14,905	19,764	34,669
Warwickshire	2,895	4,464	7,359
West Mercia	4,516	7,624	12,140
West Midlands	28,794	42,497	71,291
West Yorkshire	19,006	32,878	51,884
Wiltshire	2,006	3,524	5,530
Dyfed-Powys	966	1,772	2,738
Gwent	2,026	4,078	6,104
North Wales	2,161	4,026	6,187
South Wales	15,676	22,541	38,217
Total	393,399	628,912	1,022,311

Notifiable offences of vehicle crime by police force area England and Wales 1990

Police force area	*Theft of a motor vehicle*	*Theft from vehicle*	*Total vehicle crime*
Avon and Somerset	16,435	23,366	39,801
Bedfordshire	8,378	11,470	19,848
Cambridgeshire	3,630	6,199	9,829
Cheshire	6,817	7,789	14,606
Cleveland	10,219	13,362	23,581
Cumbria	2,254	4,900	7,154
Derbyshire	5,559	10,470	16,029
Devon and Cornwall	6,703	15,785	22,488
Dorset	4,728	8,359	13,087
Durham	6,944	7,355	14,299
Essex	10,926	17,907	28,833
Gloucestershire	3,077	8,215	11,292
Greater Manchester	48,735	55,139	103,874
Hampshire	9,875	20,298	30,173
Hertfordshire	4,933	7,857	12,790
Humberside	7,516	15,544	23,060
Kent	13,898	16,568	30,466
Lancashire	10,294	18,675	28,969
Leicestershire	8,499	13,687	22,186
Lincolnshire	2,638	4,781	7,419
City of London	200	803	1,003
Merseyside	16,702	21,003	37,705
Metropolitan Police District	73,936	135,447	209,383
Norfolk	4,798	10,823	15,621
Northamptonshire	5,630	8,103	13,733
Northumbria	27,981	34,452	62,433
North Yorkshire	3,992	6,976	10,968
Nottinghamshire	15,074	24,922	39,996
South Yorkshire	12,499	19,315	31,814
Staffordshire	7,077	12,601	19,678
Suffolk	2,709	4,842	7,551
Surrey	3,874	6,832	10,706
Sussex	7,210	15,465	22,675
Thames Valley	18,266	28,000	46,266
Warwickshire	3,950	6,557	10,507
West Mercia	5,933	9,453	15,386
West Midlands	34,236	50,085	84,321
West Yorkshire	29,045	44,587	73,632
Wiltshire	2,496	4,804	7,300
Dyfed-Powys	1,254	2,405	3,659
Gwent	2,622	5,430	8,052
North Wales	2,534	5,702	8,236
South Wales	20,133	26,746	46,879
Total	494,209	773,079	1,267,288

Notifiable offences of vehicle crime by police force area England and Wales 1991

Police force area	*Theft of a motor vehicle*	*Theft from vehicle*	*Total vehicle crime*
Avon and Somerset	19,903	30,181	50,084
Bedfordshire	8,292	12,035	20,327
Cambridgeshire	4,655	8,998	13,653
Cheshire	8,289	9,485	17,774
Cleveland	11,712	12,369	24,081
Cumbria	3,632	6,627	10,259
Derbyshire	7,410	13,621	21,031
Devon and Cornwall	7,923	19,526	27,449
Dorset	4,560	8,618	13,178
Durham	8,640	10,053	18,693

Police force area	*Theft of a motor vehicle*	*Theft from vehicle*	*Total vehicle crime*
Essex	11,377	20,610	31,987
Gloucestershire	3,927	11,432	15,359
Greater Manchester	55,338	60,461	115,799
Hampshire	11,919	26,720	38,639
Hertfordshire	6,149	10,548	16,697
Humberside	8,506	17,909	26,415
Kent	17,962	23,558	41,520
Lancashire	11,042	21,687	32,729
Leicestershire	10,751	16,104	26,855
Lincolnshire	2,779	4,958	7,737
City of London	239	839	1,078
Merseyside	16,983	22,156	39,139
Metropolitan Police District	81,173	154,453	235,626
Norfolk	5,510	12,780	18,290
Northamptonshire	6,514	10,466	16,980
Northumbria	30,356	32,680	63,036
North Yorkshire	4,999	8,312	13,311
Nottinghamshire	17,603	27,884	45,487
South Yorkshire	16,323	21,848	38,171
Staffordshire	9,290	15,382	24,672
Suffolk	2,721	6,037	8,758
Surrey	4,860	9,851	14,711
Sussex	9,251	21,020	30,271
Thames Valley	22,556	40,302	62,858
Warwickshire	4,700	8,244	12,944
West Mercia	8,652	11,937	20,589
West Midlands	41,415	54,360	95,775
West Yorkshire	40,235	55,425	95,660
Wiltshire	2,967	5,900	8,867
Dyfed-Powys	1,476	3,029	4,505
Gwent	3,240	6,786	10,026
North Wales	3,102	6,970	10,072
South Wales	22,970	31,115	54,085
Total	581,901	913,276	1,495,177

Notifiable offences of vehicle crime by by police force area England and Wales—12 months ending June 1992

Police force area	*Theft of a motor vehicle*	*Theft from vehicle*	*Total vehicle crime*
Avon and Somerset	17,907	30,590	48,497
Bedfordshire	7,586	10,630	18,216
Cambridgeshire	5,096	9,621	14,717
Cheshire	8,488	10,913	19,401
Cleveland	12,002	12,394	24,396
Cumbria	3,371	6,989	10,360
Derbyshire	8,205	16,408	24,613
Devon and Cornwall	7,427	20,362	27,789
Dorset	3,972	7,935	11,907
Durham	8,164	10,030	18,194
Essex	11,429	21,020	32,449
Gloucestershire	4,708	13,294	18,002
Greater Manchester	54,716	58,640	113,356
Hampshire	11,579	27,669	39,248
Hertfordshire	6,512	11,299	17,811
Humberside	8,618	18,444	27,062
Kent	18,289	24,604	42,893
Lancashire	11,272	22,432	33,704
Leicestershire	10,495	16,756	27,251
Lincolnshire	2,991	5,650	8,641
City of London	203	877	1,080
Merseyside	16,425	22,124	38,549
Metropolitan Police District	80,837	157,463	238,300
Norfolk	5,145	13,215	18,360
Northamptonshire	6,645	9,425	16,070
Northumbria	28,149	30,063	58,212
North Yorkshire	4,758	8,806	13,564
Nottinghamshire	17,025	27,213	44,238
South Yorkshire	17,220	22,473	39,693
Staffordshire	9,854	15,816	25,670
Suffolk	2,593	6,406	8,999
Surrey	4,816	10,771	15,587
Sussex	9,214	21,561	30,775
Thames Valley	22,531	44,527	67,058
Warwickshire	4,604	8,381	12,985
West Mercia	8,536	13,004	21,540
West Midlands	38,905	55,362	94,267
West Yorkshire	37,691	54,241	91,932
Wiltshire	2,889	6,177	9,066
Dyfed-Powys	1,591	3,434	5,025
Gwent	3,465	6,574	10,039
North Wales	3,418	7,452	10,870
South Wales	22,855	30,242	53,097
Total	572,196	931,287	1,503,483

Gambling

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on stimulating the demand for gambling.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is the Government's policy that the demand for gambling should not be unduly encouraged, because of the damage it can cause if taken to excess. This principle is applied in different degrees to different forms of gambling. The greater the scope for abuse and commercial exploitation the more rigorously it is applied.

Bail

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many non-United Kingdom *(a)* men and *(b)* women were granted bail and how many remanded in custody for each of the last five years; and of those, how many were from (i) Nigeria, (ii) other West African countries, (iii) Colombia and (iv) Pakistan.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The nationality of persons remanded on bail is not recorded centrally. Information for prisoners remanded into prison service establishments in each of the years 1989-91 is given in the table. Data for earlier years are not readily available.

Receptions of untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners into prison service establishments in England and Wales: by nationality, sex and year of initial reception, 1989-91

Number of persons

Nationality	*1989*		*1990*		[1]*1991*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
United Kingdom	27,559	1,039	32,986	1,630	48,762	2,541
Nigeria	305	64	180	65	256	67
Other West African	46	13	59	6	72	10
Colombian	20	6	19	2	50	5
Pakistani	118	2	138	3	219	7
Other	1,359	134	1,784	178	2,983	229
Not recorded/refused	32,863	2,377	21,801	1,323	7,080	323

Nationality	*1989*		*1990*		*[1]1991*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
All nationalities	62,270	3,635	56,967	3,207	59,422	3,182

[1] Provisional.

Prison Education Services

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who will make the decision to award a contract for prison education services after tenders have been submitted; and what is his policy in respect of treating each prison on a case by case basis.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The contracts for the provision of education services to inmates in prisons in England and Wales from 1 April 1993 will be let between the Secretary of State for the Home Department and the successful tenderers. As with other contracts of this value, the responsible organisation—in this case, the prison service—will make recommendations to the Home Office procurement unit. Decisions on which contractor to recommend will be made in the operational line by the governor, or, if appropriate, by the responsible area manager, operational director or by the director-general.

In each case, the governor has prepared a specification of the educational services which the prison or young offender institution will require. Some contracts may be let for individual prisons on the recommendation of the governor. In other cases, tenderers are bidding to provide educational services for a number of prisons. In these circumstances, recommendations will be made at the appropriate operational level to accept those bids which represent the best combination of quality and price to meet the needs of the prison service.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will reconsider the decision to put the prison education service out to competitive tender; and if he will make it his policy that the prison education service should continue to be provided by its current staff.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. The present arrangements cannot be continued because of the changes in local education authorities' responsibilities for further education from 1 April 1993. Competition is the best means of ensuring quality and value for money in the future provision of education services to prisoners.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the report from the staff college at Coombe Lodge on the prison education service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* The staff college at Coombe Lodge was asked to provide advice to the prison service on the implications for the provision of education in prisons in England and Wales of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The report contained commercially sensitive material and, in consequence, the prison service prepared and distributed widely in September 1992 a full summary of the report, together with comments on its findings. The text of the summary was agreed with the staff college and incorporated all of the report's principal recommendations. I am placing copies of this summary in the Library of the House.

Foreign Prisoners

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which section or officers in his Department have special responsibilities for policy matters regarding foreign prisoners.

Mr. Jack: The Home Office has a number of policy responsibilities which relate to foreign prisoners. The prison service has the primary responsibility for foreign national prisoners held here and the maintenance of their family ties, and co-ordinates the interests of other Departments of the Home Office; the criminal department has responsibility for extradition and for the policy relating to the repatriation of prisoners; and the immigration service has certain responsibilities for prisoners subject to a deportation order.

Deportation

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times he has used his power contained in section 46 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to authorise the early release of convicted deportees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: By 13 November, my right hon. and learned Friend, the Home Secretary had authorised the early release of 93 convicted deportees.

Racial Equality Councils

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many racial equality councils have had funding withdrawn in the past year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In this financial year funding has been withdawn by the Commission for Racial Equality from two racial equality councils, Gravesham and Birmingham, after effectiveness reviews. A third, Oldham, has been given notice that its funding will also be withdrawn following a similar review.

As I explained in my letter to the hon. Member of 16 November last, although funded by grant in aid by the Home Office, the Commission for Racial Equality is an independent statutory body, and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on decisions in individual cases such as these.

Holloway Prison

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make available resources to build the new visitors' centre at Her Majesty's prison Holloway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A visitors centre at Her Majesty's prison Holloway is being considered for a place in the 1995-96 major capital works building programme.

Prisoner Transfers

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the report of the interdepartmental review of the provisions governing the transfer of prisoners between United kingdom jurisdictions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have considered the report of this review in consultation with my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Secretary of State for Scotland. A copy of the report is being placed in the Library; copies are also being sent to interested organisations.

We have decided to accept in full the report's recommendations, including the need to consider how the existing legislation might be amended to overcome the present obstacles to the permanent transfer to Northern Ireland of prisoners who have their family links there but who have been convicted of serious offences in Great Britain. In the meantime we shall implement the recommendation that greater use should be made of temporary transfers, usually for extended periods, and that the criteria for considering requests should be amended.

In future, any request by a prisoner in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to be transferred to one of the other jurisdictions either permanently, to serve the rest of his or her sentence, or temporarily to foster family ties, will normally be approved, provided that (1) the prisoner would have at least six months left to serve in the receiving jurisdiction before his or her date of release at the time of making the request; (2) the prisoner was ordinarily resident in the receiving jurisdiction prior to the current sentence; or his or her close family currently reside there and there are reasonable grounds for believing that it is the prisoner's firm intention to take up residence there on release or to receive visits and (3) both Departments concerned are reasonably satisfied that the prisoner will not, if transferred, disrupt or attempt to disrupt any prison establishment, or otherwise pose an unacceptable risk to security. A request that does not meet these conditions may nevertheless be granted where there are strong compassionate or other compelling grounds for transfer.

A permanent transfer may however be refused if it is considered that the prisoner's crimes were so serious as to make it inappropriate that he or she should benefit from a substantial reduction in time left to serve, if that would be a consequence of transfer.

Requests will continue to be considered on an individual basis. To facilitate the orderly movement of small numbers of prisoners between jurisdictions, the timing of each transfer will be subject to operational and security considerations in the sentencing and receiving jurisdictions.

Temporary transfer, where granted, may be for a period of up to 12 months, with requests for extension of this period considered on a similar basis. Temporarily transferred prisoners will be expected to comply fully with such regime requirements as the receiving Secretary of State may stipulate. Failure to agree to do so either in making the request or after transfer will normally justify refusal of the request or the immediate return of the prisoner to the sentencing jurisdiction.

My colleagues and I hope that the extended use of temporary transfer will help to alleviate the difficulties experienced by families in visiting prisoners in other jurisdictions.

Drug Offences

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a table showing, for each police force area in England and Wales, the number of notifiable drug offences in *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1985-86, *(c)* 1990-91 and *(d)* 1991-92 and the percentage increase between 1979-80 and 1991-92, between 1985-86 and 1991-92 and between 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* The figures given in the tables are for offences of trafficking in controlled drugs which is the only drug-related offence which is notifiable. These figures were not collected separately until 1983 so it is not possible to provide any information for earlier years.

Notifiable offences of trafficking in controlled drugs recorded by the police by police force area
Number of offences and percentage change

Police force area	*April 1990 to March 1991*	*April 1991 to March 1992*	*Percentage change*
Avon and Somerset	257	278	8
Bedfordshire	48	55	15
Cambridgeshire	110	81	−26
Cheshire	251	310	24
Cleveland	73	76	4
Cumbria	65	143	120
Derbyshire	98	153	56
Devon and Cornwall	175	233	33
Dorset	188	197	5
Durham	78	72	−8
Essex	247	241	−2
Gloucestershire	64	200	213
Greater Manchester	746	925	24
Hampshire	327	405	24
Hertfordshire	156	180	15
Humberside	146	248	70
Kent	479	631	32
Lancashire	357	377	6
Leicestershire	39	80	105
Lincolnshire	116	137	18
City of London	18	15	−17
Merseyside	498	498	—
Metropolitan Police District	2,174	2,178	—
Norfolk	168	235	40
Northamptonshire	81	103	27
Northumbria	142	185	30
North Yorkshire	131	105	−20
Nottinghamshire	90	116	29
South Yorkshire	165	272	65
Staffordshire	79	123	56
Suffolk	265	256	−3
Surrey	135	97	−28
Sussex	487	542	11
Thames Valley	244	331	36
Warwickshire	71	86	21
West Mercia	145	173	19
West Midlands	284	302	6
West Yorkshire	466	916	97
Wiltshire	71	81	14
Dyfed-Powys	90	111	23
Gwent	103	92	−11
North Wales	114	137	20
South Wales	238	278	17

Police force area	*April 1990 to March 1991*	*April 1991 to March 1992*	*Percentage change*
England and Wales	10,279	12,254	19

Notifiable offences of trafficking in controlled drugs recorded by the police by police force area

Number of offences and percentage change

Police force area	*April 1985 to March 1986*	*April 1991 to March 1992*	*Percentage change*
Avon and Somerset	286	278	−3
Bedfordshire	39	55	41
Cambridgeshire	80	81	1
Cheshire	240	310	29
Cleveland	33	76	130
Cumbria	89	143	61
Derbyshire	58	153	164
Devon and Cornwall	339	233	−31
Dorset	218	197	−10
Durham	29	72	148
Essex	193	241	25
Gloucestershire	191	200	5
Greater Manchester	360	925	157
Hampshire	232	405	75
Hertfordshire	165	180	9
Humberside	100	248	148
Kent	361	631	75
Lancashire	183	377	106
Leicestershire	55	80	45
Lincolnshire	17	137	706
City of London	3	15	400
Merseyside	264	498	89
Metropolitan Police District	2,112	2,178	3
Norfolk	101	235	133
Northamptonshire	49	103	110
Northumbria	82	185	126
North Yorkshire	55	105	91
Nottinghamshire	110	116	5
South Yorkshire	117	272	132
Staffordshire	65	123	89
Suffolk	86	256	198
Surrey	86	97	13
Sussex	328	542	65
Thames Valley	174	331	90
Warwickshire	15	86	473
West Mercia	97	173	78
West Midlands	219	302	38
West Yorkshire	135	916	579
Wiltshire	54	81	50
Dyfed-Powys	100	111	11
Gwent	55	92	67
North Wales	96	137	43
South Wales	158	278	76
Total England and Wales	7,829	12,254	57

Murder Charges

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were charged with murder or attempted murder in each of the last five years; of those, how many were granted bail; and of those granted bail *(a)* how many were male and how many female, *(b)* how many were white and *(c)* how many were from ethnic minorities.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 19 November 1992]*: Information on the number of people charged is not collected centrally. Reliable information about the breakdown of remands into bail and custody according to offence is also not available centrally. The information that is collected does not include ethnic origin data.

The table shows the number of people prosecuted for the offences of murder and attempted murder from 1987 to 1991, provisional.

Number of persons prosecuted for offences of murder and attempted murder by sex

1987 to 1991[1]

England and Wales

Offence	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	[1]*1991*
Murder					
Male	458	479	451	421	528
Female	38	71	55	63	56
Attempted murder					
Male	147	208	214	258	250
Female	19	19	15	23	23

[1] Provisional.

Birmingham Six

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent reports he has had from the Director of Public Prosecutions into further forensic examination by West Midlands police of evidence used in the case of the Birmingham six.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

The West Midlands police are continuing the reinvestigation announced on 20 March 1991 into the bombings which occurred in Birmingham on 21 November 1974. Some of the original exhibits have been submitted for further scientific examination. The Director of Public Prosecutions is being kept informed of the progress of the reinvestigation; it is her policy not to make public information gathered during the course of current criminal investigations.

Mentally Disordered Offenders

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for the latest year available, how many persons were removed by the police under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 to a place of safety in England and Wales.

Mr. Yeo: During the year ending 31 March 1990—the latest information held centrally—1,032 persons were removed from a public place by the police to a place of safety under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983. Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

WALES

Local Government Reform

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to publish his White Paper on Welsh local government reform.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the proposed *(a)* timetable for and *(b)* boundaries of local government reorganisation in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my statement on 3 March 1992, at column 171.

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place the result of consultation on local government reform in Wales in the Library.

Mr. David Hunt: I have already placed copies of responses to my statement of 3 March 1992, together with advice submitted to the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government, in the Library of the House.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from Welsh local authorities, their respective associations and others in relation to his latest proposals for the boundaries of proposed unitary local authorities.

Mr. David Hunt: Copies of responses to my statement of 3 March 1992, together with advice submitted to the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government, are already in the Library of the House.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 17 November, *Official Report*, column *145*, if he will itemise in full the financial details of the changes in local government functions for 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: The adjustments to the 1993-94 provisional local government revenue settlement for Wales to reflect changes in local authority functions are as follows:

	£ million
School inspection responsibilities transferring to the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (Wales)	−0·9
Further and residual higher education responsibilities transferring to the Further Education Funding Council (Wales) and Higher Education Funding Council (Wales) respectively	−125·2
Transfer from Department of Social Security for care in the community	+35·9

Farmers (Diversification Grants)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been allocated by his Department in diversification grants to farmers in Wales in each of the last five years; and how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time jobs have been created as a direct result of such diversification grants.

Mr. David Hunt: The grant paid since the inception of the scheme is as follows:

	Grant paid *£ million*
1988-89	0·042
1989-90	0·315
1990-91	0·414
1991-92	0·442
1992-93	[1]0·380

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[1] Estimate.

It is estimated that the projects will create 182·5 new jobs. Information is not available on the breakdown between full-time and part-time jobs.

Leasehold Properties

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, for each Welsh district the total number of leasehold properties.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Estimates from the 1986 Welsh intercensal survey are shown in the table.

	Estimated number of owner-occupied leasehold properties
Alyn and Deeside	210
Colwyn	360
Delyn	120
Glyndwr	80
Rhuddlan	560
Wrexham Maelor	50
Carmarthen	140
Ceredigion	130
Dinefwr	170
Llanelli	1,200
Preseli Pembrokeshire	220
South Pembrokshire	330
Blaenau Gwent	2,400
Islwyn	3,220
Monmouth	1,440
Newport	7,140
Torfaen	4,130
Aberconwy	1,280
Arfon	120
Dwyfor	140
Meirionnydd	70
Ynys Mon	170
Cynon Valley	1,580
Merthyr Tydfil	1,730
Ogwr	7,660
Rhondda	1,160
Rhymney Valley	5,010
Taff-Ely	4,220
Brecknock	230
Montgomeryshire	20
Radnorshire	50
Cardiff	15,110
Vale of Glamorgan	7,240
Port Talbot	2,070
Lliw Valley	2,860
Neath	3,230
Swansea	11,080

NHS Trusts

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the present financial situation of each of the proposed health trusts and the expected situation at the end of the financial year; and what measures the new trusts intend to take to maintain their financial viability and service position.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Department does not, as a matter of routine, receive information about the financial position of individual district health authority-managed units at the level of detail requested. However, one of the key criteria for NHS trust status is financial soundness; and the financial position of applicants was therefore considered carefully prior to my right hon. Friend's recent decision to establish a further 13 NHS trusts in Wales with an operational date of 1 April 1993. In the meantime, the respective health authorities retain full responsibility for the proper financial management of the units concerned.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what system of communication he has in place with the recently announced health trusts to ensure that no problems arise in the transition out of health authority administration with regard to the level of patient treatment and financial viability.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Officials will continue to maintain close contact with the newly established NHS trusts which become formally operational on 1 April 1993. In the meantime, the respective health authorities retain responsibility for financial management and patient care services.

Hospitals

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the South Glamorgan health authority concerning the possible closure of *(a)* St. Mary's day hospital, Llandough, *(b)* the West 2 ward at Llandough hospital and *(c)* Powys ward at Sully hospital.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Business Development Centre

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 17 November, *Official Report,* column *144-45,* if he will ensure that the new business development centre will be self-financing and not require any public subsidy.

Mr. David Hunt: The business development centre will include, inter alia, accommodation for staff from the Welsh Development Agency and from the North East Wales training and enterprise council to provide a range of services to businesses in the area. Some services will be provided as part of Government support for business and training and changes will be levied for other services.

Teacher Training

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to publish the report of the All-Wales Forum on Teacher Training for the National Curriculum in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have today published the report of the forum entitled "Strategy for In-Service Teacher Training in Wales". I am grateful to the forum for its work and have accepted its advice in full. A copy of the report is being sent to all those involved in the in-service training of teachers in Wales and I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House. I will be taking a keen interest in the action taken on the report recommendations.

The forum has recommended working group arrangements to take forward its work on the exchange of ideas and co-ordination of proposals for in-service training. The work of the forum advisory group is therefore complete and it has been dissolved.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Regional Growth

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the average annual regional growth rates by standard region for the period 1979 to the present date.

Mr. Portillo: The information is not available in the form requested. Growth rates are normally calculated on the basis of estimates of gross domestic product at constant prices, but regional GDP figures are calculated only at current prices since there are no regional price deflators available.

The November 1991 edition of "Economic Trends" contained the latest estimates of regional GDP for the years 1980-90, and estimates for earlier years are available from the House of Commons Library.

Quotas

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the United Kingdom has subscribed the increase in its quota with the International Monetary Fund under its ninth general review of quotas.

Mr. Nelson: Yes. The ninth quota review recommended an increase in the United Kingdom quota from 6,194·0 million to 7,414·6 million special drawing rights, as part of a general increase in quotas to allow the IMF to continue its essential work in assisting countries with balance of payments problems, particularly in the developing world and, increasingly now, eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, to undertake economic adjustment to contribute both to their own growth and to the successful functioning of the international monetary system.

The quota increases under this review have been delayed for some time, but the United Kingdom was one of the first countries to vote in favour of them, in 1990. The subscription of an extra 1,220·6 million special drawing rights to the United Kingdom quota, in accordance with the International Monetary Fund (Increase in Subscription) Order 1990, has today been paid from the National Loans Fund. Subscribing a quota increase to the IMF is not public expenditure. The transactions result in a credit position with the IMF as part of our reserves.

Group Relief

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria the Inland Revenue applies when deciding whether to accept a late claim for group relief.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue has applied criteria set out in a reply given by the then Financial Secretary on 10 December 1985 at column *592.* These criteria covered both claims for group relief and elections for continuation treatment on a change in partnership. This has given rise to some uncertainty in practice. From today, a late claim for group relief will be accepted where it can be shown that:

—the Inland Revenue contributed materially to the failure to submit a timely claim, for example by misleading the claimant and failing to rectify the error before the statutory time limit expired; or

—for reasons beyond his or her control, for example due to a debilitating illness, a person vitally concerned in the making of a claim was not available at a crucial time; or

—for reasons beyond the claimant company's control or its agent's control, the need for the claim could not have been perceived before the time limit expired.

In each case, a claim will only be accepted where it can be shown that, although late, it was made as soon as reasonably possible in all the circumstances. A late claim will not be accepted where the delay is attributable to:

—oversight or negligence on the part of a claimant company or its agent; or

—failure, without good reason, to compute the necessary figure; or

—the desire to avoid commitment pending clarification of the effects of making a claim.

A claimant company wishing to have a late claim considered under these guidelines should apply to the inspector of taxes dealing with its affairs as soon as reasonably possible in the circumstances.

Late Elections

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the circumstances in which the Board of Inland Revenue will be prepared to consider accepting late elections under the provisions of section 113(2) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

Mr. Dorrell: As explained in the reply given by the then Financial Secretary on 10 December 1985, at column *592*, in cases where no statutory discretion is given to the Board of Inland Revenue to extend a time limit for a claim or election, it must be assumed that Parliament's intention is that the limit should be applied strictly. The number of cases in which it would be appropriate to exercise discretion under the board's powers of care and management, provided in the Taxes Management Act 1970, is correspondingly limited.

Every such case has to be considered on its own merits, and in the light of the factors relevant to the circumstances in which the claim was made late. However, there would be a presumption in favour of admitting an election under section 113(2) of the 1988 Act which is made as soon as is reasonably possible in all the circumstances, but after the statutory time limit has expired, if the reason for the election being late was one of the following:-

> some relevant and uncorrected error on the part of the Inland Revenue has had the effect of misleading the partners or their agent about whether the requirements of the legislation had been met; or
>
> at a crucial time, one of the required signatories was not available for unforeseeable reasons (eg because of serious illness); or the agent of a signatory was similarly not available and there was no one else who could reasonably be expected to stand in the agent's shoes: or
>
> there was some other difficulty about obtaining all the required signatures to the election within the time limit, and the Inland Revenue had, before the time limit expired, both been clearly notified that each of the signatories had individually decided to make an election; and been given the reasons why the election could not be made within the time limit.

The board will not admit elections if they were made after the expiry of the time limit because of oversight or negligence on the part of a partner or his or her agent; or because one of the parties to the election temporarily refused to sign it; or because there was a deliberate decision to delay the making of the election because its effect on the taxation liabilities of the relevant parties was not clear by the time the time limit expired.

European Community

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the sums paid by the United Kingdom to the EC, the rebate and the net cost to the United Kingdom for each year since 1973.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* Details of the United Kingdom's gross contribution, the refunds and abatement and of the net contribution after public sector receipts on the European Community Budget, for the years 1973 to 1989 were contained in a written answer given by the Financial Secretary to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on 20 March 1991, at columns *110-12*. Details for 1990 and 1991 were published in June 1992 in the "Statement on the 1992 Community Budget", Cm. 1948. The table reproduces the information.

£ million

Year	*Gross contribution before abatement or refunds and public sector receipts*	*Negotiated refunds*	*Abatement*	*Net contribution after abatement refunds and public sector receipts*
1973	181	—	—	102
1974	179	—	—	29
1975	342	—	—	−56
1976	463	—	—	167
1977	737	—	—	369
1978	1,348	—	—	822
1979	1,606	—	—	947
1980	1,767	98	—	706
1981	2,174	693	—	397
1982	2,863	1,019	—	606
1983	2,976	807	—	647
1984	3,204	528	—	656
1985	3,940	61	166	1,808
1986	4,493	—	1,701	572
1987	5,202	—	1,153	1,721
1988	5,138	—	1,594	1,362
1989	5,585	—	1,154	2,315
1990	6,355	—	1,697	2,475
1991	5,806	—	2,497	545

Unemployment Benefits

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the public expenditure total has been spent on benefits related to unemployment for each financial year from 1979-80; and what is the latest estimate for 1992-93 and the expenditure forecast for 1993-94.

Mr. Portillo *[pursuant to his reply, 16 November 1992, c. 31-32]:* The figure for social security benefits to the unemployed for 1984-85 should have been £6,320 million, and not £5,320 million as previously stated.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fish Statistics

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* salmon and *(b)* grilse were removed from the River Bush by his Department in each year since his Department first leased the fishery; what the sale of these fish realised in each year; and what effect their removal had on the number of smelts descending the river in subsequent years.

Mr. Hanley: Separate figures for the number of salmon and grilse removed from the River Bush are not available. The available information is as follows:

Number and value of salmon and grilse removed from River Bush

Year	*Number of fish removed from river*		*Number sold commercially*	*Value*
	Wild origin	*Hatchery origin*		*£*
1972	Not available		1,917	6,536
1973	Not available		492	1,830
1974	Not available		226	685
1975	Not available		403	1,711
1976	Not available		377	2,345
1977	Not available		2,321	4,636
1978	Not available		219	1,889
1979	Not available		300	3,393
1980	Not available		839	5,178
1981	Not available		311	2,536
1982	Not available		32	246
1983	Not available		—	—
1984	195	20	3	33
1985	557	73	—	—
1986	101	778	—	—
1987	81	674	—	—
1988	10	990	—	—
1989	102	309	—	—
1990	93	413	—	—
1991	329	1,060	—	—
1992	212	701	[1] 53	188

[1] Grilse of hatchery origin which, after scientific examination, were found to be of marketable quality.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many salmon and grilse have been taken by commercial nets of each type, in Northern Ireland waters in each of the last five years and the current year to date; how many such fish taken by commercial fishermen, and sea netted fish, were landed in *(a)* Northern Ireland and *(b)* the Irish Republic; and of all fish taken, how many were taken from the Foyle system.

Mr. Hanley: The following tables give the available information. No figures are available for landings in the Republic of Ireland, except that for statistical purposes, half of what is taken in the Foyle Fisheries Commission area is assumed to have been landed in Northern Ireland and half in the Republic of Ireland.

Numbers of salmon and grilse landed by commercial fishermen in the Foyle Fisheries Commission area (both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland)

Type of engine	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	[1] *1992*
Drift Nets	12,587	17,321	55,108	33,850	20,379	34,034
Draft Nets	5,434	16,176	31,090	10,199	5,437	8,223
Fixed Engines	47	79	330	371	—	—
Londonderry Fishery	415	763	—	—	—	—
Total	18,483	34,339	86,528	44,420	25,816	42,257

[1] To date.

Total number of salmon and grilse landed by commercial fishermen in the Fisheries Conservancy Board area

Type of engine	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	[1] *1992*
Boxes and Fixed Estuary and Tidal Draft Nets	4,653	6,828	5,167	5,265	2,091	413
Tidal Draft Nets	69	114	74	12	2	32
Tidal Drift Nets	248	675	812	252	838	1,524
Tidal Bag Nets	5,924	6,140	12,197	4,685	4,582	5,957
Total	10,894	13,757	18,250	10,214	7,513	7,926

[1] To date.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland over what period of year is there are available to him records of the numbers of salmon, grilse and sea trout caught in Northern Ireland waters; and where such records are available for inspection or purchase.

Mr. Hanley: In the Foyle Fisheries Commission area, records are available since 1960. The information may be inspected in the Commission's offices at 8 Victoria road, Londonderry BT47 2AB.

In the Fisheries Conservancy Board area records exist from 1968 and may be inspected at the offices of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries Division, Hut 5, Castle Grounds, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3PW.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what investigations he has carried out to determine the number and percentage of salmon and grilse entering each of the *(a)* Foyle river system, *(b)* the Bush system and *(c)* other rivers in Northern Ireland which support runs of such fish are (i) one sea winter fish, (ii) two sea winter fish and (iii) three or more sea winter fish.

Mr. Hanley: The only investigations of this type are carried out on the River Bush, and the fish are divided into two classes—grilse which are one sea winter fish; and salmon which are two or more sea winter fish. Examination of samples of fish from the River Bush over the last 10 years indicates the following proportions of salmon to grilse:

Smolt year Class	*Per cent. returning to river as:* Grilse	Salmon
1980	90	10
1981	91	9
1982	90	10
1983	[1]	[1]
1984	81	19
1985	80	20
1986	83	17
1987	96	4
1988	82	18
1989	87	13

[1] Incomplete due to electric barrier breakdown.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Department of Agriculture's original lease for the angling on the River Bush began; when it was renewed; when the lease ends; and if he will publish a list of the papers and reports published, and where they may be puchased or examined, of the work on this fishery carried out by the Department.

Mr. Hanley: The lease began on 1 March 1972, for a period of 30 years and is therefore not due for renewal until 1 March 2003.

A list of publications is as follows. These are available for examination at the DANI Fisheries research laboratory, 38 Castleroe road, Coleraine.

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Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what evidence he has that *(a)* increasing numbers, *(b)* an increasing percentage of salmon and grilse are entering the (i) Foyle system, (ii) the Bush system and (iii) other rivers in Northern Ireland which support runs of these fish.

Mr. Hanley: Records of the numbers of wild salmon entering rivers are available only for the Mourne system, River Faughan and River Bush and are as follows. It is not possible to provide figures indicating the percentage of the total run.

Year	*Mourne system (Sion Mills)*	*River Faughan (Campsie)*	*River Bush*
1973	n/a	n/a	2,614
1974	n/a	n/a	3,438
1975	n/a	n/a	3,366
1976	2,259	2,040	3,124
1977	2,419	2,625	1,775
1978	5,057	2,587	1,621
1979	2,226	3,262	1,820
1980	3,146	3,288	2,863
1981	2,399	3,772	1,539
1982	4,755	2,909	1,571
1983	1,271	2,410	1,030
1984	1,877	2,116	[1]—
1985	8,149	9,077	2,443
1986	6,295	4,915	2,930
1987	2,322	[1]—	2,530
1988	7,171	3,220	2,832
1989	8,526	8,919	1,029
1990	11,899	6,883	1,850
1991	7,250	4,843	2,358

[1] Incomplete due to electric barrier breakdown.

Benefits

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show for the last 12 months for which figures are available, the number of claims for benefit which were *(a)* sent to a social fund inspector for review, *(b)* upheld at the review stage and *(c)* sent back for review; and if he will also show how many decisions were overturned.

Mr. Hanley: The figures for the period 1 October 1991 to 30 September 1992, which have been provided by the Office of the Social Fund Commissioner, are as follows:

	Number
(a) applications for review by inspectors	1,693
(b) numbers upheld	1,013
(c) numbers referred back to social fund officers	611
(d) decisions substituted by inspectors	424

The figures at (b), (c) and (d) include a number of cases in which the application for review were received before 1 October 1991.

Expenditure

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he now expects to make a detailed statement of the changes in Government expenditure in Northern Ireland which will result from the autumn statement.

Mr. Mates: A statement will be made soon as the distribution of resources among services has been determined. This should be no later than the week beginning 7 December.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Bournemouth Central Station

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what grant aid is to be available to restore Bournemouth central station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government's grant schemes for historic buildings are administered by English Heritage. It is able to grant aid works to outstanding historic buildings (which for all practical purposes are those listed as grade I or grade II*) and to other buildings in conservation areas. As Bournemouth central station is listed grade II, and is not a conservation area, it is not eligible for assistance. English Heritage has reviewed the listing of the station but has concluded that upgrading would not be justified.

National Lottery

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will state the qualifications of the GAH Group to carry out the consultant's report on a national lottery; and if he will describe the process by which it was selected from the tenders received.

Mr. Brooke: The GAH group was the best qualified in terms of experience, expertise and cost. Sealed tenders were received on 3 August 1992. Each consultancy made a presentation to a tender board, which scrutinised the bids and made the final decision.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 16 November, *Official Report*, column *43*, how many firms were invited to tender for the contract of advising him on the impact of a national lottery on the football pools industry and charitable donations.

Mr. Brooke: Five firms were invited to tender.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 16 November, *Official Report*, column *43*, what policy considerations he used on which to base his choice of firms to be invited to tender for the contract of advising him on the impact of a national lottery on the football pools industry and charitable donations.

Mr. Brooke: The five firms invited to tender were chosen for their expertise and experience. In addition, the Department ensured that none of them was already advising any other client on the national lottery.

EMPLOYMENT

Transfer and Redundancy Rights

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals she has to apply the provisions of clause 26 of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill to *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* compulsory competitive tendering, *(c)* existing contracts and *(d)* casual contracts.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) on 19 November 1992 at columns *338–39*.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will set out in a table the employment change for Great Britain, and by region, between June 1979 to June 1991 with, in separate columns, the *(a)* percentage change in employees, *(b)* percentage change in employees and the self-employed together and *(c)* total change.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is as follows:

Changes in employment in standard regions June 1979 to June 1992

Per cent.

	Employees in employment	*Employees and self-employed*	*Civilian workforce in employment*
South East[1]	−5	−1	0
East Anglia	+11	+17	+18
South West	+7	+15	+16
West Midlands	−13	−8	−7
East Midlands	−1	+4	+5
Yorkshire and Humberside	−8	−3	−1
North West	−13	−9	−8
North	−14	−10	−8
Wales	−8	−3	−1
Scotland	−6	−2	0
Great Britain	−6	−1	0

[1] Including Greater London which became a separately identifiable standard region in September 1981. A comparison cannot therefore be made between 1979 and the current date.

Job Clubs

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what access to job vacancies exists for people attending job clubs in the Liverpool travel-to-work area.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mrs. Jane Kennedy, dated 23 November 1992.

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about what access to job vacancies exists for people attending Jobclubs in the Liverpool travel to work area. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Until recently Jobclubs in the Liverpool travel to work area received copies of vacancies from Jobcentres in their locality as well as providing access to job vacancy advertisements in local newspapers. Jobclub members are also encouraged to make speculative approaches to employers and most people find jobs this way. The circulation of vacancies from the Jobcentres ceased at the beginning of November because very few Jobclub members were finding work by this method.

However, following representations from local people it has been agreed that the service will be reinstated where a Jobclub specifically requests it.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administrative Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

DEFENCE

Operation Granby

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when his Department's fraud squad completed its investigations concerning the chartering of merchant vessels in support of Operation Granby; what conclusions were reached; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Papers were passed to the Crown prosecution service on 6 November 1992. Investigations continue into certain aspects however and further comment would not be appropriate at this time.

Vanguard

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what problems with welds related to the nuclear reactor were reported in the two weeks before the submarine Vanguard left VSEL Barrow on 23 October for contractor's sea trials; what action was taken by the contractor and his Department; and on what date the members of the Nuclear Powered Warship Safety Committee were informed of the situation.

Mr. Aitken: It is not our practice to comment on the detailed material condition of individual nuclear submarines. I can confirm, however, that as part of normal safety procedures, Vanguard underwent a rigorous safety assessment and a thorough quality assurance audit prior to being cleared for departure on sea trials. The Government place the highest priority on nuclear safety and no submarine would be permitted to go to sea unless we were satisfied that it was safe to do so.

Iraqi Defence Industry

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer on the Iraqi defence industry to the hon. Member for South Shields on 18 November, *Official Report*, column *251*, if he will make a statement about the conclusions of his Department's study into the Iraqi defence industry and its military procurement activity; when this study was concluded; and whether he intends to publish it.

Mr. Aitken: Iraq's defence industry and military procurement activity are subjects of continuing study in my Department. The large scale of Iraq's military production capability and the extensive nature of its international procurement activity have been revealed in the studies we have undertaken. Security considerations preclude the publication of such studies.

Eaglescliffe Royal Naval Stores Depot

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the names and grades of all officials who accompanied the Minister of State for the Armed Forces at his meeting with trade union representatives at RNSD Eaglescliffe on 18 November.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Apart from my private secretary and representatives of local management at the depot, three departmental officials were present during my meeting with trade union representatives at the Royal Naval stores depot Eaglescliffe on 18 November: Mr. G. E. Miller (grade 4), principal director of supplies and transport (stores and victualling), Mr. J. Read (grade 5), director Naval support command implementation and Mr. B. P. Neale (grade 6), head of management strategy, secretariat (fleet support).

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date, by whom, and in what form the request was made by trade union representatives at RNSD Eaglescliffe that hon. and right hon. Members and representatives of local councils should not be present in the depot during the visit on 18 November by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Defence Contracts (Payment)

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he is taking to expedite the settlement and payment of defence contracts, so as to enable contractors to make prompt payment to their subcontractors; and what is his latest estimate of the amounts outstanding on unsettled accounts for work done.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has a long-standing policy of paying its bills promptly. We normally settle our contract payments within 30 days of receiving invoices, and we will soon be introducing a two-week billing cycle with payment by the bankers automated clearing service.

Payment arrangements and details of outstanding amounts between contractors and their subcontractors are a matter for the companies concerned. However, since my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statement of 10 March, *Official Report*, column 753, we have included a clause in all new defence contracts requiring prime contractors to pay their subcontractors within a specified period from receipt of a valid invoice.

On Monday 26 October my Department's central bill-paying organisation held valid bills for some £210 million. We expect these to be paid by 2 November.

HEALTH

NHS Reform

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her latest estimate of the cost to date of implementing the NHS reforms.

Dr. Mawhinney: Details of the sums provided to date are given in the table. Figures for the practice fund management allowance in 1991-92 and 1992-93 correct those published in the departmental report earlier this year (Cm. 1913).

NHS review expenditure

£ million

	1989-90	*1990-91*	[1] *1991-92*	[1] *1992-93*
HCHS Revenue				
100 Consultants initiative	3	27	37	36
Resource management initiative, clinical audit and IT	21	65	87	103
Enhancement of personnel, finance and other key staff functions and training	18	67	87	93
NHS Trusts—mainly consultation and start up costs	—	13	22	34
Family Health Service Authorities' Administration	—	29	36	36
Other—mainly quality initiatives, pilot projects and capital charges	17	30	34	37
Total Revenue	—	229	303	339
HCHS capital				
Resource management initiative, medical audit and IT	13	55	65	28
Quality initiative	—	5	5	5
Total Capital	13	—	70	33
FHS				
Practice funds management allowance	—	6	14	27
Total FHS	—	6	14	27
CFS/DH Admin				
DH staff and consultancy costs related to the Review	7	—	—	—
Prescription Pricing Authority	—	9	4	4
Post Royal Assent Publicity	—	3	—	—
Total CFS/DH Admin/FHS Admin	7	12	4	4
Total NHS Review	79	306	391	403

[1] **Figures for 1991-92 are provisional and figures for 1992-93 are estimates.**

***Note:* Totals may not sum due to rounding.**

Staff Recruitment

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made of the utility of personality questionnaires in the recruitment of senior NHS staff.

Dr. Mawhinney: Selection criteria for the recruitment of senior staff in the national health service are a matter for each individual NHS employer.

Expenditure

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what monitoring is carried out by her Department of overspending in the current year by health service authorities.

Mr. Sackville: Internal monitoring information is collected to assist in the management of the national health service. This includes information on current spending against plans and centrally laid down objectives. Information collected in respect of district health authorities is generally aggregated to a regional level.

Prescription Budgets

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the final out-turn figures for indicative prescription budgets in 1991-92 in each family health service authority area and NHS region; if she will also express those figures as a percentage of the projected budget; what are the indicative budgets for 1992-93 in each FHSA area and NHS region; and if she will express those figures as percentages of *(a)* the projected budget and *(b)* the out-turn budgets for 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Ultra-violet Radiation

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide a breakdown of her Department's expenditure by medium on advice on the dangers of over-exposure to UV radiation for the current financial year.

Mr. Sackville: Expenditure by the Health Education Authority, which is funded by the Department, on the dangers of over-exposure to existing levels of UV radiation for the current financial year was as follows:

	£
Leaflets and promotional material	32,500
Posters, factcards and feature articles	6,900
Public Information Booklet	4,100
General support costs estimates at 25 per cent.	10,875
(This includes staff time, responding to enquiries etc)	
TOTAL	54,375

In addition, the Department issued an information note to health professionals in respect of which no separate costing is available.

Abortion

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information she has concerning the extent of the use in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* overseas in products used in the United Kingdom, of cell-lines from the tissue of aborted babies in the production of (i) polio vaccine, (ii) rubella vaccine, (iii) other vaccines and (iv) other medical and pharmaceutical products;

(2) what guidance is issued by her Department concerning the use of cell lines from the tissue of aborted babies in the production of vaccines and other medical products;

(3) if she will give a breakdown by country of manufacture of those medical, pharmaceutical and other products which are currently approved for use in the United Kingdom and which have been produced using cell lines from the tissue of aborted babies.

Dr. Mawhinney: Human cell lines are used in the manufacture of polio, rubella and hepatitis A vaccines. The cell line MRC5 developed by the Medical Research Council was isolated in the early 1970s from the lungs of a single foetus. Our understanding is that all current needs, and those for the foreseeable future, will be met from this one isolation.

The vaccines may be manufactured in the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, France or the United States of America. We are not aware of other licensed products using human cell lines.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and which NHS hospitals in England providing day-care abortion services are offering early medical abortion services in the first nine weeks of pregnancy with mifepristone and prostaglandin.

Mr. Sackville: Information in the form requested is not collected centrally. Abortion notifications between July, when the drug was licensed, and December 1991, the latest period for which figures are available, show that the mifepristone and prostaglandin method was used in 19 national health service hospitals in England and Wales. Identifying information derived from the notification form, including the names of the hospitals concerned, may not be generally disclosed, except in the circumstances specified in regulation 5 of the Abortion Regulations 1991.

Police Vetting

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been issued during the past 12 months to local authorities' social service departments who because of staff shortages may need to employ persons not yet cleared by the established police vetting procedure.

Mr. Yeo: None.

Incontinence

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration was given to the inclusion of treatment of incontinence in the establishment of health targets in "The Health of the Nation" document.

Dr. Mawhinney: In reaching the decision, after careful consideration, to select five key areas at this time, it was recognised that there were other strong candidates for key area status. However, in the Government's view they required further development and research before national targets could be set—rehabilitation services for people with a physical disability, embracing continence services, was an example. The strategy will be kept under review and further key areas may be added in due course.

Adoption

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many adopted people have applied for help in tracing their birth parents since 1976.

Mr. Yeo: Since November 1976, 47,668 adopted persons have applied to the Registrar General under the provisions of section 51 of the Adoption Act 1976 for access to their original birth records. Since May 1991 the Adoption Contact register has been available for adopted persons seeking to trace their natural relatives, by entry on the register. On 17 November 1992 a total of 1,804 adopted persons have had their names entered.

Talking Books

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's policy on support for the talking book services for the blind.

Mr. Yeo: Talking book services for visually impaired people are largely provided by voluntary organisations, although some social services departments may provide this service or assist a person to obtain it. Audio-cassettes are now available in many local authority libraries.

Older People

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what involvement her Department will take during the 1993 European year of older people and solidarity between generations; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The Department, in co-operation with the Department of Social Security has overall co-ordinating responsibility for the European Year in the United Kingdom and we are now well advanced with our plans. Following consultation with a wide range of national voluntary and professional bodies, statutory authorities and other relevant Government Departments, a group has been set up to advise on the conduct, promotion and evaluation of the programme. The group involves representatives of organisations reflecting the interests of older people, including the National Pensioners' Convention, and will take direct account wherever possible of the views and preferences of older people themselves. The programme in the United Kingdom will focus on four major themes:

Combatting 'ageism' and promoting positive images of ageing;
Volunteering;
Health promotion and active leisure, including remaining mentally active;
Social integration, including problems of isolation and loneliness, information needs, housing, transport and community care issues.

Four task groups have also been set up to examine each of these themes and put forward specific proposals, and to implement them once agreed, with particular reference to intergenerational and multicultural aspects.

There will be two elements to the year in the United Kingdom: a core programme involving high profile national events focusing on the four themes, including cultural and sporting events, exhibitions and conferences; and a general programme, consisting of activities being organised by individual organisations, but not co-ordinated through the official structure.

The Department is providing funds for the cost of a secretariat to co-ordinate the core programme and to disseminate news and information, and has already committed £81,000 in the current year.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be launching the European Year in the United Kingdom at the age resource awards, which will be presented in

London on 17 December by HRH The Prince of Wales, one of a wide range of special events marking the United Kingdom's presidency of the European Council. This project highlights the creative potential and social participation of older people.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what monitoring the Government do of the voluntary agreements in tobacco advertising.

Dr. Mawhinney: The voluntary agreement is monitored by the Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising and Sponsorship. The terms of reference of the committee are set out in appendix 7 of the voluntary agreement. This and its annual reports are in the Library.

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the breaches of United Kingdom voluntary agreements on tobacco advertising reported in the fifth annual report of the Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising and Sponsorship were reported by Dr. Mindell, either personally or on behalf of organisations.

Dr. Mawhinney: Ninety per cent. (28 out of 31 breaches), equally divided between breaches for which tobacco manufacturers were responsible and breaches by shopkeepers and other third parties ("inadvertent breaches").

Fluoridation

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those health authorities in England that have requested water undertakers to increase the fluoride content of water supplies, indicating (i) those that have had their request met, (ii) those whose applications are pending and (iii) those that have been refused.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

Cot Deaths

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the survey by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys of the annual rates of cot deaths for 1990 and 1991.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest annual figures published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys show that the rate of sudden infant death (or cot death) in England and Wales fell from 1·93 per 1,000 live births in 1989 to 1·70 in 1990, and again to 1·44 in 1991.

Towards the end of last year, the Government ran a successful media campaign to reduce the risk of cot death. Called the "Back to Sleep" campaign, it highlighted new evidence that the risk of cot death can be reduced if babies are laid to sleep on their back or sides, rather than on their stomachs.

It is a measure of the success of the Government's campaign that the number of cot deaths which occurred in the month of December 1991 was about half the number which occurred in the previous December.

A nationwide confidential enquiry into stillbirths and deaths in infancy has been established. It will help us find out more about why some babies die and make us better able to prevent this happening in the future.

Disabled Children

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has had from the disabilities study unit in regard to the report entitled "Relationships of Children with their Disabled Brothers and Sisters", a copy of which has been sent to her; what reply she is sending; what action she proposes to take; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: We have received the report together with a request that the Department assists with the costs of its dissemination. We are considering this request.

GPs (Job Evaluation)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated cost of introducing job evaluation schemes for general practitioners in Birmingham and the west midlands.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are not aware of any plans to introduce such schemes.

Ondine's Syndrome

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many research and specialist establishments exist within the United Kingdom for research and development into the treatment and cure of Ondine's syndrome;

(2) how many persons presently suffering from Ondine's syndrome are presently living within the United Kingdom.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available for England. Responsibility for Ondine's syndrome in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is respectively a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is given to health authorities in cases where a patient, requiring treatment for Ondine's syndrome, lives within their area.

Mr. Sackville: As with other disorders, provision of health care for those suffering from Ondine's syndrome, is made by district health authorities who are responsible for assessing the health needs of their resident populations and purchasing services to meet those needs.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what level of expenditure was devoted to research into Ondine's syndrome for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: I am not aware of any expenditure being devoted to research specifically into Ondine's syndrome. The main agency through which the Government support medical research in the United Kingdom is the Medical Research Council (MRC), which receives its grant-in-aid from the Office of Public Service and Science. The MRC is always willing to consider scientifically sound proposals for research in competition with other applications.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of Ondine's syndrome have been detected annually in the years 1982 to 1992 inclusive.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally.

Bone Marrow Donors

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action is being taken to identify and encourage bone marrow donors.

Mr. Sackville: Public awareness of bone marrow transplantation as a treatment for leukaemia has increased in recent years. This had led to an increase in the number of people volunteering to become donors, for those situations where a patient does not have a matched sibling donor.

There are two bone marrow donor registers in the United Kingdom. The Anthony Nolan trust is a charity and relies on publicity for its success. The British Bone Marrow and Platelet Donor Panel (BBMPDP) recruits from blood donors directly through the blood transfusion service and does not advertise its work other than at regional transfusion centres. The two United Kingdom registers are working closely to ensure greater co-ordination of effort. This should be of benefit to patients. The Government contribute to the BBMPDP's running costs.

Government support is not limited to the United Kingdom. One of the measures included in the 1990-94 action plan under the "Europe Against Cancer" initiative is a feasibility study on co-operation between European bone marrow donor banks.

NHS Wages Bill

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the cost of increment drift for the NHS wages bill for 1990-91 and 1991-92; and the projected figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

NHS Review

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *850*, if she will list *(a)* the terms of reference of the current review of her Department's requirements for information from the NHS, *(b)* the role of the management consultants used, *(c)* the timescale for completion of the review and *(d)* the date for reporting the results of the review to Parliament.

Mr. Sackville: The purpose of the review is to ensure that the burden on the national health service of completing central returns is fully justified by the uses to which the information is put centrally. Management consultants were employed to identify with the NHS those returns representing a significant burden beyond what is required for local operational purposes. The results of the review should be announced early next year.

Parkinson's Disease

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce free prescriptions for the sufferers of Parkinson's disease.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Hospital Advertising

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy that patients and relatives may be shielded from televisions and video advertising displays located in accident and emergency and out-patient departments if that is their wish; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Responsibility for managing advertising in hospitals is for local managers who will have regard to the interests of patients and visitors when making arrangements.

Royal College of Nursing Conference

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assurances she gave on the independence of pay review bodies at the Royal College of Nursing annual conference in 1991; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I did not attend the Royal College of Nursing annual conference in 1991.

Creuzfeldt Jakob Disease

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of how Creuzfeldt Jakob disease may be acquired, other than through accidental injection; and what information she has on the nature of the disease-causing agent.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 29 June at column *441*.

Information on the incidence of Creuzfeldt Jakob disease in the United Kingdom is set out in annual Creuzfeldt Jakob disease surveillance unit report by Dr. Will, a copy of which is in the Library.

Extensive epidemiological information on Creuzfeldt Jakob disease cases collected by the unit does not reveal an association between the disease and particular activities. Neither is there any indication that the pattern or incidence of Creuzfeldt Jakob disease has changed over the last two decades.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been produced to assist patients who may be contaminated with Creuzfeldt Jakob disease in the event that they *(a)* have children, *(b)* intend to donate blood or other organs and *(c)* wish to undertake tattoos.

Mr. Yeo: The Creuzfeldt Jakob disease surveillance unit has produced patient information on Creuzfeldt Jakob disease which is provided on a doctor-to-patient basis—a copy is in the Library. This makes no specific reference to the children of Creuzfeldt Jakob disease patients as there is no evidence to suggest Creuzfeldt Jakob disease can be passed between family members either through normal contact or in pregnancy. Neither does it refer to tattoos as there is no evidence of peripheral inoculation transmitting the infection.

For guidance in respect of potential blood and organ donors I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave him on 29 June at column *443*.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been undertaken to quantify the proportion of persons, showing no symptoms of disease, who may be carrying the infectious agent causing Creuzfeldt Jakob disease.

Mr. Yeo: As yet there is no test to identify asymptomatic infection in humans. It is not therefore possible to identify those who may be carrying the Creuzfeldt Jakob disease agent.

Hospices

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the Government's policy on the development of hospices; and what is the level of financial support earmarked for this purpose for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The Government greatly appreciate the contribution of the voluntary hospice movement and of national health service units, to the provision of specialised care and support for terminally ill people and their families. Any individual or group considering developing a hospice or hospice-type services should discuss their ideas with the local health authority to ensure that services match local needs.

Since 1990-91, the Government have allocated funds annually to regional health authorities in England specifically to enable them to increase the support they give to voluntary hospices. The sums allocated have been:

	£ million
1990-91	8
1991-92	17
1992-93	32

Renal Patients

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will introduce into the patients charter a specified time limit within which renal patients will be guaranteed the disconnect system.

Mr. Sackville: Under the patients charter patients are guaranteed admission for treatment within a maximum of two years from the time they are placed on the waiting list. However, patients suffering from end-stage renal failure are not placed on waiting lists. As emergencies they are treated immediately by means of dialysis or kidney transplant.

NHS Pay Policy

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the NHS executive statement and guidelines on the 1·5 per cent. pay policy in the NHS; and if she will list those who were sent this advice.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have written to the chairmen of all health service employing bodies setting out the arrangements for implementing the policy of restricting public sector pay settlements to a maximum of 1·5 per cent. in the coming year. The chief executive of the NHS Management Executive also wrote to general managers and chief executives setting out the key figures for public expenditure on health and priorities for use of those resources.

Copies of both letters have been placed in the Library.

Clinical Grading

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current number of clinical grading cases remaining to be heard under section 32 of the Whitley Council agreement at *(a)* regional health authority level and when they are expected to be concluded and *(b)* at national level and when they are expected to be concluded; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* At 30 September 1992 there were 19,908 appeals outstanding at regional health authority level and 2,138 at national level. Initiatives are being taken to bring the process to the earliest possible conclusion. Due to the introduction of new appeals procedures the number of national appeals heard in the six months up to 31 October 1992 was almost twice the number heard in the 18 months prior to that date.

Disease Statistics

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current incidence of *(a)* Lyme's disease, *(b)* leptospirosis, *(c)* trichanella spiralis, *(d)* Q fever and *(e)* toxoplasmosis.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* Laboratory reports to the Public Health Laboratory Service Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre for England and Wales for these infections are as follows. It should be noted that the data are provisional and do not differentiate between indigenous and imported cases.

Disease	*Laboratory reports 1991*
(a) lyme disease	39
(b) leptospirosis	30
(c) trichinosis	0
(d) Q fever	74
(e) toxoplasmosis[1]	635

[1] A British Paediatric Surveillance Unit survey on congenital toxoplasmosis—the serious form of this condition—showed 14 symptomatic babies (0-1 year) in England and Wales for a 12 month period in 1989-90.

NHS Capital Schemes

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what capital projects costing £1 million or more are currently scheduled by each regional health authority; what is the anticipated date of completion for each project; what was the original projected completion date for each project; and how many projects and at what total value, have been removed from the 1992-93 capital programme in each regional health authority.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* The latest information available on capital schemes costing over £1 million under construction in each regional health authority area is shown in the table. Management of the capital programme is a matter for individual regional health authorities, and information on schemes in planning or removed from the programme is not held centrally. In total, some 400 schemes each costing more than £1 million are at various stages of planning, design and construction throughout the NHS in England.

Schemes £1 million and over which are under construction

Authority and Scheme	*Contract target completion date*	*Latest estimated completion date*
Northern RHA		
Furness General Scheme 3 Phase 1 (Mental Illness)	16 January 1993	3 February 1993
Royal Victoria Infirmary Ante-Natal Clinic	25 September 1993	25 September 1993
RVI-Unification of Obstetrics and Gynaecology	31 March 1993	31 March 1993
Sunderland General Scheme 2 Phase 2 (ward block)	28 July 1993	4 August 1993
W. Cumberland GH rationalisation maternity/geriatric	15 May 1994	15 May 1994
Wansbeck General Hospital Scheme 1 Phase 1 (Nucleus)	29 May 1992	11 December 1992
Yorkshire RHA		
Chapel Allerton (Newton Green Wing additions)	24 December 1993	24 December 1993
Harrogate DGH Acute Geriatric Improvements	16 January 1995	16 January 1995
Scunthorpe DGH Phase 4A(3) Path. 2 and Hydro	13 February 1994	13 February 1994
St. James Redevelopment Phase 4 (Nucleus)	9 May 1994	9 May 1994
St. Lukes Development Phase 1A (Nucleus)	25 February 1993	25 February 1993
Trent RHA		
Bassetlaw DGH Phase 2A	12 March 1993	12 March 1993
Clay Cross Community Hospital	28 February 1994	28 February 1994
Derby City Hospital Mental Illness Unit	16 January 1994	28 June 1993
Glenfield DGH Phase 3 Cardiothoric Dept.	27 August 1993	27 August 1993
Kings Mill DGH OPD & GU Clinic	4 October 1992	30 October 1992
Leicester Health Authority Cook/Chill	0 May 1992	30 October 1992
Lincoln County Phase 2	2 October 1992	30 November 1992
Mansfield Community 2 new wards	26 March 1993	26 March 1993
Notts City Renal/Radiotherapy	30 November 1992	8 May 1993
Rotherham DGH Phase 3B Geriatric Unit	24 June 1994	24 June 1994
East Anglia RHA		
Ipswich HRW—pathology extension PH1	30 November 1992	1 December 1992
Risbridge facilities for mentally handicapped	4 March 1993	4 March 1993
UEA School of Physio + O/T	6 November 1993	6 November 1993
Waveney Hospital—ESMI Unit	18 December 1992	18 December 1992
North West Thames RHA		
Central Middlesex Acute Secure Unit/Mother and Baby Unit	28 May 1993	28 May 1993
Charing Cross Hospital Linear Accident and new building	26 October 1992	26 October 1992
Vincent Square Health Care Centre (W and C)	17 February 1993	17 February 1993
Westminster and Chelsea Hospital	9 June 1992	30 November 1992
North East Thames RHA		
Chase Farm Regional Secure Unit	12 October 1992	2 November 1992
Daleham Gardens Intensive Rehabilitation Unit/Health Clinic	7 February 1993	7 February 1993
Goodmayes DGH	10 November 1992	10 November 1992
South East Thames RHA		
Guys Phase 3 Stage Superstructure	16 May 1993	19 December 1993
Kings College Hospital—Theatres	27 August 1993	17 September 1993
Knights Hill—ESMI Unit	2 November 1992	9 November 1992
Mid Kent Radiotherapy	3 October 1992	21 December 1992
RSCH Tower Block Internal/External Refurbishment	18 March 1993	18 March 1993
St. Martin's Hospital Phase 1—MH1	21 May 1993	21 May 1993
St. Martin's Hospital Phase 2 Office Kitchen Block	22 January 1993	22 January 1993
St. Thomas' Hospital—A and E Upgrade/Extension	24 January 1994	24 January 1994
Thanet Mental Health Development	7 May 1993	7 May 1993
Uckfield Community Hospital	29 October 1993	29 October 1993
William Harvey Hospital 1A Rehabilitation and NI Unit	20 January 1993	6 September 1993
South West Thames RHA		
Barnes ESMI Phase 2 (Nucleus)	5 January 1993	5 January 1993
Frimley Park Hospital Phases 1 and 2	12 February 1993	12 February 1993
St. John's Twickenham Redevelopment Phase 1	7 February 1993	7 February 1993
Tolworth Hospital—New Ward Unit	6 June 1993	6 June 1993
Woking Hospital Development—Phase 1 Rehab Centre	11 December 1993	11 December 1993
Wessex RHA		
Alton Community Hospital/LMT Redevelopment Phase 1	4 January 1991	30 November 1992
Gosport Community Hospital Phase 1A	30 April 1993	30 November 1992
Queen Alexandra Ophthalmology Department	16 July 1993	16 July 1993
Royal United Hospital—Bath and Wessex Replacement	23 June 1993	23 June 1993
Southampton General East Wing Window Replacement	18 February 1993	18 February 1993
St. Andrew's Hospital—Chippenham Catering	00 August 1993	00 August 1993
St. Mary's Portsmouth Phase 2A and 2B	26 June 1994	26 June 1994
Oxford RHA		
Amersham—Dermatology Unit	8 November 1993	8 November 1993
Ashurst—Phase 1	10 August 1993	10 August 1993
Central Area—CPU	13 October 1992	13 November 1992
Southern Area—CPU	1 March 1993	1 March 1993
Wexham Park—Post Graduate Medical Centre	2 August 1993	2 August 1993
South Western RHA		
Bridgewater EPD 18 beds 18 day places	1 April 1993	1 April 1993

Authority and Scheme	*Contract target completion date*	*Latest estimated completion date*
Cheltenham Acute Mental Illness	27 April 1994	27 April 1994
Derriford DGH Phase 2	14 December 1992	3 February 1993
Derriford DGH Phase 3A Maternity Unit	29 October 1993	29 October 1993
Derriford Fire Precautions Work	00 December 1992	00 December 1992
Frenchay DGH Phase 1A	4 December 1992	4 December 1992
Gloucester Royal Pathology	23 October 1992	14 December 1992
Gloucester Royal Waste Disposal Complex	00 May 1992	00 August 1992
Lyngford House Taunton Phase 11	21 January 1993	21 January 1993
Manor Park Hospital New Mental Illness Unit	19 September 1992	19 September 1992
Watford Gardens Newcourt Hospital Replacement	11 December 1992	11 December 1992
Royal Devon and Exeter (Wonford) Priority 2 (Nucleus)	21 July 1995	21 July 1995
Royal Devon and Exeter (Wonford) Support Services	11 March 1994	11 March 1994
Southmead Hospital—Orthopaedic Unit (Nucleus)	29 November 1992	29 November 1992
Southmead Hospital Mental Illness Unit	4 October 1992	16 November 1992
Taunton and Somerset Hospital Phase 2	26 March 1995	31 August 1994
Torbay DGH Surgical Services (Part only)	31 May 1993	31 May 1993
Totnes Community Hospital	20 June 1993	20 June 1993
West Cornwall Penzance New Ward Block	9 September 1993	9 September 1993
West Midlands RHA		
Burton DGH Phase 2.4 main hospital	15 February 1993	15 February 1993
Conversion of surgical square to medical beds	18 December 1992	18 December 1992
Dudley DGH Mental Health Development	31 July 1993	31 July 1993
East Birmingham—Maternity/ENT Theatres/Pathology	4 September 1992	1 October 1992
George Eliot Nuneaton Phase 3 (Nucleus)	9 July 1993	18 July 1993
Hollymoor Hospital Community Unit	28 September 1992	11 January 1993
Kidderminster DGH Phase 6 (Nucleus)	24 July 1995	24 July 1995
Rowley Regis Community Hospital Sandwell	10 December 1993	27 January 1994
Solihull DGH Phase 2 Contract 1 (Nucleus)	10 April 1994	10 April 1994
St. Cross Rugby Phase 3 (Nucleus)	14 September 1992	3 November 1992
Warwick DGH Phase 2	3 October 1993	3 October 1993
Mersey RHA		
Clatterbridge Hospital Redevelopment Phase 2	6 December 1993	6 December 1993
Fazakerley Hospital A&E Department	16 April 1993	16 May 1993
Hospital for Obstetrics and Gynaecology	20 Janaury 1995	20 January 1995
Warrington DGH Phase C	30 September 1993	13 September 1993
Whiston Phase 1 Regional Burns and Plastic Unit	8 October 1993	8 October 1993
North Western RHA		
Birch Hill Hospital—Mental Illness Unit	24 January 1993	24 January 1993
Calderstones Hospital—Replacement Kitchen	5 February 1993	5 February 1993
Chorley DGH Phase 3A	12 March 1995	12 March 1995
Manchester Royal Infirmary—Mental Illness Unit	22 June 1993	22 June 1993
Manchester Royal Infirmary—Pathology and Mortuary	1 January 1995	1 January 1995
Manchester Royal Infirmary—Phase 2 Ass. Works PHB	28 September 1993	29 September 1993
Manchester Royal Infirmary—School of Physiotherapy	12 January 1993	12 January 1993
North Manchester General—Cook Chill Catering Development	7 September 1992	23 October 1992
North Manchester General—F and G Block (Main Phase)	March 1994	March 1994
North Manchester General—Phase 1	23 May 1993	23 May 1993
Ormskirk District General Hospital Phase 1	9 March 1993	9 March 1993
Post Graduate Medical Centre	2 July 1993	2 July 1993
Prestwich Mental Health Centre for Deaf People	1 February 1993	30 January 1993
Queens Park—PH3 Maternity and Gynaecology	25 July 1994	25 July 1994
Royal Lancaster Infirmary—Phase 3	18 August 1995	18 August 1995
Wythenshawe Integrated Thoracic Medicine	9 November 1992	23 November 1992

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) when he will arrange for officials from his Department to meet representatives of the Graphics Company, Ivybridge, Devon, to discuss the application for regional selective assistance made by the company last August;

(2) what plans he has to make a decision on the application for regional selective assistance submitted in August by the Graphics Company, Ivybridge, South Devon.

Mr. Sainsbury: Officials of my Department met the Graphics Company on 18 November. A decision on the company's application for regional selective assistance is expected by the end of November.

Export Licences

Mr. Bennett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to provide to Parliament such information on export licences as is provided to the inquiry conducted by Lord Justice Scott.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of all applications for export licences to Iraq in respect of machine tools, equipment and arms that were either approved or rejeted under the rules laid down by his predecessor in 1985 that were submitted by Marconi, GEC, BAC, Colchester Lathes or any subsidiary companies; and if he will make a statement about the extent of those applications from subsidiary companies over the same period.

Mr. Needham: No. For reasons of commercial confidentiality, it has been the practice of successive Administrations not to disclose such information. However, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Minutes of Evidence to the Trade and Industry Select Committee, 26 November 1991, pp 37-106.

Policy Initiatives

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the initiatives taken on industrial policy by him during the United Kingdom's presidency of the EC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: Since the beginning of the United Kingdom presidency, we have made further significant progress towards completion of the single market programme—the free trade principles of which will assist the development of business within the Community. The United Kingdom presidency has also achieved a key objective with the adoption by the Internal Market Council on 10 November of a resolution on "Making the Single Market Work". This resolution should help to ensure that single market legislation is implemented effectively and enforced evenly throughout the Community.

As well as taking forward work in hand in the Council of Ministers, the United Kingdom presidency has promoted two initiatives: on industrial competitiveness and evironmental protection and on administrative simplification. The former should ensure the proper integration of environmental and industrial policies at Community level and the close involvement of industy in the development of policies designed to achieve the Community's environmental objectives. The latter should ensure that new legislation at Community level does not add unnecessary burdens to business.

The Industry Council which I shall be chairing on 24 November will have a substantial agenda covering many aspects of EC industrial policy, including draft resolutions on the initiatives referred to above.

Betws Mine, Ammanford

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will direct the British Coal Corporation immediately to desist from blocking access to coal reserves at the Betws mine, Ammanford; and forthwith to seek bids by public tender from potential operators with a view to continuing mining operations as from 1 January 1993.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* Ministers have no powers to give specific directions about the conduct of its business to British Coal.

The corporation has assured me that it will continue to discharge responsibly its duty to consider applications from responsible organisations seeking licences to mine coal. British Coal has also given me an assurance that when coaling ceases at Betws it will ensure that the fabric of the pit is preserved so that, if at the end of the statutory consultation period it is decided to keep it open, that will be possible.

Pit Closures

Mr. Kim Howells: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many British Coal staff have been disciplined or dismissed for releasing to commercial organisations lists of names of British Coal employees likely to be in receipt of lump sum redundancy payments during the present round of pit closures.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 18 November 1992]:* This is a matter for British Coal.

Iraq

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will update his answer of 17 January 1992, *Official Report*, column *716*, with respect to the trading operations of the Technology and Development Group based in London, in connection with the procurement of military usable technology for Iraq.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* I have nothing to add to the earlier answer given by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much cover was provided by the Export Credit Guarantee Department for exports to Iraq in the period from 1985 to the outbreak of hostilities; and how much of it is outstanding.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* A total of £615 million medium-term credit was made available to Iraq in the form of a series of financial protocols between 1985 and the outbreak of hostilities. In addition ECGD also insured cash and short-term credit transactions of £725 million over the same period. At present £830 million remains outstanding for payment, of which, as at 31 October 1992, £463 million represented unrecovered claims paid by ECGD.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current amount of coal produced from opencast mining in tonnes and as a percentage of current coal production.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* Total production of opencast coal in 1991-92 from British Coal Opencast and licensed private sector producers was 19 million tonnes, 21 per cent. of the total United Kingdom coal production.

Energy Enterprises

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the application of the 1·5 per cent. pay rise ceiling to each of *(a)* those energy enterprises which are still nationalised and *(b)* those energy enterprises now privatised in which the Government maintain a substantial minority shareholding.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* In the autumn statement the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that pay settlements in the public sector and related bodies will be restricted to the range 0-1·5 per cent. in the coming year. This policy applies to energy enterprises which are publicly owned, namely: British Coal Corporation, Nuclear Electric plc, British Nuclear Fuels plc, the UK Atomic Energy Authority and Scottish Nuclear Ltd. The policy does not apply to energy enterprises in which the Government have a minority shareholding.

Second-hand Gas Appliances

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps will he take to extend safety standards to second-hand gas appliances, beyond 1 January 1996.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* A high standard of safety is already required for second hand gas cookers under the Gas Cooking Appliances (Safety) Regulations 1989. The regulation of these products after 1 January 1996 will be maintained and I am also considering the possibility of extending the same level of consumer protection to a wider range of second hand gas appliances.

Office of Electricity Regulation

Mr. Caborn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many contracts have been put out to consultancies by the Office of Electricity Regulation; what are their subjects, cost and completion dates; and which ones have been or will be published.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* This is a matter for the Director General of Electricity Supply. I have passed the question to the director general and he will write to give the information and place it in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Caborn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many whole-time equivalent staff work for the Office of Electricity Regulation; and what are their grades, functions and location.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* This is a matter for the Director General of Electricity Supply. I have passed the question to the director general and he will write to give the information and place it in the House of Commons Library.

Assisted Area Status

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will extend the areas eligible for assisted area status to north Staffordshire as part of his review of assisted area status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* The needs and circumstances of all areas including north Staffordshire will be carefully considered in the review.

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the submission of intent for assisted area status presented by the city of Stoke on Trent on 13 November.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* My Department has received a submission which the city of Stoke on Trent made jointly with other Staffordshire organisations in September. To date, the further submission dated 13 November referred to has not been received. I shall be considering the needs and circumstances of all areas and all the representations received as part of the present assisted areas map review.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Charters

34. **Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many new charters are scheduled for publication in the next six months.

Mr. Waldegrave: Twenty-seven charters have been published to date. Six more charters will be published over the next six months.

41. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on private sector funding of scientific research.

Mr. Jackson: Private sector funding for scientific research is buoyant. Such funding almost doubled in real terms over the 1985-1990 period.

Justices of the Peace (Stockport)

42. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to appoint new Stockport JPs who live in north Reddish and south Reddish or Brinnington wards; and when he expects to appoint new Tameside JPs who live in the Denton, North-East ward.

Mr. Waldegrave: My advisory committee in Stockport is currently processing 51 applications, two of which are from the wards concerned. In Tameside my advisory committee has recently recommended the names of 10 prospective justices of which four are from Denton, one of them from Denton, North-East ward.

Citizens Charter

43. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many representations he has received since 9 April from members of the public about the citizens charter programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: We have since 9 April received nearly 1,500 letters from members of the public referring to the citizens charter. This is a clear indication of the charter's success in encouraging people to demand better, more responsive services.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all units of central Government currently under consideration for executive agency status, their parent Department and the number of staff employed in each case in full-time equivalents.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The current list of activities announced by Departments as under consideration for executive agency status, together with their parent department and staff employed is as follows:

Candidate Name	*Parent Department*	*Staff*[1]
Army Logistics (Including Army Base Repair Organisation)[2 3]	Defence	12,000
Chessington Computer Centre	Cabinet Office	440
Child Support Agency[4]	Northern Ireland	—[4]
Defence Central Services[2]	Defence	1,400
Defence Animal Centre[2]	Defence	220
Directorate Information Technology Bureau Services[2]	Defence	120
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency	Northern Ireland	250
Equipment Test and Evaluation[2]	Defence	2,220
Fuel Suppliers Branch	Environment	20
Her Majesty's Prison Service	Home Office	37,900
Human Factors Research[2]	Defence	390
Meat Hygiene Service[5]	Agriculture	—[5]
Ministry of Defence Police[2]	Defence	5,100
Naval Training[2]	Defence	5,200
National Health Service Superannuation Branch	Health	630
Office of Population Censuses and Surveys[6]	Health	2,100
Paymaster General's Office	Treasury	850
Pesticide Safety Directorate	Agriculture	150
Property Division	Treasury Solicitor	120
Property Holdings Portfolio Management	Environment	460
Royal Air Force Training[2]	Defence	9,200
Royal Parks	National Heritage	270
Scottish Office Superannuation	Scottish Office	160
Scottish Prison Service	Scottish Office	4,230
Social Security Child Support Agency[7]	Social Security	—[7]
Transport and Security Services Division	Environment	1,235
Valuation and Lands Office	Northern Ireland	350
Youth Treatment Service	Health	220
28 in number		

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[1] April 1992 figures for Civil Servants and Armed Forces Personnel. Casuals are excluded. Part time staff are counted as half units.

[2] May be launched as a Defence Support Agency. All figures subject to revision due to major reorganisation. Figures include 7,300 Armed Forces personnel.

[3] Excludes 500 staff in Defence Postal and Courier Services Agency launched 1 July 1992.

[4] Estimated to require 550 staff by April 1993. Of these 120 will come from the Northern Ireland Social Security Agency.

[5] Estimated to require 1,800 staff, drawn from a variety of sources.

[6] Independent Government Department. Responsible Minister: Secretary of State for Health.

[7] DSS estimate the Agency at launch will comprise 4,500 staff, 1,500 of which will come from the Social Security Benefits Agency.

Many other areas are under internal consideration for executive agency status.

Health and Safety Policies (Agencies)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will place a copy in the Library of the health and safety policy of each of the agencies within his Department.

Mr. Jackson: The chief executives of the Central Office of Information, the Civil Service college, her Majesty's Stationery Office, the Occupational Health Service and the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency are responsible for health and safety policy within their agencies.

I am placing in the Library copies of the health and safety policies applying in the Central Office of Information and Her Majesty's Stationery Office. I am also placing in the Library a copy of volume IV of the Cabinet Office staff handbook, which contains the Cabinet Office's health and safety policy. This will continue to apply in the Civil Service college, the Occupational Health Service and the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency until separate health and safety policies have been developed and put in place.

SCOTLAND

National Monuments

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many ancient and historic monuments in Scotland were added to the national monuments record in each year since 1989;

(2) if he will list the reported instances of damage to scheduled ancient and historical monuments in Scotland from 1989 to 1992; and what action was taken on the discovery of the damage;

(3) how many ancient and historical monuments in Historic Scotland aims to schedule from 1992 to 1995;

(4) how many management agreements for national monuments were made in 1991.

Mr. Lang: I have passed the hon. Member's questions to the chief executive of Historic Scotland and asked him to reply direct.

Letter from G. Munro to Mr. Nigel Griffiths, dated 22 November 1992:

The Secretary of State for Scotland has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions about ancient and historical monuments in Scotland.

Firstly, you asked how many ancient and historical monuments were added to the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS) in each of the years from 1989 to 1992. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) is responsible for maintaining a comprehensive archive and database in the form of the NMRS. I have therefore contacted the RCAHMS who informed me that they added the following number of monuments to the NMRS:—

	Number
1989-90	2,430
1990-91	2,586
1991-92	2,050

The Commission inform me that the figure for 1991-92 will be increased by air photographs of sites discovered in that period which have yet to be fully incorporated into the NMRS. In addition 1991-92 was the year in which the whole national archive was moved to new premises.

Secondly, you asked the Secretary of State if he would list the reported instances of damage to scheduled ancient and historical monuments in Scotland from 1989 to 1992; and what action was taken on the discovery of the damage. No central record of such cases is maintained but we are aware of 35 cases during the period. In such cases we would normally write to the owner of the monument, or the person who had carried out the work which had damaged the monument, seeking an explanation for the unauthorised works. This could result in remedial action being taken or in extreme cases the matter being referred to the Procurator Fiscal for possible prosecution.

Thirdly, you asked how many ancient and historical monuments in Scotland Historic Scotland aim to schedule from 1992 to 1995. As shown in Annex A to our Corporate Plan for 1992-95, a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library, we aim to schedule 900 monuments in this period—300 per year.

Finally, you asked how many management agreements for national monuments were made in 1991. The answer to that question is eight.

Green Policies

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how the Departmental Green Minister has promoted protection of the ozone layer with specific policy measures and which possible measures have been considered and rejected and on what grounds.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* The Government's policy on the protection of the ozone layer is set out in the 1990 White Paper "This Common Inheritance" and the subsequent yearly reports. It is to control and eliminate as quickly as possible the production and supply of ozone-depleting substances. This will be reflected in the Scottish Office's green housekeeping strategy, currently in the course of preparation, which will include a presumption against the purchase of any products which cause significant damage to the environment during manufacture, use or disposal, if a suitable alternative is available.

Domiciliary Family Planning

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those health authorities which provided domiciliary family planning services in each year since 1985.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* Since 1985, five health boards—Forth Valley, Grampian, Greater Glasgow, Lothian and Tayside—have provided continuous domiciliary family planning services.

Listed Buildings

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to increase the funds available to local authorities for the maintenance of listed buildings owned by themselves; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* Local authority current expenditure is supported by aggregate external finance which, with the exception of specific grants, is not hypothecated to particular services. So far as capital expenditure is concerned, each authority receives annually a block capital consent allocation which it is free to augment by revenue contributions and capital receipts. Within the total levels of support available to them, authorities are free to set their own current and capital expenditure priorities.

University Research

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the amount of research funding to universities in Scotland from agencies funded by his Department.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* Financial allocations for programmes, including higher education, within the Scottish block will be announced in the near future.

Single-tier Councils

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a breakdown of the costs of the consultation exercise in relation to the proposals for single-tier councils in Scotland, indicating how many consultation documents, videos and leaflets have been distributed and at what cost.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* The information requested is as follows:

	Number produced to date	*Cost[1] (£)*	*Number distributed to date*
Consultation paper	22,500	72,000	17,000
Video	900	27,500	785
Leaflets	110,000	31,000	75,000

[1] Costs shown are production costs and do not include postage.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial contribution will be made to local authorities for supplementation to private nursing homes for the year beginning 1 April 1993.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* My right hon. Friend announced on 2 October that he was making available £40·6 million to local authorities in 1993-94, being the transfer of resources from the Department of Social Security and a further £20 million for other costs associated with implementation of our community care reforms. These sums are not hypothecated to expenditure on particular types of services but we expect authorities to devote a significant part of these resources to supporting new residents of nursing homes in the private sector.

Police (Court Appearances)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many citations to appear in court were issued to police officers in *(a)* Dundee and *(b)* Scotland in each of the past five years for which figures are available; and how many were withdrawn prior to the date of the trial in each year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* This information is not recorded.

Sheep Annual Premiums

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of sheep annual premium application forms for the current year received so far from sheep producers in the Western Isles have been wrongly completed; what the percentages of false completion were in the previous three years; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 November 1992]:* A total of 0·74 per cent. of applications for the 1992 sheep annual premium from sheep producers in the Western Isles have been wrongly completed and rejected for payment. The information for earlier years is not readily available.

TRANSPORT

Road Pricing

10. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards road pricing.

Mr. MacGregor: We are undertaking a major three year study of congestion in London. This is to inform debate on road pricing in towns and cities. No decisions have been taken. As the Chancellor indicated in his autumn statement, I will publish a Green Paper early next year on the scope for motorway charging.

Networker Trains (Kent)

11. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the prospects for the introduction of the proposed Networker express trains for east Kent and the Kent coastal service.

Mr. Freeman: In the autumn statement the Government announced an increase in BR's external finance. British Rail will be allowed to order up to £150 million of rolling stock on leases over the next three years. BR has not yet decided which rolling stock orders would be suitable for leases but is considering this matter at present.

Rail Access (Disabled People)

13. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance he gives British Rail about making provision for access by the disabled.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail takes account of the needs of people with disabilities in the provision of its services and facilities.

The Department is represented on BR's advisory group on disability, which includes people with a wide range of disabilities. The Department's disability unit also works closely with BR on these issues.

Cones

14. **Mr. Allason:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further measures he will take to reduce the number of cones on roads.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We are actively pursuing measures to reduce the number of cones on the national road network to the minimum consistent with safety, and with the smooth flow of traffic through roadworks. These include: the development of improved road materials which require less maintenance, increased use of incentive contracts to reduce contract periods, and use of moving vehicles instead of cones to close lanes for routine maintenance.

Channel Tunnel

15. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss rail links to the channel tunnel.

Mr. MacGregor: I meet regularly with the chairman of British Rail and channel tunnel issues are often discussed.

16. **Mr. Peter Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive from British Rail its proposals for a specific route for a new rail link between King's Cross and Folkestone.

Mr. Freeman: I expect a report by the end of December containing a reference case route and associated options.

29. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his best estimate of the difference in cost between building the proposed channel tunnel rail link to the largest European gauge and the gauge measurements favoured by Union Railways.

Mr. Freeman: Union Railways' costed proposals and options will be submitted to Government by the end of the year. Its report will include proposals for the gauge of the link.

Road Crashes

17. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress in the reduction of deaths and serious injuries from road crashes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The provisional figures for the 12 months ending in June 1992 are: 4,585 deaths, 50,695 serious injuries and 312,278 slight injuries. These figures show that, for deaths and serious injuries, the Government have already almost achieved their target of reducing road casualties by one-third by the year 2000.

Coal Mining Areas

18. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to draw up a transport policy to create a more appropriate infrastructure for traditional coal mining areas.

Mr. Macgregor: The Government fully recognise the importance of good transport infrastructure in promoting economic regeneration. The Government will continue their policy of promoting a high level of investment in transport infrastructure in all modes, both in traditional mining areas and elsewhere. Major transport policies in south Yorkshire which will assist coal mining areas include the £29 million Dearne towns link road—supported by transport supplementary grant—and the channel tunnel rail freight terminal at Wakefield.

Ports (Trade)

19. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the proportion of trade coming to British ports at weekends as opposed to weekdays.

Mr. Norris: Although no overall assessment can be made of the proportion of trade coming to British ports at weekends from the available information, most British major ports are open at weekends and there are indications of significant weekend demand at some ports.

London-Leicester Line

20. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what future plans he has for the electrification of the London-Leicester line.

Mr. Freeman: At present, it is for British Rail to come forward with investment proposals it considers worthwhile and in the light of available resources. I understand that electrification will be one of the options considered when the existing rolling stock reaches the end of its economic life.

Railways (Leaf Fall)

21. **Mr. Wilkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what success British Rail has had in dealing with the autumn leaf fall on to rail lines.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail has implemented a range of measures to deal with the perennial leaf problem. These have included the spreading of sandite paste on the track at noted trouble spots, special driver training, and the management of lineside vegetation. I believe that these measures have helped to minimise delays.

East London River Crossing

22. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when work will start on the east London river crossing.

Mr. Norris: We hope to be able to start work soon on this important scheme. However, construction cannot begin until the current High Court challenges and the question of the EC infraction proceedings have been resolved. In the meantime, we are pressing on with detailed design and other advance work.

Environmental Impact

23. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he plans to introduce to reduce the environmental impact of transport.

Mr. MacGregor: From the end of this year most new cars will require catalytic converters to meet tighter EC emissions standards. The United Kingdom Government continue to press for even tighter emissions and noise standards for vehicles and to discuss with other member states and the Commission measures to improve the fuel efficiency of new cars.

From 1 August 1993, certain existing vehicles over 16 tonnes will be required to have speed limiters. This measure complements the introduction of speed limiters for new heavy goods vehicles on 1 August 1992 and will improve fuel consumption and reduce emissions.

The MOT emissions check introduced for cars in November 1991 is helping to reduce exhaust emissions. Since 1 September there has been a metered smoke test in the annual test for heavy diesels. A similar test for light vans and diesel cars shortly will be included for the first time in the MOT test from 1 January 1993.

We are working on a number of other initiatives for 1992-93, including the publication of an updated manual of environmental appraisal. The White Paper "This Common Inheritance—The Second Year Report" gives further information about our work to reduce the impact of transport on the environment.

Rail Privatisation

24. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his plans for the privatisation of British Rail's island assets.

Mr. Freeman: My Department is now analysing the responses to the consultation document on franchising issued on 12 October. We hope to be able to announce early next year the first services or groups of services that will be prepared for franchising. We are considering whether the Isle of Wight services will be included in that announcement.

Red Routes

25. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to instigate an independent review to determine how the pilot red routes have been operating.

Mr. Norris: Independent monitoring of the pilot red route scheme by the transport research laboratory has already shown how well it has been operating.

River Travel (London)

26. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he has taken to improve travel in London by river.

Mr. Norris: Since the Marchioness Disaster in 1989, my Department immediately accepted all the recommendations in the Marine Accident Investigation Branch's report into the loss of the Marchioness and took immediate action to implement them as quickly as possible. All but five of the 27 recommendations have been fully implemented and action on the outstanding recommendations should be completed by the end of the year. Action is now in hand on all 22 recommendations in the Hayes report of the inquiry into river safety.

For the future, I wish to explore further the potential for both passenger and freight traffic on the River Thames and I hope to make an announcement about this shortly.

Third Aviation Package

27. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made towards the implementation of the third aviation package; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Good progress has been made in preparations to make the appropriate changes to existing United Kingdom legislation. The necessary statutory instruments will be laid before the House shortly so that these changes can be in place by the end of the year.

Severn Bridge

28. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about traffic flows on the Severn bridge since the last change in tolls.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: About 4½ million vehicles have travelled westbound over the Severn bridge since 26 April when the concessionaires, Severn River Crossing plc, introduced a new one-way toll. This is about 6 per cent. less than the figure for the same period in 1991. No figures are available for eastbound, non-tolled, traffic.

Penzance-Exeter Line

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will come to a decision on the proposal for electrification of the British Rail South West main line from Penzance to Exeter.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail has not put forward any proposals for electrification of the Great Western main line. Electrification will be one of the options considered by British Rail to replace infrastructure and rolling stock when they reach the end of their economic lives.

Bus Users

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to expand regional transport users' consultative committees to cover bus users.

Mr. Freeman: No. It would be inappropriate to expand the role of the transport users consultative committees to cover buses which operate in a competitive environment.

Hayes Bypass

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research he is undertaking into the effects upon pedestrians and vehicular traffic in Northolt following the opening of the Hayes bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: None. The roads in question are the responsibility of the London borough of Ealing.

Duty-free Goods

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that aircraft and ships are not overloaded as a result of the changes in duty-free and duty-paid concessions from 1 January 1993.

Mr. Norris: The proposed changes in duty-free and duty-paid concessions from 1 January 1993 will not have any effect on the loading of goods on aircraft and ships.

It is, and will remain, the duty of the commander of the ship and aircraft to ensure he is satisfied that all goods loaded onto the vessel or aircraft are stowed, distributed, secured and segregated so as to ensure that the load may be carried safely on the voyage or flight. Such loading would be in accordance with the design and performance characteristics of the vessel or aircraft. Monitoring, by a process of ongoing inspections by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) for aircraft and the Surveyor General's Organisation (SGO) for marine vessels, ensure that safety standards are not compromised.

London Underground

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects the Jubilee line extension to come into operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I cannot offer a precise date. There is planned to be a 53-months' construction period, which would start after the conclusion of a formal agreement with the administrators of Olympia and York Canary Wharf on the terms of its contribution to the cost of the extension.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the occasions in November on which he held discussions with London Underground; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I discuss matters affecting the underground regularly with the chairman of London Transport and I have done so on a number of occasions during November; the topics covered include the public expenditure settlement, the Jubilee line and industrial relations.

Rail Services (Disabled People)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the importance of *(a)* local rail services and *(b)* the national rail network to disabled people.

Mr. Freeman: The Secretary of State and I are well aware of the importance of rail services to disabled passengers as is British Rail. That is why the Department of Transport is represented on BR's advisory group on disability, which includes people with a wide range of disabilities. The Department's disability unit also works closely with BR on these issues and I know that British Rail does take account of the needs of people with disabilities in the provision of services and facilities.

Bus Companies

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the future of local authority-owned bus companies.

Mr. Macgregor: Following the autumn statement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I would like to remind local authorities that if they sell their public transport companies (PTCs) by 31 December 1993, they will be able to devote the proceeds to projects such as the improvement of public transport. After that date 50 per cent. of the proceeds will have to be used for the reduction of their debt. I trust this will encourage the sale of the remaining PTCs before we fulfil our manifesto commitment to make their sale compulsory.

Although I expect that future sales of PTCs will be by competitive tender, I am pleased to say that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has agreed that the time limit previously announced in relation to pension arrangements for those PTCs where sales to buy-out teams have already been agreed in principle, will be extended to 30 June 1993. The staff concerned will be able to remain within the local government superannuation scheme if the sales are completed by that date, and I would urge all concerned to meet this deadline.

I have today issued a direction to the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority, the sole shareholder of Greater Manchester Buses Ltd., to produce a plan to divide the company into separate smaller companies. The direction is issued in accordance with section 61 of the Transport Act 1985 and the plan must be submitted to me by 30 March 1993.

I have taken this step to bring the full benefits of bus deregulation to bus passengers in Greater Manchester. The very size of Greater Manchester Buses has tended to inhibit competition between operators and I am convinced that dividing the company into smaller units will bring better services to passengers. I look to the PTA, using its expertise on public transport matters and local knowledge, to produce a workable plan to achieve the division of Greater Manchester Buses.

Shipping Records

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many complaints have been made *(a)* in each of the past three years an *(b)* so far this year (i) by his Department and (ii) by the contractor at the relevant time in respect of the operation of the Small Ships Register.

Mr. Norris: I am not aware of any complaint about the day-to-day running of the register.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the importance of the General Register and Record Office of Shipping and Seamen to modern historians of British and Commonwealth merchant shipping and seamen.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend is aware that the services of the registry are valued by modern historians undertaking research, some of whom have written letters of support for the registry. We will want to ensure that the registry continues to provide this service following the market testing.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those agencies in his Department which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Mr. Gummer: Before an agency is created, there is a thorough assessment of alternative options, including privatisation and contractorisation. Each agency is reviewed after three years in operation and privatisation and contractorisation are again considered.

When I announced on 25 July 1990 that ADAS was to become an agency I said that privatisation could, in the longer run, be the logical development. Any change of status for a MAFF agency would be announced at the appropriate time.

Foreign Fishing Vessels

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek to amend regulations currently allowing foreign-owned super-trawlers to register under British registration and prevent them from fishing British waters.

Mr. Curry: As a result of the European Court ruling given in the Factortame case last year, non-British EC nationals may register fishing vessels in the United Kingdom provided those vessels are to be operated, managed and controlled from here. Beam trawlers like other fishing vessels are subject to United Kingdom licensing and quota management rules, but any restriction on grounds of nationality would be discriminatory and contrary to Community law. Fisheries Departments operate a restrictive licensing policy so that any newly registered beam trawler will need to have transferred onto it a licence which has been issued to an existing vessel. This arrangement restricts access of beam trawlers in order to protect stocks. It has applied in the North sea since August this year and was an extension of the arrangements which existed in area VII since 1985.

Shellfish

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to offer full compensation to shellfish producers who operate within shellfish fisheries where they are adversely affected by the pumping of sewage into the sea.

Mr. Curry: As part of the discussions now underway we are helping shellfishermen to overcome problems arising from the microbiological status of the water. Responsibility in relation to the discharge of sewage or treated sewage effluent lies with the National Rivers Authority, which applies controls by means of consents issued under the Water Resources Act 1991.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action is being undertaken by his Department to carry out tests on contamination of shellfish fisheries with *(a)* sewage and *(b)* heavy metals and other chemicals.

Mr. Curry: With the co-operation of the local authorities concerned, my Department has undertaken a comprehensive survey of the microbiological status of all known shellfish-growing waters in England and Wales. The preliminary results of this survey were published for comment in July. A revised survey will be published following discussions with shellfish growers and others now in progress. Monitoring will continue and classifications will be reviewed regularly. The aquatic environment is regularly monitored for levels of heavy metals and other chemicals and reports are published. The latest report, "Aquatic Environment Monitoring Report Number 30" (ISSN 0142–2499), was published in October. A copy is available in the Library of the House. The National Rivers Authority undertakes similar monitoring.

Agri-environmental Measures

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make representations to the EC to ensure that a substantial proportion of the common agricultural policy budget is allocated to the agri-environment programme.

Mr. Curry: The level of funds to be attributed to agri-environment programmes will be decided annually along with the rest of the EC budget. It will depend on a range of factors, including uptake by member states. The Government's view will depend on the balance of such factors when each year's budget is set.

Genetic Resources

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action is currently undertaken by his Department to extend long-term protection to the crops that are poorly represented in long-term gene banks and to their wild relatives.

Mr. Curry: The Department currently funds a number of plant genetic resource collections, including the vegetable gene bank at Wellesbourne, Warwickshire and the collections of wild species at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Wakehurst Place. Earlier this year the Department, in collaboration with the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department, completed a review of United Kingdom policy in this area, taking account of present collections, international developments, and future requirements. The findings of that review were made publicly available and its recommendations are now being implemented with a view to improved coverage and co-ordination, value for money, and utilisation of collections.

Pesticides

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action is currently undertaken by his Department to comply with the Food and Agriculture Organisation code of conduct on the distribution and use of pesticides.

Mr. Soames: The Department complies with this code principally through the strict controls under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 which require that only approved pesticides may be advertised, sold, supplied, stored or used. In addition the new EC Regulation 2455/92 on the Import and Export of Certain Dangerous Chemicals incorporates the prior informed consent procedure, which is based on the principles in the FAO code. The Health and Safety Commission and Exectutive is the designated national authority for the regulation.

Grazing Management

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to introduce an incentive scheme for sheep farmers in less-favoured areas to establish grazing management schemes which include consideration for the hiring of grazing and the conservation of habitats.

Mr. Curry: The Government plan to introduce, under the Agri-environment Regulation, a scheme which will provide for an environmentally favourable extensification of sheep farming. This will include appropriate grazing conditions aimed at the conservation of habitats. The new scheme will supplement the beneficial effects of the environmentally sensitive areas scheme on grazing management in the less favoured areas.

Vegetation and Wildlife

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research work and monitoring is currently being carried out by his Department on the effects of extensification upon vegetation and wildlife populations.

Mr. Curry: The Department's environmental research and development programme includes a number of projects which examine the effects of different forms of more extensive management practices upon both vegetation and wildlife. In addition the monitoring of schemes such as set-a-side, extensification and, particularly, environmentally sensitive areas assesses the vegetation changes and the effects on wildlife populations.

Heather Regeneration

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to offer financial incentives to livestock farmers in less-favoured areas to fence-off certain areas of land in order to promote heather regeneration.

Mr. Curry: It is already our policy to promote heather regeneration within the less favoured areas: 50 per cent. grants are available under the farm and conservation grant scheme to meet the cost of fencing off moor and heathland to exclude stock and for ancillary operations to encourage heather regeneration in the fenced off areas. Our environmentally sensitive areas (ESA) scheme also encourages appropriate heather management, including in some cases the use of temporary fencing to exclude stock. Heather regeneration will be further promoted with the extension of our ESAs and the development of a new scheme to reduce livestock numbers where this will be environmentally beneficial.

Cattle (Transport)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements have been made with the Dutch Government concerning the sealing of lorries carrying British cattle in transit to Holland before and after 1 January 1993; and what steps have been taken to protect the welfare of the animals concerned.

Mr. Soames: We have received no formal request from the Dutch authorities about the saling of lorries carrying British cattle in transit to Holland and cattle for export are not sealed in transporters.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what specific criteria are used to confirm a case of BSE.

Mr. Soames: Diagnosis of BSE is principally by histophathological examination of brain tissue. For the majority of animals, examination is confined to a single section of the brain stem. For animals born after 18 July 1988, histopathological examination has been supplemented by examination for scrapie—associated fibrils (SAFs) from cervical spinal cord. Where suspects are the offspring of confirmed cases, diagnosis currently involves histopathological examination of whole brain and SAF extraction.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 29 October, *Official Report*, column *781*, how many positive cases of BSE were in *(a)* cows and *(b)* male cattle.

Mr. Soames: Up to 30 October 1992 in Great Britain, 72,031 cases of BSE have been confirmed in female cattle and 201 in male cattle.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many of the cattle offspring, born of BSE-infected mothers, as stated in the Southwood report, developed BSE.

Mr. Soames: The monitoring study described in paragraph 8.1 of the Southwood report has not produced any results yet as it is being conducted as a blind experiment. Field evidence derived from the BSE epidemic as a whole shows that to 9 November 1992 there are 190 confirmed BSE cases in animals which were offspring of previously confirmed cases. This incidence is the same as the incidence in cattle whose dams are unaffected.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 29 October, *Official Report*, column *781*, if he will publish geographical details of confirmed BSE cases.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 22 October, *Official Report*, column *354*. Some of these cases will have been clinically suspected before the period.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 29 October, *Official Report*, column *781*, when the study into the amount of infected material required to be eaten to cause BSE in cattle commenced; when it will be completed; how many animals are involved in the study; what results he has available for the number of cattle developing BSE from oral challenge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: This study began in January 1992. It involves four groups of 10 cattle, each group being exposed to a different dose of infected material. Its completion is dependent on the length of time before the presentation of clinical symptoms (particularly in the group receiving the smallest challenge dose, where the incubation period is expected to be the longest). So far, no cattle in the study have shown symptoms of the disease.

Harwich Fishermen

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much notice was given to Harwich fishermen using vessels of 10 m and over of the prohibition, as from midnight of 17 November, on their catching any more sole, cod or spratts, for the rest of the month; what will happen, and for what size of vessels, in this respect in December 1992 and in January 1993; what length of notice he usually gives to fishermen on such occasions; and whether he is satisfied with the way in which Harwich fishermen were informed of the prohibition.

Mr. Curry: United Kingdom quotas are divided between various industry groups in accordance with a methodology agreed with the industry. In order to ensure that fish landed do not exceed the United Kingdom quota allocations, and other groups are not prejudiced, when it becomes clear that a group's allocation of any stock has been exhausted, Departments close the fishery to that group. It became clear to Departments on Monday 16 November that these closures would be necessary. Immediate action was set in train to issue licence variations suspending fishing from midnight on 17 November for these stocks until the end of 1992 by over 10 m boats. Those variations were despatched by the Department to Harwich fishermen on Wednesday 18 November. It is the Department's normal practice to notify fishermen of such changes as soon as practicable given the circumstances relating to a particular closure. Because fisheries are not closed until it is absolutely necessary to do so, it is not possible to give advance warning of such closures in every case. I am satisfied that given the circumstances Harwich fishermen were informed properly of these closures. So far as January 1993 is concerned, the current licences issued to fishermen are valid for the 1992 calendar year. New licences and new quota management arrangements will be in place for the 1993 calendar year, and fishermen will be notified in due course of the arrangements which will pertain to that year.

Cattle

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what new restrictions on trading cattle, calves or beef from the United Kingdom, have been introduced by other European countries during 1992.

Mr. Soames: This information is not yet available. I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Bacteria

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what grants have been made to the national collections of industrial and marine bacteria in each year since 1988; what grant is proposed to be made for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Under a five-year agreement made in 1988, this Department has made the following contributions towards the work of the National Collections of Industrial and Marine Bacteria (NCIMB) Ltd:

	£
January-March 1988	39,897
1988-89	142,983
1989-90	154,100
1990-91	167,708
1991-92	184,279
1992-93	197-325

The possibility of providing further support for an additional year is currently under consideration.

Agricultural Returns

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the requests he has received from within the United Kingdom for agricultural returns to be set out in hectares rather than acres; and if he will make a statement on the application of the principle of subsidiarity in considering a change from acres to hectares.

Mr. Curry: All agricultural census and survey returns, grant application and claim forms sent out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are already set out in hectares. Requests for these returns to be sent out in hectares rather than acres would be redundant.

Sea Defences

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the prospects for sea defence, coast protection and land drainage schemes in Suffolk and Norfolk in 1993-94 in the light of the autumn statement.

Mr. Curry: Previous plans for coast protection and the National Rivers Authority's flood defence works in England have been maintained, indicating the Government's continuing commitment to reduce risks to life and to the environment. Minor reductions have been made to bring plans for local authority and internal drainage board flood defence more closely in line with actual spending in recent years.

An allocation for capital works of £7·0 million is being made to the National Rivers Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk. The basic rate of grant remains at 55 per cent., with a 20 per cent. supplement for tidal and sea defence work.

Provision is also available for grants to local authorities, internal drainage boards and maritime district councils in England for flood and coastal defence works. Schemes proposed by such authorities in Norfolk and Suffolk will be considered for approval and grant aid by the Department in the normal way.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Derek Strain

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the case of Mr. Derek Strain's application for a disability living allowance was first raised with the disability living allowance unit; and when the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford, can expect a reply from the Benefits Agency's correspondence section.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. As the claim is a personal and confidential matter, he will reply direct to the hon. Member.

Independent Living Fund

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the amount of money to be transferred from his Department to local authorities to compensate disabled people for the loss of the independent living fund in April 1993.

Mr. Scott: There are no funds to transfer to local authorities from this Department for this purpose.

European Court

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases in the European Court of Justice have been won by his Department in the last five years.

Mr. Burt: In the last years only two cases against the Secretary of State for Social Security have been referred to the European Court of Justice. Judgment was given this year in both cases and in each the court ruled in favour of this Department.

Charter Safeguards

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what extra charter safeguards he envisages to protect the dignity of those who receive state benefits.

Miss Widdecombe: We do not plan any extra charter safeguards. The Benefits Agency customer charter gives a commitment to treat all customers courteously and with respect as well as delivering benefits speedily and accurately. A refurbishment programme to upgrade public caller areas to provide increased privacy, comfort and convenience is under way. More than half of the offices will have been upgraded by the spring.

Claimants in Hospital

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out the basis for the setting of the benefit level for people with no dependents after one year in hospital at £10·85 per week; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: For recipients of most social security benefits who have no dependents and have been in hospital for more than one year, the amount paid is equivalent to 20 per cent. of the basic rate of retirement pension.

We consider this amount to be sufficent to meet the personal needs of long-stay hospital in-patients for minor items not provided by the hospital such as newspapers and confectionery.

Claimants of No Fixed Abode

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of *(a)* sickness benefit, *(b)* invalidity benefit and *(c)* income support are receiving giro cheques over office counters because they are of no fixed abode.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available.

ENVIRONMENT

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all of the reports his Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the last three years; for each of the last three years, how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My Department commissioned 320 reports from external consultants in 1989-90; 391 in 1990-91 and 457 in 1991-92. For the convenience of the hon. Member, I have placed in the Library of the House separate lists of the reports for each of these years. Information concerning subsequent work commissioned as a result of these reports could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Halons

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish halon banks to assist in the recovery and recycling of halon.

Mr. Maclean: The Government are working closely with the fire industry and halon users on ways in which halon banking in the United Kingdom can be facilitated and are also playing an active role both within the EC and internationally on discussions on banking.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ban the production and import of halons into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: The parties to the Montreal protocol are currently meeting in Copenhagen to discuss the phase out of ozone-depleting substances, including halons. The United Kingdom, together with its EC partners, is calling for production of halons to be phased out by the end of 1994 at the latest except for continued production for essential use.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has made to the Government of Greece concerning membership of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.

Mr. Maclean: We and other EC partners have regularly urged the Greek Government to become a party to CITES. I am pleased to say, however, that the Greek Government have passed a law enabling Greece to ratify CITES, and formally become a party to the convention on 6 January 1993.

Ultra-violet Radiation

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the current system of UVB monitoring; and what plans he has for improvements.

Mr. Maclean: The National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) has carried out continuous monitoring of ultraviolet radiation in the United Kingdom for three and a half years.

The Department of the Environment has supported the spectral measurement of ultraviolet radiation at Reading university for two and a half years. It is planned to continue this programme.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to enable the National Radiological Protection Board to purchase equipment that is capable of detecting the levels of UVB increase resulting from present ozone depletion.

Mr. Maclean: Spectral radiometers have the potential for detection of increases in UVB that may result from ozone depletion. The Department of the Environment has supported the spectral measurement of UVB at Reading university since 1989 and will continue to do so. There is no plan at the moment to support the purchase of identical equipment for the National Radiological Protection Board.

UN Conventions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make representations to the Secretary General of the United Nations seeking clarification on the compliance arrangements and verification procedures for *(a)* the framework convention on climate change and *(b)* the convention on biological diversity.

Mr. Maclean: The intergovernmental negotiating committee will resume its work next month to elaborate the framework convention on climate change and prepare for decisions at the first meeting of its parties.

Subject to approval by the United Nations Environment Programme's Governing Council in May 1993, an intergovernmental committee on the convention on biology diversity will be established. In the interim, UNEP will establish official level working groups to take forward the necessary further work on the convention.

Packaging

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been undertaken by his Department to date upon the implementation of *(a)* waste-reducing packaging design and *(b)* the introduction of landfill and packaging taxation.

Mr. Maclean: *(a)* None. The Government believe that it is in industry's own commercial interest to undertake research and introduce techniques and technologies to minimise the quantity of packaging and other material which ends up as waste.

(b) The Government have commissioned studies on the use of economic instruments for recycling and on landfill charges.

Council House Sales

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it hs policy to ensure that the proceeds from council house sales, including capital receipts currently set aside, are earmarked for the development of new social housing within each local authority area.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his autumn statement a relaxation of the rules governing the use by local authorities of their capital receipts. In consequence, authorities are able to spend 100 per cent. of most capital receipts generated between 13 November 1992 and 31 December 1993.

This initiative will proceed in conjunction with our plans for a capital partnership in England between central and local government to enhance the value for money from these substantial extra resources. These proposals represent an opportunity for the provision of additional new social housing, particularly through the sponsorship by local authorities of housing association development, as well as for substantial new expenditure on the renovation of existing housing.

Recycling

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to oblige shops and offices to collect their waste paper and cardboard for recycling.

Mr. Maclean: We have no plans to do so at present.

Solid Waste

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish targets for the reduction of solid waste production within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: The Government advise industry on how to reduce and minimise waste; however, we have no plans to set targets at present.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish his original estimates for local authorities' capital receipts, showing for each authority both gross receipts and usable receipts and showing separately housing receipts for *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94.

Mr. Howard: I have not made any estimates of these receipts at the level of individual local authorities. Local authorities have provided their own forecasts of the receipts they expect to receive during 1992-93. I am arranging for this information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish his latest estimate for each local authority of *(a)* the gross receipts from (i) housing and (ii) other assets from 1 April to 12 November, *(b)* the gross receipts from (i) housing and (ii) other assets from 13 November to 31 March 1993, *(c)* the gross receipts from (i) housing and (ii) other assets from 1 April 1993 to 31 December 1993 and *(d)* the gross receipts from (i) housing and (ii) other asets from 1 January 1994 to 31 March 1994.

Mr. Howard: I have not made any estimates of these receipts at the level of individual local authorities.

Caravan Sites

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many applications for gipsy sites have been turned down since the Caravan Sites Act 1968 became law;

(2) if he will list the locations of the gipsy sites established since 1968, indicating *(a)* which were subject to public inquiries and *(b)* in which ones the local authority concerned applied for outline planning permission first before applying for detailed planning permission;

(3) how many gipsy sites have been established in England and Wales since the Caravan Sites act 1968 became law.

Mr. Baldry: Information is not available in the form requested. In January 1992 there were 306 local authority gipsy sites in England and Wales acommodating nearly 6,000 gipsy caravans, and nearly 3,000 caravans on authroised private sites. I have placed in the Library a copy of the Department's list of local authority gipsy sites in England, as at January 1992, compiled from data supplied by local authorities.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the total number of occupied caravan sites by local authority area, which would be affected by legislation implementing the proposals of the 1992 consultation paper on the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Mr. Baldry: The consultation paper states that the Government expect existing gipsy caravan sites to continue in being.

North-East Atlantic (Discharges)

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the Government are taking to ensure the new levels of discharges, agreed in Paris in the new convention to protect the north-east Atlantic, can be met.

Mr. Maclean: The new convention to protect the marine environment of the north-east Atlantic does not itself set any "new levels of discharges". The Government and the regulatory authorities will be using the powers at their disposal to fulfil obligations established under the convention and its predecessors.

Land Quality Statements

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ensure that all planning applications are accompanied by land quality statements.

Mr. Baldry: The relationship between a proposed development and the quality of land affected can be material to decisions on planning applications, and local planning authorities have powers to ensure they obtain all the information they need to take proper decisions.

Water Supplies (Contamination)

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the incidence of bacterial contamination of water supplies in each of the last five years in each of the areas covered by the present water companies.

Mr. Maclean: Information on drinking water quality in England and Wales during 1990 and 1991 is contained in the annual reports of the chief inspector, the drinking water inspectorate, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Information on earlier years is not held centrally and could be collected only at disproportionate cost.

Castle Vale Housing Action Trust

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce a decision on the future of the proposed Castle Vale housing action trust, Birmingham.

Mr. Baldry: An announcement on the proposal for a housing action trust on the Castle Vale estate in Birmingham will be made once the assessment of the feasibility work is complete.

Water Companies (Safeguards)

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the memorandum on safeguards in the operation and management of public waterworks still applies to the privatised water companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The memorandum has been replaced by "Operational Guidelines for the Protection of Drinking Water Supplies", published in 1988 by, and obtainable from, the Water Services Association. The advice given is not mandatory. It complements the legal requirement to provide wholesome water.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research his Department has carried out in the last five years into the possibility of cross contamination in the water industry.

Mr. Maclean: During the last five years, the Department has commissioned two research projects about backflow which could lead to contamination of water supplies. The first, which started in 1988, is to evaluate the degree of protection afforded by a range of mechanical devices designed to prevent backflow. The second, which started recently, is to study information on events which might lead to backflow. Both are due for completion in March 1993.

Water Charges

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the method of basing water charges on the rateable value of properties.

Mr. Maclean: Following the publication of my right hon. Friend's paper, "Using Water Wisely", we have received numerous representations about the possible bases for calculating water charges, including on the use of property values.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what investigations his Department has carried out into the possible methods of charging for water and sewerage services.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has co-funded with the water industry 11 of the national water metering trials. Following widespread consultation, the Director General of Water Services has issued guidance to water companies about the development of their charging strategies. It is now for each water company to decide on its preferred method of charging in the light of the circumstances in its area, subject to legal limitations such as the obligation to avoid discriminatory charges and the prohibition on using rateable values after the year 2000.

Leasehold Properties

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each housing authority in England the total number of leasehold properties.

Mr. Baldry: No information is held centrally on the total number of leasehold properties in each local authority area.

Local Government (Legislation)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the public Acts of Parliament passed since the general election of 1979 which have affected the duties, powers and responsibilities of local government.

Mr. Squire: Public General Acts of Parliament between June 1979 and the end of the last Session of Parliament which affect local authorities in England include those on the following list:

Charter Trustees Act 1985
Further Education Act 1985
Food and Environment Protection Act 1985
Representation of the People Act 1985
Local government Act 1985
Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act 1985
Wildlife and Countryside (Service of Notices) Act 1985
Child Abduction and Custody Act 1985
Transport Act 1985
Housing Act 1985+
Housing (Consequential Provisions) Act 1985+
Housing Associations Act 1985[1]
Weights and Measures Act 1985[1]
Highways (Amendment) Act 1985
Education (Amendment) Act 1986
Museum of London Act 1986
Local Government Act 1986
Statute Law (Repeals) Act 1986
Drainage Rates (Disabled Persons) Act 1986
Civil Protection in Peacetime Act 1986
Health Service Joint Consultative Committees (Access to Information) Act 1986
Road Traffic Regulation (Parking) Act 1986
Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Act 1986
Airports Act 1986
Disabled Persons (services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986
Education Act 1986
Rate Support Grants Act 1986
Education (No. 2) Act 1986
Housing and Planning Act 1986
Public Order Act 1986
Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987
Rate Support Grants Act 1987
Local Government Finance Act 1987
Reverter of Sites Act 1987
Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987
Local Government Act 1987
Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988
Local Government Act 1988
Coroners Act 1988+
Environment and Safety Information Act 1988
Education Reform Act 1988
Local Government Finance Act 1988
Housing Act 1988

Rate Support Grants Act 1988
Road Traffic Act 1988
Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988
School Teachers Pay and Conditions No. 2 Act 1988
Water Act 1989
Dangerous Dogs Act 1989
Children Act 1989+
Local Government and Housing Act 1989
Planning (Consequential Provisions) Act 1990[1]
Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990[1]
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990+
Town and Country Planning Act 1990[1]
Environmental Protection Act 1990
Food Safety Act 1990
National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990
Caravans (Standard Community Charge and Rating) Act 1991
Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991
Community Charges (Substitute Setting) Act 1991
Local Government Finance and Valuation Act 1991
Planning and Compensation Act 1991
Dangerous Dogs Act 1991
New Roads and Street Works Act 1991
Road Traffic Act 1991
Deer Act 1991[1]
Land Drainage Act 1991[1]
Water Consolidation (Consequential Provisions) Act 1991[1]
Education Act 1979
Justices of the Peace Act 1979[1]
Representation of the People Act 1980
Child Care Act 1980
Foster Children Act 1980[1]
Residential Homes Act 1980[1]
Police Negotating Board Act 1980
Education Act 1980
Transport Act 1980
Coroners Act 1980
Magistrates Courts Act 1980[1]
Housing Act 1980
Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980
Highways Act 1980[1]
European Assembly Elections Act 1981
Water Act 1981
Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981
Statute Law (Repeals) Act 1981
Animal Health Act 1981
Food and Drugs (Amendment) Act 1981
Fisheries Act 1981
Representation of the People Act 1981
Town and Country Planning (Minerals) Act 1981
Zoo Licensing Act 1981
Local Government and Planning (Amendment) Act 1981
Education Act 1981
New Towns Act 1981[1]
Compulsory Purchase (Vesting Declarations) Act 1981[1]
Acquisition of Land Act 1981[1]
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
Travel Concessions (London) Act 1982
Fire Service College Board (Abolition) Act 1982
Children's Homes Act 1982
Planning Inquiries (Attendance of the Public) Act 1982
Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1982
Food and Drugs (Amendment) Act 1982
Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982
Local Government Finance Act 1982
Derelict Land Act 1982
Representation of the People Act 1983[1]
Water Act 1983
Level Crossing Act 1983
Miscellaneous Financial Provisions Act 1983
Mobile Homes Act 1983
Litter Act 1983
Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1983
Education (Fees and Awards) Act 1983
Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act 1983
Local Authorities (Expenditure Powers) Act 1983
Town and Country Planning Act 1984
Education (Grants and Awards) Act 1984
Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984[1]
Registered Homes Act 1984
Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984[1]
Housing and Building Control Act 1984
Food Act 1984[1]
London Regional Transport Act 1984
Rates Act 1984
Cycle Tracks Act 1984
Animal Health and Welfare Act 1984
Housing Defects Act 1984
Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984
Building Act 1984[1]
New Towns and Urban Development Corporations Act 1985
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Act 1985
Mineral Workings Act 1985
Cinemas Act 1985[1]
Town and Country Planning (Compensation) Act 1985
Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985
Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
Further and Higher Education Act 1992
Local Government Act 1992
Local Government Finance Act 1992
Severn Bridges Act 1992
Traffic Calming Act 1992

[1] Consolidation Act

Note: Not all the foregoing Acts were based on Bills introduced by the Government.

Council Tax

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what comparisons he is able to make, nationally and district by district, between levels of council tax and the levels which would have been necessary for domestic rates for 1993-94.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* The average domestic rate bill in England for 1993-94, based on 1989-90 rate bills uprated by the GDP deflator, would have been £637. But I intend to make no predictions of council tax levels for 1993-94. These are a matter for individual local authorities.

Derelict Land

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of England's population live in *(a)* derelict land clearance areas and *(b)* assisted areas.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the travel-to-work areas that are derelict land clearance areas but not assisted areas.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* Derelict land clearance areas are not defined by travel to work area. The following travel to work areas include areas which have been designated as derelict land clearance areas and which are not assisted areas.

Alfreton and Ashfield
Barrow in Furness
Berwick
Burnley
Buxton
Calderdale
Carlisle
Castleford and Pontefract
Chesterfield
Clitheroe
Crewe
Derby
Goole and Selby
Huddersfield
Keighley
Lancaster and Morecambe
Leeds
Leek
London
Macclesfield
Manchester
Mansfield
Matlock
Newark
Northwich
Nottingham
Pendle
Preston

Re[illegible]d
St Austell
Stafford
Stoke
Truro
Uttoxeter and Ashbourne
Wakefield and Dewsbury
Warrington
Whitehaven

Climate Change

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) of 27 October, *Official Report*, column *540*, when he now expects the United Kingdom to ratify the treaty on climate change agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 18 November 1992]:* The position has not changed since my answer to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) on 27 October, *Official Report*, column *540*.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Mr. CHAMBERS [illegible]

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 24 November 1992

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Hain: To ask the Attorney-General what documents were given by the Law Officers' Departments to HM Customs and Excise before it prosecuted Matrix Churchill; on what dates the documents were given; what was the source of any such documents provided; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: On 3 December 1990 Sir Hal Miller, then my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove, wrote to me enclosing documents supplied to him by *The Sunday Times* about the affairs of Matrix Churchill. The company was then the subject of a continuing investigation by HM Customs and Excise to which the documents were forwarded on the 4 December 1990 in accordance with the usual arrangements for transfer of correspondence.

Inquiries have been made in all the Law Officers' Departments, but no further documents have been located which were received and passed to HM Customs and Excise prior to the institution of proceedings relating to Matrix Churchill.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Authorities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all the organisations and individuals he has *(a)* consulted and *(b)* invited to submit comments, suggestions or representations about the future structure and funding of police authorities in England and Wales; when their reports were received or are expected; and what process of consultation and discussion he intends to undertake.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No formal consultations have taken place nor have comments formally been invited. If changes are proposed, consultation will take place with those directly concerned.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the individuals outside his Department who are advising his Department on the future structure and funding of police authorities in England and Wales; when their reports were received or are expected; and what process of consultation and discussion he intends to undertake.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* It is Ministers, not officials, who are responsible for policy. It does not seem appropriate to give the names of individual officials advising Ministers when it is Ministers, not officials, who are responsible for decisions on policy. If changes are proposed, consultation will take place with those directly concerned.

Drugs

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people aged *(a)* 16 to 21 years, *(b)* 22 to 30 years and *(c)* 31 to 45 years were arrested for possession of crack cocaine in (i) London and (ii) Wales in each year since 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The table shows the number of people who have been dealt with for offences involving crack cocaine in London in 1990, 1991 and 1992. There were no persons dealt with in Wales in any year. Figures for actual arrest are not collected centrally.

Persons dealt with for offences involving "crack" London (Metropolitan and City police districts)

Age at time of disposal	*1990*	*1991*	[1]*1992*
Up to 21 years	6	9	6
22—30 years	19	31	25
Over 31 years	10	30	23
Total	35	70	54

[1] So far recorded.

Young Offenders

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether Her Majesty's prison Manchester will be used for young people awaiting allocation to a young offender institution once it becomes fully operational.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are no immediate plans to use Manchester prison for this purpose, but the invitation to tender issued in connection with the market testing of the establishment covers the possibility of its holding young prisoners.

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington of 7 August and 24 August about the growth of juvenile crime in the mid-Warwickshire area.

Mr. Jack: I shall write to my hon. Friend this week.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now refer the conviction of Mr. Colin Wallace for the manslaughter of Jonathan Lewis to the Court of Appeal for review.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. and learned Friend has the power under section 17(1)(a) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 to refer a conviction to the Court of Appeal; but he would normally do so only if presented with new evidence or a consideration of substance which had not been before the courts and which appeared to cast doubt on the safety of the conviction. Since my right hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) wrote to the hon. Member on 30 June 1990, no representations claiming to have identified such evidence or other consideration of substance has been made to the Home Office.

Police (Court Attendance)

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many man-hours were used by police officers attending courts in *(a)* Carlisle and *(b)* Cumbria in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and what proportion of total police man-hours this represented in each year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I will write to the hon. Member.

HM Inspector of Police

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each regional crime squad in England and Wales the dates on which each has been inspected by Her Majesty's inspector of police in each year since 1980.

Mr. Charles Wardle: All the information requested is not readily available, but I will write to the hon. Member.

Prison Officers (Name Badges)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the policy of his Department as to the wearing of a name badge by prison officers working in prisons in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The procurement process through competitive tendering has commenced in order that name badges will be provided for every member of the prison service by 1 April 1993. As from that date all staff, including prison officers, coming into contact with prisoners or the public will be required when they do so to wear name badges. Further, staff will be encouraged to wear name badges in any circumstances where it will be useful or courteous to do so. This policy is in accord with the citizens charter, the report by Lord Justice Woolf and the White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice".

The wearing of name badges will be a tangible sign of the shared commitment by all employed in the Home Office prison service to deliver a quality public service.

Police (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of police officers of each rank are from the ethnic minorities.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is as follows.

	Per cent.
Chief Constable	0·00
Deputy Chief Constable	0·00
Assistant Chief Constable	0·00
Chief Superintendent	0·18
Superintendent	0·20
Chief Inspector	0·17
Inspector	0·34
Sergeant	0·47
Constable	1·65

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of the police are from ethnic minorities in England and Wales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The percentage of police officers in England and Wales from ethnic minorities on 31 August 1992 was 1·34 per cent.

Vulnerable Prisoner Units

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provision exists for vulnerable prisoner sections in custodial centres for persons under the age of 18 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are no formally designated sections within juvenile units for vulnerable persons. Under rule 46(1) of the Young Offender Institutions Rules 1988, the governor may arrange for an inmate to be separated from others where this would be in his or her interest. But this would be unlikely to be a long-term solution to problems being faced by a vulnerable juvenile and the governor of the establishment would be concerned to find other means of providing protection, for example, by use of disciplinary procedures in respect of those using or threatening violence.

Crack

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many seizures of the drug crack there were in the Northumbria police authority area in 1991.

Mr. Jack: There were no recorded seizures of the type of cocaine known as "crack" in the Northumbria police area during 1991.

Drug-related Offences

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the number of crimes committed while under the influence of drugs, in Blyth Valley and the Northumbria police authority area, in each year since 1979.

Mr. Jack: It is not possible to estimate with any accuracy the number of crimes committed by offenders under the influence of drugs.

Young Offenders (Dyslexia)

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young offenders in remand or prison institutions suffer with dyslexia.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Records of the number of young offenders with dyslexia are not held centrally. When young offenders are received into remand centres or young offender institutions, their educational needs are assessed. The aim is to help offenders prepare for their return to the community by providing a programme of activities including education, training and work.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what areas within the Northumbria police authority area have been identified as having the highest levels of drug abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I understand that Northumbria police judge that most drug misuse occurs within the major centres of population in the Tyne and Wear conurbation.

Prison Officers' Accommodation

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officer quarters at each of the London prisons were occupied by prison officers on November.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of prison quarters occupied by prison officers on 16 November 1992 in the six London prisons is as follows:

	Number
Belmarsh	[1]10
Brixton	154
Holloway	141
Pentonville	100
Wandworth	126
Wormwood Scrubs	196

[1] flats (one bedroomed)

Vehicle-related Projects

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the vehicle-related projects which were wholly or partly funded by his Department under the probation supervision grant scheme and the safer cities programme in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* The list of projects is set out in the table. The 1992-93 section includes a recently approved scheme which is additional to the number quoted in my earlier reply of 26 October, at column *457*, and my letter of 30 October to the hon. Member.

Vehicle-related projects funded in 1991-92

From the Probation Supervision Grant Scheme	
South Glamorgan	Dragon Wheels
West Glamorgan	Guiding Hands Association
Northumbria	YMCA North Shields
Oxfordshire	Trax—Oxfordshire Motor Project
Shropshire	Telford Drive
Somerset	Mendip Motor Project
West Sussex	Car Offender Project
North Yorkshire	Croft Motor Trust
West Yorkshire	Bradford Motor Education Project (jointly funded by Safer Cities)
West Yorkshire	NACRO Focus
From the Safer Cities Programme	
Bradford	Keighley Motor Project
Bradford	Canterbury Motor Project
Bristol	Southmead Racing Bangers Project
Coventry	Henley Green Motorcycle Project
Hartlepool	Motor Cycle Project
Hull	Orchard Park Wheels Project—Summer 1991
Nottingham	Wheelbase
Salford	Swinton Karting Project
Salford	General Education in Automobile Responsibility in Salford (GEARS)
Sunderland	Town End Motor Project
Sunderland	Warden Law Motor Sports Park
Wandsworth	Wandsworth Motor Project

Vehicle-related projects funded in 1992-93

From the Probation Supervision Grant Scheme	
Avon	Bristol Wheels Project
Essex	Essex Motor Project
South Glamorgan	Dragon Wheels
West Glamorgan	Guiding Hands Association
West Midlands	Shard End Driver Training Project
Northumbria	Motoring MACPI (Multi-Agency Crime Prevention Initiative)
Northumbria	Motorvation Youth Project
Northumbria	YMCA North Shields
Oxfordshire	Trax—Oxfordshire Motor Project
Shropshire	Telford Drive
Somerset	Mendip Motor Project
West Sussex	Car Offender Project
North Yorkshire	Croft Motor Trust
West Yorkshire	Birstall Urban Motorcycle Project for Youth (BUMPY)
West Yorkshire	Bradford Motor Education Project (jointly funded by Safer Cities)
West Yorkshire	NACRO Focus
From the Safer Cities Programme	
Bradford	Keighley Motor Project
Bradford	Canterbury Motor Project
Coventry	Henley Green Motorcycle Project
Nottingham	Wheelbase

Deportation

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many non-United Kingdom *(a)* men and *(b)* women were deported from Britain, following the completion of their prison sentence in each of the last five years; and of those, how many were deported to (i) Nigeria, (ii) other West African countries, (iii) Colombia and (iv) Pakistan.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 23 November 1992]*: The information available is given in the table. Data for men and women separately, and on the country to which the person is deported, are not available.

Persons removed from the United Kingdom under the deportation process as a result of a court recommendation.[1]

Nationality of person	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Total	490	469	396	372	402
Of which:					
Nigeria	146	172	204	172	205
Ghana	67	39	40	23	16
Sierra Leone	2	1	1	1	1
Colombia	9	8	8	13	22
Pakistan	38	26	11	11	16

[1] Under section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1971.

TREVI Group

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to put the future agreements made at the Trevi Group before Parliament.

Mr. Wardle: The Secretary of State for the Home Department will continue to report to the House on the decisions of Trevi Ministers by means of a written answer after each ministerial meeting. Any arrangements which need parliamentary approval will naturally be put to the House.

ENVIRONMENT

Energy Review

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution his Department will be making to Her Majesty's Government's energy review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My officials are contributing fully to the work of the review.

Capital Receipts

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the amount of reserved part of capital receipts set aside as provision to meet credit liabilities but not yet used to redeem debt for each local authority and standard economic region and one total for England; and if he will place the information in the Library on floppy disk.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on the total amount set aside as provision for credit liabilities at 31 March 1991, as reported by local authorities, has been placed in the Library of the House. Local authorities are not required to identify separately amounts originating from set-aside capital receipts.

Building Effects Review Group

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining the action undertaken by his Department resulting from the United Kingdom buildings effects review group report published in 1989.

Mr. Maclean: A number of recommendations in the United Kingdom buildings effects review group report have been implemented. These include the setting up of the national materials exposure programme, the establishment of more urban pollution monitoring sites, the development of inventories of stock at risk for a range of economically important materials, work on air pollution effects on stained glass and the development of economic models to assess the costs of air pollution damage to buildings and materials. In addition, overall research on air pollution effects in a number of areas has been sustained as recommended in the BERG report.

Fire Extinguishers

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken in Government offices to replace fire extinguishers which use ozone-depleting substances; and when replacement will be completed.

Mr. Maclean: It is my Department's policy to avoid the use of fire extinguishers which use ozone-depleting substances. All portable halon fire extinguishers in DOE buildings have been replaced by ozone-friendly alternatives. Other departments have been advised to follow a similar policy with a view to phasing out the use of ozone-depleting substances as soon as is practically possible and within the time scale set out by the Montreal protocol and other international agreements.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining compensation payment levels to be granted following the appearance of a piece of land on the newly established contaminated land register.

Mr. Maclean: The Government have no plans for compensation in respect of land included on the proposed local authority registers of land which may be contaminated.

Audit Fees

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local authorities on the level and percentage rise of audit fees charged to local authorities by the Audit Commission.

Mr. Robin Squire: I have received a number of representations from parish councils about the cost of the requirement for regular audit. I have received no representations from local authorities about the rate of audit fees as such, or about the percentage rise of audit fees.

Urban Regeneration Agency

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of Barnsley as a possible location for the urban regeneration agency.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities gave in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) on 11 November, *Official Report*, columns *789-90.*

Orimulsion

Mr. Oakes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will name the power stations which have applied to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to burn orimulsion.

Mr. Maclean: The chief inspector of Her Majesty' inspectorate of pollution has received two applications under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 from National Power to burn orimulsion in its power stations at Pembroke and Padiham. He has also received two applications under that Act from PowerGen to burn orimulsion in its power stations at Ince and Richborough.

Rents

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to ensure that rent levels required by housing associations do not increase above the level of inflation.

Mr. Baldry: For tenants of registered housing associations whose tenancies commenced after 15 January 1989, rents are set by each individual housing association in accordance with its overall rent policy.

For tenants of registered housing associations whose tenancy began before 15 January 1989 rents are set by the rent officer under the Rent Act 1977. The rent officer will take into account the age, character, locality and state of repair of a dwelling while disregarding any shortage of similar accommodation in the area.

EC Structural Funds

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what way allocations to local authorities under the revenue support grant settlement and capital approvals take account of allocations to individual local authorities under European structural fund programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: European structural fund programmes do not provide specific allocations for individual local authorities. European regional development fund receipts are not take into account, therefore, in determining revenue support grant settlements. Local authorities do, however, receive capital approvals to provide public expenditure cover for European regional development fund receipts, which from 1993-94 will be automatic.

Bathing Water

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will identify the beaches in the north-west of England that failed to meet the bathing water quality standard during 1992.

Mr. Maclean: Bathing waters not meeting the standards for coliform bacteria in 1992 were Southport, St. Anne's (2), Blackpool (3), Bispham, Cleveleys, Fleetwood, Heysham, Morecambe (2), Bardsea, Newbiggin, Roan Head, Askam, Haverigg, Seascale, St. Bees, Allonby (2) and Skinburness.

Urban Programme

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had from local authorities affected by the announcement on 13 November that there would be no more new starts under the urban programme.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. and learned Friend and other Ministers have received a few representations from local authorities about the arrangements set out in my letter of 13 November to urban programme authority leaders for an urban partnership fund, which will use uncommitted urban programme money alongside local authority capital receipts and other resources to promote urban regeneration.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (i) if he will list those authorities eligible for urban programme funding *(a)* that are also in receipt of successful city challenge project allocation, *(b)* that put forward city challenge projects which failed and *(c)* that did not bid for city challenge;

(2) if he will list the local authorities in England that received an allocation from the urban programme this year.

Mr. Robin Squire: Tables 1 and 2 list successful and unsuccessful city challenge authorities. Taken together, the tables list all 57 authorities which received an urban programme allocation in 1992-93.

Table 1—successful city challenge authorities

Barnsley
Birmingham
Blackburn
Bolton
Bradford
Brent
Derby
Doncaster
Hackney
Hartlepool
Kensington and Chelsea
Kirklees
Lambeth
Leicester
Lewisham
Liverpool
Manchester
Middlesbrough
Newcastle
Newham
North Tyneside
Nottingham
Rotherham
Sandwell
Sefton
Stockton-on-Tees
Sunderland
Tower Hamlets
Walsall
Wigan
Wirral
Wolverhampton

Table 2—unsuccessful city challenge authorities

Bristol
Burnley
Coventry
Dudley
Gateshead
Greenwich
Halton
Hammersmith and Fulham
Haringey
Hull
Islington
Knowsley
Langbaurgh
Leeds
Oldham
Plymouth
Preston
Rochdale
Salford
Sheffield
South Tyneside
Southwark
St. Helens
Wandsworth
The Wrekin

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his present estimate of urban programme allocation for 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95 *(a)* nationally, *(b)* for each region and *(c)* by urban programme authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: *(a)* The public expenditure provision of the urban programme is £237 million in 1992-93, £176 million in 1993-94 and £91 million 1994-95. This will allow us to fund existing commitments in future years and provide an additional £20 million in 1993-94 for projects as part of capital partnership.

(b) The 1992-93 provision includes the urban crime fund initiative. The main urban programme provision for each region for 1992-93 is set out in the table.

	£ million
Northern	36·520
North West	38·954
Merseyside	28·285
West Midlands	35·488
East Midlands	9·913
Yorkshire and Humberside	25·997
London	43·172
South West	2·665

In addition, local authorities contribute 25 per cent. of the cost of revenue projects, estimated at about £16 million, and will receive £11 million for projects supported by district health authorities from the Department of Health. Regional allocations for future years have not yet been made.

(c) For initial allocations to urban programme authorities for 1992-93, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 5 June, *Official Report*, column *666*.

Industrial Improvement Grant

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many industrial improvement area grant schemes will finish in March 1993.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not available in the form requested. Individual and commercial improvment area grants often form part of larger block projects which cannot easily be disaggregated.

Radiation

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's comparative assessment of the annual radiation exposure to individuals from (i) natural background radiation in the environment, (ii) iodine 125 discharged from hospitals in sewers, (iii) iodine 125 in drinking water and (iv) krypton 85 discharges from the thermal oxide reprocessing plant received by the public in the vicinity of Sellafield.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* (i) Exposure of individuals to natural background radiation is kept under review by the National Radiological Protection Board. An NRPB report published in 1989 gave the average effective dose from background radiation to the United Kingdom population as 2,200 microsieverts per year.

(ii) NRPB estimated the effective dose to sewer workers from iodine 125 to be 1·2 microsieverts per year.

(iii) A study by St. Bartholomew's medical school funded by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution found the effective dose to the public from iodine 125 in drinking water to be in the range 0 to 7 microsieverts per year.

(iv) The THORP plant is not operational. However, the effective dose from krypton 85 emissions from THORP under proposed discharge limits contained in draft authorisations recently published by HMIP would not exceed 6·4 microsieverts per year to members of the critical group in the Sellafield area.

For comparison, the International Commission on Radiological Protection has recommended a limit on effective doses from man-made sources—other than doses received by a patient undergoing medical treatment—for members of the public of 1,000 microsieverts per year.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what work has been undertaken within his Department on the effect of the Labour party's proposals for domestic rates and the Liberal Democrat proposals for local income tax; and at what cost.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* Both the Labour party's proposals for "fair rates" and the Liberal Democrat proposals for a local income tax were considered thoroughly during the review of local government finance in 1991 and throughout the passage of the Local Government Finance Bill.

The annual cost of the local government review was estimated to be some £1 million. It is not possible to segregate the costs of work of considering some proposals rather than others during the course of that review and the Committee stages of the Bill.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Court Fees

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage increase is planned for each type of court fee; when such increases are proposed to take effect; and what is the estimate of the additional income arising from the fee increase.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The County Court Fees (Amendment) Order 1992, which comes into force on 30 November 1992, and 1 April 1993 in respect of proceedings under the Road Traffic Act 1991, revises the fees payable for proceedings in the county court. This is the first increase since 1986. There will be no immediate increases in other court fees, but all fee rates are kept under regular review. The percentage increase in individual county court fees is set out in the table. It is estimated that the additional income arising from the fee increase will be approximately £55 million in a full year, bringing the civil courts considerably closer to their target for covering their costs.

Revision of county court fees
County Court Fees (Amendment) Order 1992

Fee	*Title*	*Date last amended*	*Current*	*New*	*Percentage increase*
1(i)	Summons	April 1986	Min. = £7 10p in £ £300-£500 = £37 Above £500 = £43	Min. = £10 10p in £ £500-£1,000 = £60 £1,000-£5,000 = £65 Above £5,000 = £70	Min. = +43% £300-£500 = −19% to +35% £500-£1,000 = +40% £1,000-£5,000 = +51% Above £5,000 = +63%
1(ii)	Fixed Date Action/ Originating Application	May 1985	£30	£40	+33%
2	Service	December 1983	£5	£10	+100%
4(i)	Warrant of Execution/ Delivery	Min. = December 1983 Max. = April 1986	Min. £5 15p in £ Max. = £38	Min. = £10 15p in £ Max. = £50	Min. = +100% Max. = +32%
4(ii)	Oral Examination	May 1985	£12	£20	+67%
4(iii)	Garnishee Order	May 1985	£12	£20	+67%
4(iv)	Warrant of Possession	April 1986	£25	£50	+100%
4(v)	Charging Order	May 1985	£12	£20	+67%
4(vi)	Judgment Summons	May 1985	£12	£20	+67%
4(vii)	Attachment of Earnings	Min. = December 1983 Max. = April 1986	Min. = £5 10p in £ Max. = £40	Min. = £10 10p in £ Max. = £70	Min. = +100% Max. = +75%
7	Registry of County Court Judgments	December 1982	£1	£3	+200%
9(i)(a)	Debtor	December 1986	£15	£20	+33%
9(i)(b)	Creditor	December 1986	£45	£50	+11%
9(ii)	Other	December 1986	£40	£50	+25%
9(iii)(a)	Applications to District Judge	December 1986	£10	£15	+50%
9(iii)(b)	Applications to Judge	December 1986	£15	£20	+33%
9(iv)	Public Examination Hearing	December 1986	£15	£20	+33%

County Courts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many cases have been dealt with by county courts for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. John M. Taylor: During the 12 months from November 1991 to October 1992, the county courts of England and Wales issued 3,211,281 default cases of which 76,564 were disposed of by arbitration and 26,980 by trial. A further 2,042,127 judgments were entered in default or on acceptance of an admission. In addition, a further 402,925 other actions were issued by county courts including summonses for possession of land and return of goods.

EDUCATION

Community Care

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the importance to the development of community care policies of two new degree courses in learning disabilities that were officially launched on 16 November.

Mr. Forman: The two new degree courses to be run at Stockport college of further and higher education and King Alfred's college aim to develop the knowledge and skills of those who work in the provision of services for people with learning disabilities. The courses constitute part of the overall training provision for the caring professions offered by educational institutions throughout the country. The Government welcome the development of such provision, which has an important part to play in ensuring that those who work at all levels in community care have opportunities to acquire the necessary skills.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations have been received from Manchester's chief education officer in reply to the letter sent to him by Mr. D. M. Forrester of his Department on 3 November concerning applications from schools for grant-maintained status; what reply is being sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Manchester city council's chief education officer has responded to the Department's letter of 3 November making a number of points. A reply will be sent to the CEO shortly.

Examination League Tables

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many specific errors in the league table of school examination results were reported to his Department within the first 48 hours of publication.

Mr. Forth: Within the first 48 hours the Department had received 52 complaints; during this time, only two complaints were substantiated, one of which was a spelling mistake. The press were notified as soon as those errors came to light and erratum slips have been sent out with the tables concerned.

The other complaints did not reveal errors on the part of the Department or its contractors. The schools concerned had in many cases supplied the information they were complaining about; others had not asked for any changes, had asked for unacceptable changes, had not sent in the necessary evidence, or sent it in too late; one was complaining about a newspaper error which misquoted the tables.

Pupils

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Education if he will list for the most recent date for which information is available, the number and proportion of pupils in each local education authority educated outside the local education authority, and the proportion which resides outside the local education authority, in rank order by the net pupil inflow.

Mr. Forth: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost. I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Regulatory Measures

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Education if he will list the main measures increasing regulation in any area for which his Department has responsibility, which his Department has caused to be put into effect since 9 April.

Mr. Forth: The wide-ranging reforms of school inspection put into effect by the Education (Schools) Act 1992 will involve the regulation of registered inspectors by Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools, in order to maintain quality assurance. No other new regulatory measures have been put into effect in the Department's area of responsibility.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Education if he will list the main measures of deregulation, or simplification of regulation, which his Department has carried out, or caused to be carried out, since 9 April.

Mr. Forth: There have been no such measures of deregulation.

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Education which Minister in his Department is responsible for the oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters which fall within the responsibility of his Department.

Mr. Forth: I have the responsibility for these matters in the Department.

Mature Students

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of students in higher education were classed as mature in each year since 1979.

Mr. Forman: The percentages of first-year students on higher education courses in further and higher education institutions in Great Britain classified as mature are shown in the table.

	Per cent.
1979	40·0
1980	42·6
1981	42·4
1982	42·0
1983	44·0
1984	44·0
1985	46·7
1986	49·3
1987	48·7
1988	50·5
1989	49·8
1990	50·6

Note:
Mature students are defined as those enrolling on the 1st year of a 1st degree or undergraduate course at age 21 or over, or on a postgraduate course at age 25 or over.

Special Education Needs

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to ensure access to local education authority psychological services for further education students who have special educational needs and who need special examination arrangements for GCSE and A-level equal to that provided by local education authorities for students in sixth forms at schools.

Mr. Forman: It is for the Further Education Funding Council to decide how to secure such support services, including psychological services, as are needed by students with learning difficulties in the new further education sector, for which the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 provides. The council intends to issue guidance on this to colleges in due course.

Books

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to ring fence funding for books in the allocation of resources to local education authorities.

Mr. Forth: No. It remains our policy that it is for local authorities to decide what expenditure, within the resources available to them, to devote to the services for which they are responsible; and for schools under delegated management to decide how to deploy their budgets among teaching costs, other staff costs, and non-pay costs such as books.

Corporal Punishment

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the level of costs and compensation paid in respect of the recent case before the European Court of Human Rights, relating to corporal punishment; and what are the reasons for making the settlement.

Mr. Forth: The applicant received £8,000 compensation and agreed costs totalling £11,368. It is common practice for the parties to litigation to attempt to reach a settlement out of court.

Vocational Courses

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the criteria he uses to determine whether a vocational course should qualify for mandatory grants.

Mr. Forman: The Education Act 1962 permits my right hon. Friend to designate, for mandatory student awards, only those full-time and sandwich courses which lead to a first degree or comparable qualification, or to a DipHE or HND, and courses of initial teacher training. His present policy is to designate most courses which fall within those categories. Where, however, a course is a candidate for specific designation on an individual basis—for example, as a course provided by an institution other than a university and leading to a qualification comparable to a first degree—it is considered in the light of all the relevant factors.

University Academic Staff (Pay)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education by how much university academic staff pay has increased since 1979; and what was the average pay level for such staff at 1 April.

Mr. Forman: Between December 1979 and April 1992 the average pay of academic staff in the universities supported by the Universities Funding Council in Great Britain rose by just under 20 per cent. in real terms, as measured by the retail prices index. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals estimate that the average pay for a university lecturer as at 1 April this year was £22,894.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those agencies in his Department which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Mr. Forman: There are no current plans to privatise or contract out any agencies in my Department. However, this issue is reconsidered periodically as part of my Department's normal review process, as explained in the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South East (Mr. Paice) on 17 November 1992, *Official Report*, column 104.

TRANSPORT

Ferry Ships (Safety)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make a statement on the safety of ferry ships.

Mr. Steven Norris: The Government consider that all ro-ro passenger ferries should be required to meet the full safety of life at sea—SOLAS '90—standard for damage stability. Despite intensive efforts, it has not so far proved possible to secure sufficient international support for implementation of the full SOLAS '90 standard on existing vessels over a reasonable time scale. We will continue to seek support in the International Maritime Organisation for an amendment to the convention. Meanwhile, we are considering alternative ways of achieving the same objective for vessels using United Kingdom ports.

General Register and Record Office of Shipping and Seamen

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received against the privatisation of the General Register and Record Office of Shipping and Seamen from *(a)* shipping interests, *(b)* seafarers and their representatives, *(c)* historians and researchers, *(d)* artists and others concerned with depicting Britain's maritime heritage and *(e)* families and descendants of those who have served at sea during the existence of the register.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is as follows:

	Number
(a)	0
(b)	2
(c)	3
(d)	0
(e)	0

Rail Services (Disabled People)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received *(a)* from disabled people and *(b)* organisations concerned with the welfare of disabled people, in regard to the preservation or enhancement of provision of rail services, access to rail services and cost of rail services for disabled people; and what response he has made.

Mr. Freeman: I receive representations on these matters from time to time both from disabled people and groups which represent them.

The BR board has had a policy commitment for a number of years to improve access and facilities for disabled passengers whenever possible. It has an advisory group on disability which is consulted in advance of major decisions on either station development or rolling stock design.

I know that BR provides discounts for disabled passengers, but the detail of such discounts is for BR to decide.

For the future, our privatisation proposals envisage a duty on the rail regulator to take into account the interests of persons with disabilities, which would be reflected in obligations imposed on railway operators through the regulator's licensing regime.

Rail Electrification

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what national safety standards are set for the diameter of the current carrying overhead wire used for railway electrification, giving the largest and smallest permitted diameters.

Mr. Freeman: The electrification equipment used by BR generally conforms to the appropriate British or UIC standards. Stranded wires of diameters between 10 and 22 mm and solid contact wires of between 12·3 and 14·5 mm diameter are currently used. The Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate issues standards for the safe use of this electrical equipment.

Green Issues

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who, in his Department, has been appointed to oversee and develop green issues; how many civil servants have been allocated new or additional responsibilities to deal with the management and development of green issues; and what additional allocation of resources has been made to support programmes related to green issues in his Department.

Mr. MacGregor: As the Department of Transport's Green Minister, I am personally responsible for overseeing its environmental work. This work is co-ordinated and developed by the transport policy unit which was set up in 1989.

Conserving the environment is one of the main aims of transport policy and is an aspect of many of the Department's activities. It is not therefore possible to specify the precise number of people or resources in my Department concerned with green issues.

Nuclear Material

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library the full text of the United Kingdom delegation's statement to the recent International Maritime Organisation marine environment protection committee in connection with the transport by sea of nuclear materials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The report of the marine environment protection committee on its 33rd session, held between 26 and 30 October 1992, will reflect the oral contribution made by the United Kingdom delegation during the plenary session. A copy of that report will be placed in the Library when it is available.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he will be represented at the forthcoming joint International Atomic Energy Agency—International Maritime Organisation—United Nations Environment Programme working group on the transport of irradiated nuclear fuel, at the International Maritime Organisation maritime safety committee on 7 to 11 December.

Mr. Norris: The Department will be represented by specialists in the transport of irradiated nuclear fuel.

Bus Companies

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to offer cash incentives for bus companies to develop full access to vehicles for disabled people.

Mr. Freeman: It is for bus operators to make their own decisions on the purchase of vehicles. Local authorities may assist operators in the purchase or equipment of vehicles to facilitate travel by members of the public who are disabled. My Department is supporting two low-floor bus demonstration projects, one inside London and one elsewhere; and we shall be evaluating their costs and benefits.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 2 November, *Official Report*, column 86 to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), what ozone-friendly alternatives were considered in the construction of the channel tunnel; if he will recommend that the bi-national intergovernmental commission and safety authority reconsider the use of ozone-destroying substances in the sealed tunnel cooling system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: At present no suitable ozone-friendly substances have been developed, although it is envisaged that advances in fire extinguishing and cooling substances will eventually allow Eurotunnel to replace the materials now available. As indicated in my answer to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, Eurotunnel has been required to design a cooling system to accept without great modification the possible replacement of HCFC 22 by more ozone-friendly fluids which become available.

Rail Services (Franchising)

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many responses he has received to his consultation document "The Franchising of Passenger Rail Services" from those with an interest either as a franchisee or lessor.

Mr. Freeman: Responses to the consultation document have included 48 expressing interest in operating passenger franchises and nine in leasing rolling stock.

Freight Services

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the estimated targets established by his Department for the proportion of freight tonnage to be transported through combined road-rail transport means by the year 2000.

Mr. Freeman: The Department neither sets any such targets nor makes any such estimates. The extent to which consignors of freight use combined transport will depend on what services are available and on their cost, reliability and speed relative to carriage by other means.

Public Service Obligation Payments

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to amend the current public service obligation rules to allow payments to be made in respect of individual railway lines.

Mr. Freeman: Amendments to the present rules will be made with the introduction of the franchising of passenger rail services.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Manufacturing Investment

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of United Kingdom gross domestic product was earned from manufacturing investment in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1989.

Mr. Nelson: Estimates of manufacturing investment and gross domestic product may be obtained from the Central Statistical Office database accessible through the House of Commons Library.

Offshore Companies

Mr. Miller: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the tax avoided by intellectual property contracts with offshore companies entered into by United Kingdom companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The United Kingdom has long-established transfer-pricing legislation to counteract international tax avoidance generally, which would include tax avoided in relation to such contracts. Where cases of international tax avoidance are identified, these are in the main handled by a small specialist section within the Inland Revenue, which in 1991-92 recovered an additional £123 million in tax from its investigations generally.

Export Controls

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contribution Her Majesty's Customs and Excise Department will make to the forthcoming seminar being held by the Export Control Organisation on a practical guide to United Kingdom export controls.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise regularly participate in seminars organised by the Export Control Organisation on United Kingdom export controls. Such a seminar was held on Friday 20 November with Customs and Excise participation.

National Income Accounts

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to adjust national income accounts and gross national product calculations to take account of natural resource usage and pollution.

Mr. Nelson: The national accounts, compiled by the Central Statistical Office, measure economic activity in a clearly defined way in line with international recommendations. Development of methods of evaluating environmental factors in an economic accounting framework to complement the national accounts is also being encouraged by international organisations. For a number of reasons, however, not least the difficulty of putting monetary values on environmental factors, the development of integrated environmental and economic accounts is particularly difficult. The Central Statistical Office will be publishing an article on this subject, with illustrative statistics, in the November issue of "Economic Trends".

Pensioners' Price Index

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his best estimate of the annual cost of calculating the pensioners' price index.

Mr. Nelson: The estimated annual cost of the two price indices for pensioner households, which are produced as a by-product of the retail prices index, is approximately £4,000.

Whisky

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how far the income from duties on whisky has fallen in real terms since 1983-84.

Sir John Cope: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 17 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *118*.

Friendly Societies Commission

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the full-time and part-time commissioners appointed to the Friendly Societies Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: Mr. Derek Lee is chairman of the Friendly Societies Commission and a full-time commissioner.

The part-time commissioners are:

Mr. Phillip Couse
Dr. Janet Dine
Mr. Anthony Geddes
Mr. Alec Wilson

Mr. Lee and Mr. Wilson were appointed with effect from 22 July 1992 and Mr. Couse, Dr. Dine and Mr. Geddes were appointed on 1 October 1992.

Minimum Lending Rates

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to remove the freedom of clearing banks to set their own minimum lending rates.

Mr. Nelson: I have no plans to do so.

Interest Rates

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer at what level interest rates were set *(a)* in each of the 14 days prior to leaving the exchange rate mechanism and *(b)* in each of the 14 days afterwards.

Mr. Nelson: The information is as follows:

Clearing Banks' Base Rates[1]

1992	*Rate*
September 2—September 15	10
September 16	12
September 17—September 21	10
September 22—September 30	9

[1] Clearing banks do not necessarily all change their base lending rates on the same day.

Macroeconomic Forecasting

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he has taken to improve macroeconomic forecasting.

Mr. Lamont: I have introduced a number of measures. First, in my Mansion House speech on 29 October I announced my proposal to invite a number of independent forecasters to join a new forecasting panel. This will meet at regular intervals and then publish an assessment which will be used to inform Government policy decisions alongside the Treasury's own forecast.

Secondly, this year's autumn statement includes for the first time some details of how the Government's own economic forecast compares with the view other organisations have taken.

Thirdly, Treasury officials now regularly meet economists from industry to discuss current business conditions.

Fourthly, both I and my predecessor have taken steps to improve the quality of economic statistics on which forecasts are based.

Fifthly, efforts are being made to strengthen the analytical basis of Treasury forecasting.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that economic forecasts will always be subject to a considerable degree of uncertainty.

Insider Dealing

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals are being considered to simplify the investigation and prosecution of insider dealing under one authority.

Mr. Nelson: Under existing legislation the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry may appoint inspectors to investigate suspected insider dealing. Prosecutions may be brought by or with the consent of the Secretary of State or the Director of Public Prosecutions. These arrangements are carried forward in the Criminal Justice Bill, currently in another place, which seeks to amend the law on insider dealing.

EC Budget

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement explaining the differences in the basis of calculation of the latest estimate of the United Kingdom's net Budget contribution to the EC in the pamphlet "Britain in Europe" and his statement to the House of 27 October, *Official Report,* column 572.

Sir John Cope: The estimate of £2,599 million given on 27 October was, as stated, that published in the "Statement on the 1992 Community Budget", Cm 1948, June 1992. This took account of the United Kingdom's gross contribution, public sector receipts and abatement received in 1992 in respect of 1991. The estimate of the United Kingdom's net contribution in 1992 of £1·7 billion given in the pamphlet "Britain in Europe" takes account of the latest information on the United Kingdom's gross contribution, receipts to both the public and private sector and abatement in respect of contributions and payments made in 1992. This gives a better indication of the underlying level of the budgetary implications of Community membership for the UK as a whole.

Parcelforce

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the legal basis on which the activities of Parcelforce are exempt from VAT.

Sir John Cope: Supplies of postal services by Parcelforce are exempt under group 3 of schedule 6 to the VAT Act 1983.

Industrial Subsidies

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish details of subsidies in both monetary and real terms given to *(a)* agriculture and *(b)* mining for each year since 1979-80, including the latest forecast for 1992-93 and the estimates for 1993-94, for both industries in total and also for both industries on the basis of the amount of subsidy per worker.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 18 November 1992]:* The tables provide figures only for central Government subsidies to agriculture from 1979-80 to 1991-92, and grant aid to the coal industry from 1979-80 to 1992-93. It is not possible to forecast the level of agricultural subsidies in 1992-93 and 1993-94, as expenditure depends to a considerable degree on unpredictable conditions. On mining, it is not possible to provide figures for the element of the external financing limit for 1993-94 published in the autumn statement which will be grant aid until decisions have been taken in the light of the coal review.

However, it should be made clear that a direct comparison of levels of subsidy to both industries cannot be inferred from the tables below. This is because both receive subsidies in addition to those funded from Government expenditure. In the case of agriculture, additional subsidies are provided by consumers, who pay higher food prices due to the guaranteed price support system of the common agricultural policy, though these cannot be quantified with any accuracy. In the case of the coal industry, additional support has been provided for British Coal through the high margins, over and above world market prices, that the electricity generators pay for their coal supplies from the corporation. Under present contracts, which have been operating since April 1990, this assistance has amounted to about £1 billion a year.

Table 1. Agricultural subsidies 1979-80 to 1992-93

Year	Subsidy monetary £ million	[1] Subsidy real £ million	[2] Total workers '000	Monetary subsidy worker £	Real subsidy worker £
1979-80	677	1,568	740	915	2,219
1980-81	1,012	1,982	726	1,395	2,730
1981-82	972	1,736	710	1,370	2,445
1982-83	1,433	2,388	706	2,030	3,382
1983-84	1,717	2,734	700	2,453	3,906
1984-85	1,710	2,591	693	2,467	3,739
1985-86	2,162	3,108	693	3,120	4,485
1986-87	1,444	2,010	684	2,110	2,939
1987-88	1,630	2,151	665	2,451	3,235
1988-89	1,380	1,698	657	2,100	2,584
1989-90	1,258	1,452	644	1,953	2,255
1990-91	1,910	2,042	642	2,975	3,180
1991-92[3]	2,086	2,086	628	3,322	3,104
1992-93[4]	n/a	[5]n/a	621	n/a	n/a

[1] Real subsidies are shown in 1991-92 prices.

[2] Total number of workers, farmers, partners, directors and working spouses.

[3] 1991-92 expenditure figures are provisional.

[4] No comparable figures available until the publication of Agriculture in the United Kingdom by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in January 1993.

[5] 1992-93 work force figure provisional.

Sources: 1979-80 to 1986-87: Annual Review of Agriculture 1984-88.
1987-88 to 1991-92: Agriculture in the United Kingdom 1989-1991.

Table 2. Grant aid to the coal industry 1979-80 to 1992-93

Year	Grant £ million Monetary	Real[1]	Total workers ('000)[2]	Grant per worker Monetary £	Grant per worker Real £
1979-80	266	616	295	902	2,088
1980-81	269	526	294	915	1,789
1981-82	623	1,112	279	2,233	3,985
1982-83	600	998	266	2,256	3,751
1983-84	1,335	2,126	246	5,427	8,642
1984-85	2,614	3,962	222	11,775	17,847
1985-86	1,126	1,618	180	6,256	8,988
1986-87	1,492	2,078	142	10,507	14,633
1987-88	972	1,283	117	8,308	10,966
1988-89	468	576	105	4,457	5,485
1989-90	7,371	8,509	85	86,717	100,105
1990-91	234	250	74	3,162	3,378
1991-92	526	526	58	9,069	9,069
1992-93	127	[3]122	n/a	n/a	n/a

[1] Real grants are shown in 1991-92 prices.

[2] Total employees of British Coal and subsidiaries in September for 1979-80 to 1983-84 and in March for 1984-85 onwards.

[3] 1992-93 work force numbers not yet known.

Taxation

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer of 17 December 1991 to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), *Official Report*, column *121*, to provide similar estimates of the burden of direct and indirect taxes for the years 1991-92 and 1992-93; and if he will publish any revisions for earlier years.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* Although the 1991 family expenditure survey has now been published, estimation of the effects of the community charge on tax burdens requires further analysis of the data. I will write to the hon. Member with updated estimates as soon as this extra work has been carried out.

Company Car Tax

Mr. Mills: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what date he plans to announce his conclusions on the reform of company car tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* It is normal to announce details of major income tax changes in the Budget statement.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total net receipt to Her Majesty's Treasury arising from premium bonds since the inception of the scheme.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* The balance outstanding as at end-October 1992 was £2·549 billion.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to increasing the top prize in premium bonds to £1 million.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* The prize structure is kept under review. I have no present plans to make any changes.

Unemployment

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the sensitivity of his public sector borrowing requirement forecast for 1993-94 to an increase of unemployment of *(a)* 0·3 million, *(b)* 0·5 million and *(c)* 0.7 million.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* The effect of an increase in unemployment on the public sector borrowing requirement depends on a large number of factors and assumptions, and cannot be reliably estimated. Estimates of the direct effect on expenditure on unemployment benefit, income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit are set out in figure 25 of DSS departmental report, Cm 1914.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will reconsider the arrangements which lead to the imposition of VAT upon charges incurred in the care of the dependent elderly; and if he will seek to ensure that the United Kingdom is permitted such fiscal relief through derogation from the EC sixth VAT directive.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* The United Kingdom has always exempted from VAT the supply of services by a person registered or enrolled in any of the medical or paramedical registers. The provision of care by a local authority or charity otherwise than for profit is also exempt from VAT. Domiciliary care and domestic help supplied on a commercial basis is in principle liable to VAT at the standard rate subject to the turnover of the supplier exceeding the small trader registration threshold. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has no plans to seek any amendment of the law. The EC sixth VAT directive contains no provision for derogations of the type suggested by the hon. Member.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Aujeszky's Disease

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has consulted pig breeders' associations on the use of remaining funds raised through the Aujeszky's disease levy.

Mr. Soames: Pig industry representatives have explored various possibilities in discussion with my officials. But, as I informed industry organisations last week, it has been decided to use the remaining funds to support the continuing input necessary to maintain freedom from disease.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current situation with respect to Aujeszky's disease.

Mr. Soames: The last outbreak of Aujeszky's disease in Great Britain was in October 1989 and freedom from the disease was announced in May 1991. New animal health trade rules, designed to protect Great Britain's freedom from Aujeszky's disease, have now been agreed by the Community. We are satisfied that these will continue to protect our disease-free status.

Fisheries Council

Mr. Booth: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Fisheries Council held in Brussels on 23 November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I chaired this meeting of the Council. The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir Hector Monro), represented the United Kingdom.

The Council reached agreement on the general guidelines for the multi-annual guidance programmes to be set for 1993-96. These envisage cuts of up to 20 per cent. in demersal fleets, cuts of up to 15 per cent. for beam trawlers and a freeze in the size of pelagic fleets. Forty to 45 per cent. of the necessary cuts can be made by effort reductions. The detailed arrangements are to be agreed by the EC structures committee.

The Council agreed the arrangements for tariff quotas and suspensions for 1993. The 1993 support prices had already been agreed in principle prior to the Council.

The Council also discussed some of the main elements in the Commission's proposal for a replacement to the basic regulation for the common fisheries policy. There was general endorsement of the principle of relative stability and the need to continue the special access arrangements agreed in 1983, including the Shetland box. There are to be further expert discussions with a view to reaching final agreement on a new regulation at the December Council.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy for a total figure for the number of confirmed BSE cases to be deposited in the House and updated regularly.

Mr. Gummer: I have arranged for the cumulative total of confirmed BSE cases for each county or region in Great Britain to be placed in the Library of the House on a regular basis.

Set-aside Land

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish details of the amount of agricultural land currently being taken out of cultivation under the EC set-aside policy in each of the member countries.

Mr. Curry: The latest information available to this Department on the amount of land currently set aside in EC countries is set out. This covers only the voluntary five-year set-aside scheme which was introduced in 1988 and which is now closed to new entrants. New set-aside arrangements come into effect on 15 December, but it is not possible at this stage to say how much land will be set aside in 1992-93.

Estimated area of land in five year set-aside scheme

	Hectares
United Kingdom	150,854
Germany (excluding former GDR)	367,977
Netherlands	29,606
Belgium	873
France	266,575
Ireland	1,766
Spain	84,087
Greece	250
Italy	608,705
Luxembourg	90
Denmark	5,520
Total	1,516,303

Notes: Includes 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991 intakes into the five year set-aside scheme except for Greece—1989 only—Denmark—1990 only—and Spain and Italy—1991 not available. United Kingdom figures exclude 1991 withdrawals from 1988 intake. Former GDR land entered in the scheme in 1990 and 1991 estimated at 704,083 hectares.

Group Marketing Grants

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what sums have been awarded, and to what groups, under his Department's Ministry's group marketing grant scheme since 1 April.

Mr. Curry: The Ministry is responsible for administering the group marketing grant in England. Since the scheme began in April we have approved nine applications —to a total value of £170,482. The majority of these have been for first phase feasibility studies which may well lead in due course to further awards. It is not our practice to give details of individual groups without their agreement.

Common Agricultural Policy Reform

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he proposes to make a statement on the package of positive payments to encourage environmentally friendly activities included within common agricultural policy reform.

Mr. Curry: We propose to develop a new nitrate reduction programme especially where this is necessary to protect drinking water sources, a new scheme to encourage organic farming, a new scheme to reduce livestock numbers where this will be environmentally beneficial, measures to increase the environmental benefits of set-aside and payments to manage land for public access and recreation. Details of these proposals will be issued for consultation this winter. They are in addition to plans to introduce a series of new environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he plans to announce the detailed implications and administrative arrangements resulting from common agricultural policy reform.

Mr. Curry: We have been providing information to farmers as quickly as possible as the detailed arrangements for implementing CAP reform have been agreed. All registered arable farmers were sent a booklet in September which set out detailed guidance on the operation of the reformed arable regime. Agreement has just been reached on the implementing regulation in the sheepmeat sector. Agreement has been reached on the integrated administration and control system regulations, but the detailed implementing rules have yet to be finalised.

Sand Dredging

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library copies of reports held in his Department of the effects on the marine ecology of offshore sand dredging.

Mr. Curry: Progress reports on an investigation by the Ministry's directorate of fisheries research into the effects of aggregate dredging on the marine ecology are included in aquatic environment monitoring reports Nos. 26 and 30, copies of which are in the Library. Studies currently under way, funded in part by the Crown Estates Commissioners, are investigating the rates at which marine life re-colonises a dredged area. A copy of the report will be placed in the Library once this work is completed.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information his Department holds on the impact of offshore sand dredging on coastal erosion and deposition.

Mr. Curry: Applications to dredge marine aggregates, including sand, are subject to a process known as the Government view procedure which is operated in England by the Department of the Environment. The process includes the commissioning of studies to ascertain the effects that the proposed dredging would have on the coastline. Consultations take place with all interested Government Departments—including the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—coast protection authorities and other interests. An application will not proceed unless there is a favourable Government view overall. The individual studies carried out are based on the best scientific and research information available, and should provide an adequate safeguard in relation to the potential impact of offshore dredging on coastal erosion and deposition.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the locations where his Department has been consulted in relation to offshore sand dredging in each of the last 10 years; for which sites he has given a positive response; for which sites he has given a negative response; and what estimates he has of the annual tonnage of sand that has been extracted from each working site.

Mr. Curry: The table shows the areas in respect of which applications were made to the Crown Estates for marine aggregate extraction licences in the period 1982-91, and the response finally given by this Department in each case. Some of these applications are still subject to consideration under the procedure. Information on quantities extracted each year are not made public by the Crown Estates for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

Summary of Government views of marine aggregate licence applications 1982-91

Location of Application to Crown Estate	*MAFF View*
1982	
Mersey	Favourable
Conwy	Favourable
1983	
Southwold	(Withdrawn)
South Goodwins	Favourable
Hilbre Swash (Bristol Channel)	Favourable
East of Isle of Wight	Favourable
Off Great Yarmouth	Favourable
Bristol Channel	Favourable
1984	
South Goodwins	Favourable
1985	
North Goodwins	Favourable
Brighton	Favourable
The Knoll (Clacton)	Unfavourable
1986	
Owers Bank (Seaford)	Favourable
Off North Wales	(Withdrawn)
South Goodwins	Favourable
1987	
Great Yarmouth	Favourable
1988	
Southern North Sea	Discussions continuing
Nash Bank (Bristol Channel)	Favourable
Holme Sand (Bristol Channel)	Favourable
North Goodwins	Favourable
South East of Isle of Wight	Discussions continuing
1989	
North Goodwins	Favourable
Cross Sands (Lowestoft)	Discussions continuing
Long Sand (Thames Estuary)	Discussions continuing
Barley Pickle (Great Yarmouth)	Discussions continuing
Black Deep (Thames Estuary)	Discussions continuing
Southwold	Discussions continuing
1990	
Helwick Bank	Favourable
Southwold	(Withdrawn)
Shoreham	Discussions continuing
Off Selsey	Discussions continuing
North Goodwins	(Withdrawn)
Maplin	Discussions continuing
Outer Bristol Channel	Discussions continuing
East Nab (Isle of Wight)	Discussions continuing
1991	
Owers (Shoreham)	Discussions continuing
Off Southwold	Discussions continuing
East Nab (Isle of Wight)	Discussions continuing
Off Great Yarmouth	Discussions continuing
North Dowsing (Humber)	Discussions continuing
Baggy Point (Bristol Channel)	Discussions continuing

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to pay the maximum permitted levels of national supplements to the suckler cow premium.

Mr. Curry: No. As a result of common agricultural policy reform, premium rates for both suckler cows and male beef animals will rise significantly between now and 1995. In view of this, we have decided that for 1993 onwards, we should pay the EC-funded rate.

Food Promotion

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the food promotion budget level allocated by his Department in each of the last five years; and if he will publish the equivalent figures for France and Germany.

Mr. Curry: The Government grant to Food From Britain in the last five financial years was:

	£ million
1987-88	4·1
1988-89	4·2
1989-90	4·5
1990-91	4·5
1991-92	4·5

The expected level for 1992-93 is £4·8 million.

The equivalent body in Germany, CMA, has over this period been funded entirely by levies on the food and agricultural industries, with no Government grant. The equivalent body in France, SOPEXA, has been partly funded by the French Government. The amount of grant was 250 million francs in 1991: information on other years is not readily available.

Ethyl Alcohol and Oilseed Rape

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in the United Kingdom in cultivating ethyl alcohol or oilseed rape for use as fuel; and what support such cultivation obtains from his Department.

Mr. Curry: The processes to produce ethanol from wheat, for use as a petrol substitute, and to produce biodiesel from rape seed are known and proven. Wheat production is supported through the intervention price, while rape seed producers receive area-based payments. From 1993 harvest, both crops will receive area-based support through the new arable crops support scheme whether grown for food or non-food use and will also be eligible for the set-aside payment when grown under contract on set-aside land for industrial use, including fuel production.

Cod Fishing

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will reverse his ban on allowing Lowestoft fishing boats, over 10 m, to catch cod for the rest of the year; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement about the newly announced North sea cod fishing ban; if this represents a change of policy; and what has been the influence on his decision of the take-up of the Scottish cod fisheries quota;

(3) if he will make a statement on the impact, scope and enforcement of his ban on North sea cod fishing on the fishing fleet of Lowestoft.

Mr. Curry: United Kingdom quotas are divided between various industry groups in accordance with a methodology agreed with the industry. This closure applies to the non-sector vessels—that is, to all vessels over 10 m overall length not in membership of a producer organisation which manages its own sectoral quota for North sea cod. It is necessary because the latest landing statistics indicate that the non-sector vessels allocation of North sea cod has now been exhausted, and for no other reason. The fishery cannot be re-opened to non-sector vessels, as to do so would result in other groups, which still have fish to catch, being prejudiced. The closure will be enforced in the normal manner by British sea fishery officers.

Bacteria

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what commission his Department paid to NCIMB Ltd., in respect of the national collections of industrial and marine bacteria.

Mr. Curry: Under two five-year agreements which expire at the end of this financial year, this Department will have made a contribution of £1,591,183 towards the work of the National Collections of Industrial and Marine Bacteria (NCIMB) Ltd.

Destructive (Imported) Animals Act

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what use his Department has made of the Destructive (Imported) Animals Act 1932 to ban the keeping of non-indigenous species; and if he will list the species concerned.

Mr. Soames: The provisions of the Destructive (Imported) Animals Act 1932 have been used by Agriculture Ministers to prohibit the importation and keeping of musk rats, grey squirrels and non-indigenous rabbits and to prohibit the keeping of coypu. The keeping of mink on offshore islands, with some exemptions, and part of the Scottish mainland is also banned.

Flags of Convenience

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many Dutch fishing vessels sailing under flags of convenience have *(a)* area VII beam trawl pressure stock licenses and *(b)* area IV beam trawl licenses.

Mr. Curry *[pursuant to his reply, 19 October 1992, c. 93]:* As at 9 October four Dutch-owned or largely Dutch-owned United Kingdom-registered fishing vessels hold area VII beam trawl pressure stock licences. Two of these also hold area IV beam trawl licences and a further 13 have area IV beam trawl licences only.

Abattoirs

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many people are employed in abattoirs in England, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

The latest available information on regional employment for abattoirs is from the 1989 census of employment and is given in the table.

Estimated number of employers in employment in abattoirs[1] at September 1989.

	Number
England	9,000
Scotland	1,200
Wales	300

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[1] Activity heading 4121 of the standard industrial classification 1980.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is attending a lunch, given by the Lord Mayor and the Corporation of the City of London to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Her Majesty the Queen's accession to the throne.

Former Prime Ministers

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister what has been the extent of the special financial allowance available in the past 10 years to former Prime Ministers; what measures are in place to ensure that these allowances are not used for political or personal purposes; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The special financial allowance to assist former Prime Ministers to meet the additional office costs they incur because of their special position in public life was not available before 1 April 1991. Payments totalling £88,956 were made from the allowance for 1991-92 and payments in the first seven months of 1992-93 total £67,840.

Payments from the allowance are subject to the same scrutiny and controls as other payments from voted moneys.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister when the study by the National Radiological Protection Board into the effects of radiation on veterans of British nuclear tests will be published; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The study is being undertaken by the National Radiological Protection Board in conjunction with the Imperial Cancer Research Fund. Both are independent organisations and it would be inappropriate for the Government to interfere with the conduct of the study. A report will be published as soon as practically possible.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister what are the terms of reference of the study by the National Radiological Protection Board into the effects of radiation on veterans of British nuclear tests; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: A copy of the first report by the National Radiological Protection Board, including its terms of reference, is in the Library of the House. The updated study includes, I understand, the following changes in scope and methodology: follow-up work on all test participants to 1 January 1992, an increase of two years; a sample emigration check; examination in detail of a sample of about 200 participants to see whether a pattern emerges between incidence of disease and the tasks performed, trades and professions and location at time of detonation.

Parliamentary Private Secretaries

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish the current list of parliamentary private secretaries and the Minister to whom each is attached.

The Prime Minister: The information is as follows:

Department	*Minister*	*Parliamentary Private Secretary*
Agriculture	Minister for Agriculture	James Paice
	Minister of State	Douglas French
Defence	Secretary of State	Henry Bellingham
	Minister of State for Armed Forces	Roger Gale
	Minister of State for Defence	Stephen Milligan
Education	Secretary of State	Matthew Carrington
	Minister of State	David Evennett
Employment	Secretary of State	Julian Brazier
	Minister of State	Derek Conway
Environment	Secretary of State	Peter Thurnham
	Minister for Housing and Planning	Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes
	Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities	David Evans
	Minister for the Environment and Countryside	Jacques Arnold
Foreign and Commonwealth	Foreign Secretary	David Martin
	Minister of State	Hartley Booth
	Minister of State	Malcolm Moss
	Minister of State	George Kynoch
Overseas Development	Parliamentary Under-Secretary	Mark Robinson
Health	Secretary of State	Keith Mans
	Minister of State	Patrick Thompson
Heritage	Secretary of State	Anthony Steen
Home Office	Home Secretary	Phillip Oppenheim
	Minister of State	Emma Nicholson
	Minister of State	David Wilshire
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster /OPSS	Chancellor	Ian Taylor
Law Officers	Attorney General	Tim Devlin
Northern Ireland	Secretary of State	Michael Brown
	Minister of State	Jerry Hayes
	Minister of State	Jonathan Evans
Prime Minister's Office	Prime Minister	Graham Bright
Privy Council Office	Lord Privy Seal	Andrew Mitchell
	Lord President	John Marshall
Scotland	Secretary of State	Simon Coombs
Social Security	Secretary of State	Piers Merchant
	Minister for Social Security and the Disabled	Michael Bates
	Three Parliamentary Under-Secretaries	Ian Bruce
Trade and Industry	President of the Board of Trade	Richard Ottaway
	Minister for Energy	Simon Burns
	Minister for Industry	Dudley Fishburn
	Minister for Trade	Andrew Rowe
Transport	Secretary of State	Graham Riddick
	Minister of State	Bowen Wells
Treasury	Chancellor of the Exchequer	William Hague
	Chief Secretary	David Amess
	Paymaster General	Dr. Ian Twinn
Wales	Secretary of State	John Bowis
	Minister of State	David Tredinnick

Libya

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will now consider advising the relevant bodies of the United Nations to lift sanctions against Libya.

The Prime Minister: There can be no lifting of sanctions until Libya has complied in full with United Nations Security Council resolutions 731 and 748.

Bacteria Collections

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on Government support for the National Collections of Industrial and Marine Bacteria.

The Prime Minister: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has, since 1983, provided financial support for the National Collections of Industrial and Marine Bacteria. This support, provided under an agreement with the company, ends in March 1993. The possibility of providing further support for an additional year is currently under consideration.

Tobacco

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Prime Minister what arrangements are in place to co-ordinate the policies of the Department of Health and the Department of Trade relating to tobacco and tobacco imports; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: There are links at both ministerial and official levels.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister what arrangements have been made by Government Departments, individually or jointly, for funding existing residential projects for alcohol and drug misusers from April 1993.

The Prime Minister: If eligible, people entering such projects from April 1993 will be entitled to income support from the Department of Social Security, including a residential allowance. People will have their charges met by the relevant local authority if they are assessed as needing residential care. A total of £635 million will be made available in 1993-94 to local authorities in Great Britain in recognition of their new community care responsibilities. We have announced that guidance to local authorities will reflect the particular circumstances of projects for alcohol and drug misusers.

Funding for special needs housing schemes sponsored by housing associations, including those relating to the provision of accommodation for people with alcohol and drug-related problems, will continue to be provided by the Department of the Environment through the Housing Corporation.

The Home Office will maintain its contribution to the running costs of those residential projects that reserve bed spaces for offenders with alcohol and drug problems.

Iraq (Equipment)

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Prime Minister what representations his Department received between 1986 and 1990 regarding the sale of machine tools to Iraq.

The Prime Minister: My office has received a number of representations.

Commonwealth

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister by whom, and by what method the Queen is advised on constitutional matters, including those specifically relating to the Crown, which relate equally both to the United Kingdom and to the other Commonwealth countries of which the Queen is head of state.

The Prime Minister: On the rare occasion when a constitutional matter has implications both for the United Kingdom and other countries of which The Queen is sovereign, Her Majesty would take advice from her Ministers in the countries concerned.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions over the past year, he has had discussions with the Prime Minister of those Commonwealth countries of which the Queen is head of state on matters relating to the common constitutional link of the Crown.

The Prime Minister: None.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister who is the Queen's principal adviser on matters that relate to her capacity as head of the Commonwealth.

The Prime Minister: The Queen consults her Ministers in the United Kingdom and in those other countries of which she is Sovereign, in matters relating to her capacity as head of the Commonwealth. Her Majesty also has regular contact with Heads of State and Government of other Commonwealth countries, at the biannual Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings and on other occasions.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Eastern Europe

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total amount of financial resources provided by the external assistance programme to the former Soviet Union and central and eastern European countries up to 5 April; and for how long he expects this aid programme to continue.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Up to 5 April 1992, we provided assistance to the countries of the former Soviet Union, eastern and central Europe amounting to £166·7 million. By that date our share of EC commitments was £200 million and of money spent £55 million. We expect our aid programme to continue for some time.

Development Issues

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Minister for Overseas Development last met her EC colleagues to discuss development issues; and what was decided.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development chaired the Council of EC Development Ministers on 18 November 1992. I represented the United Kingdom. The Council adopted a declaration on aspects of development co-operation policy in the run-up to the year 2000, which sets out objectives for the Community and member states and puts in place the mechanisms to achieve a greater co-ordination between EC donors. It also adopted a resolution on family planning in developing countries which established an agreed framework for action by the Community and its member states. There were conclusions on the implementation of the 1991 resolution on human rights, democracy and development, and on co-operation with non-governmental organisations. The Community and member states reaffirmed their commitment to provide 3 billion ecu in support of "Agenda 21" and agreed to commit 600 million ecu of this over the next year. There were general discussions on aid untying and on general aspects of emergency aid including the specific case of Angola, Somalia and Mozambique.

Ascension and St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to introduce a second service between Ascension and St. Helena in addition to the present one provided by the RMS St. Helena.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: At the request of the St. Helena Government, the Overseas Development Administration has been considering means of providing an extra weekly scheduled shipping service between St. Helena and Ascension Island. Attempts have been made through national and international tendering to identify a suitable vessel for purchase or charter but to date no vessel has been found which could provide the required service at an acceptable rate of return. The Overseas Development Administration are considering with the St. Helena Government alternative ways of meeting the need.

Liberia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contact the Government have had with Nigeria concerning peacekeeping forces in Liberia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We maintain regular contact with the Nigerian Government and support the efforts of the states of the Economic Community for West African States—ECOWAS—including Nigeria, to bring about a negotiated settlement in Liberia.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what investigations have been made of the use of British manufactured arms by any party to the Liberian conflict.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We abide by the mandatory embargo on the supply of arms to all parties in Liberia except the ECOWAS ceasefire monitoring group—ECOMOG—imposed by the United Nations Security Council in its resolution 788 of 19 November 1992.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance or logistical support is being given by the United Kingdom Government to the West African peacekeeping force in Liberia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made at the European Council regarding the situation in Liberia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None.

Yugoslavia

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his Department's response has been to the UN appeal for former Yugoslavia launched in September; and if that response has included action on the need for programme food aid to cover the deficits in grain supply in 1992.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry) on 23 November 1992, at columns *452-53*. Our response has been planned in close consultation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the needs she has identified, including food supplies, in her report of 4 September and elsewhere.

Iraq

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what funding he will provide for humanitarian aid to northern Iraq for the next six months.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* A new contribution of £2·6 million was announced in my reply to the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney) on 26 October, at column *433*. Of this, £2·5 million has been passed to the World Food Programme for the provision of food. This has already been bought in Turkey and WFP is now making arrangements for its transport and distribution within northern Iraq.

The remaining £100,000 is being used to augment our funding for non-governmental organisations in northern Iraq. This includes three projects with the Save the Children Fund for road maintenance, bridge erection and distribution of winter wheat seed, and a small programme of village reconstruction and development of community facilities through the Kurdish Reconstruction Organisation.

Iraq

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contributions to meeting humanitarian needs in the safe haven area of northern Iraq have been conducted by his Department, the European Community and the UN; and what is his estimate of the needs for both the safe haven and other areas of northern Iraq for the next six months.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* Since April 1991 we have provided nearly £3 million in bilateral assistance towards the humanitarian needs of northern Iraq. The figures available to us for EC humanitarian aid to Iraq do not disaggregrate spending in the north and south. The total since April 1991 is 105 million ecu, of which the United Kingdom share is around £12·5 million. A further EC contribution is at present under consideration. Figures for UN humanitarian spending are not immediately available to us.

A UN needs assessment carried out in September 1992 estimated that 750,000 Kurds would need relief aid during the coming winter. The Food and Agriculture Organisation at that time estimated a food shortfall of 35,000 tonnes. However, it is now recognised that the figures will be considerably higher, due to the continued internal economic blockade of the north operated by the Baghdad Government. In early October a joint assessment mission led by the United States and including EC and United Kingdom representatives visited northern Iraq and concluded that in the absence of a government food ration, a further 74,000 tonnes of food would be required for a further 1·5 million people.

The UN has appealed for $256 million to implement its plan of action, of which approximately half is intended for the north. So far it calculates that $62 million is available in new pledges or carried over from its previous appeal.

Private Sector Lending

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current level of private flows from the United Kingdom to developing countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Flows from the private sector of the United Kingdom to developing countries in 1990 and 1991 were as follows:

£ million

	1989	*1990*	*1991*
Direct investment	2,377	2,661	3,000
Guaranteed export credits	2,236	85	−2
Other bilateral securities and claims	−850	−1,010	−680
Total net private flows	3,763	1,736	2,318

Bank lending is the major element of "other bilateral securities and claims". Hitherto it was calculated as the annual change in outstanding loans to developing countries subject to adjustment for exchange rate changes. Strictly speaking, this is a measure of change in stock rather than a flow.

In previous years it was not possible to make an adjustment for the changes in the valuation of claims due to write-offs associated with sales of loans and swaps of loans for other securities. These include bonds issued in connection with debt service reduction agreements or equities which affect the volume of outstanding loans but do not reflect any repayments by debtor countries.

Until 1989 such adjustments were considered unnecessary as the amounts involved were relatively small. The Bank of England has undertaken inquiries during 1992 to estimate the extent of this, however, which has led to substantial revision of the figures that were published last year.

These figures should replace those published in "British Aid Statistics 1986-1990", which were −£1,058 million in 1989 and −£4,515 million in 1990.

SCOTLAND

Water and Sewerage Services

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he intends to take, while consulting on the future of water and sewerage services in Scotland, to ascertain the views of right hon. and hon. Members.

Sir Hector Monro: The consultation paper, "Investing for our Future", seeks the views of all interested parties. Copies of this consultation paper are available in the Library, and my right hon. Friend would welcome the views of right hon. and hon. Members.

Disabled Teachers

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps are currently undertaken by his Department to monitor the number of *(a)* disabled teachers in employment and *(b)* disabled students on initial teacher training courses.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not collected centrally at present. However, as part of a wider review of statistical returns on students taking teacher training courses, it may be possible for the future to include information about numbers of disabled students on such courses.

Scottish Homes

Mr. George Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the debt repayment by Scottish Homes which was announced as part of the autumn statement.

Mr. Lang: The repayment of loans totalling £250,143,307 will be made on 25 November, when Scottish Homes will make a payment to the national loans fund totalling £250,139,023.

Scottish Homes will receive a capital grant from the Scottish Office Environment Department to allow it to make this payment. Parliamentary approval of this new expenditure will be sought in a supplementary estimate for the housing and environmental services Scotland vote—class XV, vote 5. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £250,139,023 will be met by a repayable advance from the contingencies fund.

The repayment is expected to release some £70 million over the next three years for new investment, focusing chiefly on housing improvement and developments.

Care and Repair Scheme

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when his Department will make a policy announcement on the care and repair scheme, co-ordinated by Shelter, Age Concern and his Department's Environment Department;

(2) if he will increase his Department's funding to the care and repair initiative scheme.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 17 November 1992]*: My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning has indicated in reply to letters from hon. Members that he hopes to make an announcement on the future of the care and repair initiative by early December.

Fire Safety

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provision has been made within his Department for monitoring the impact on fire safety of changes to the building regulations and the Approved Document B Fire Safety 1992 Regulations for England and Wales in order to assess the possible implications of the regulations for building and fire standards in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 November 1992]*: The effectiveness of the building standards in England and Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. My Department has developed close working relationships with other Departments which facilitate exchanges of information on the operation of the separate building regulations.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what plans he has to review or amend existing building and fire standards in Scotland; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received on building and fire standards in Scotland; how many were *(a)* in favour of and *(b)* opposed to preserving existing arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* The technical standards for compliance with the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations were last reviewed in 1990. New proposals affecting the fire provisions in the standards are currently under consideration and will shortly be issued to interested bodies for comment.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the composition of the advisory panel on building and fire standards in Scotland, the length of tenure for each appointment and the level of remuneration, where appropriate.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* The membership of the Building Standards Advisory Committee is as follows:

Professor C. C. Robertson DA FRIBA FRIAS FRAIA FCIOB (Chairman)
Professor S. J. Allwinkle BSc MSAAT
Mrs. J. B. Deans MBE PRIAS BArch RIBA
Mr. K. J. B. Graham FIBD FIR
Mrs. M. M. Hall CBE MA LLB
Mr. H. C. Hunter MBE IFE
Mr. R. F. Jamieson HonFRIAS FRICS FFB FInstD
Mr. R. C. Kirkwood BSc CEng MICE MASHRAE FCIBSE
Mr. R. McGowan CEng MICE MIStructE MIHE MIBC
Dr. E. W. Marchant RIBA RIAS MIFireE MSFSE
Mr. A. G. Short MCIOB FICW MRSH FFB
Mr. M. A. Underwood BSc DipTech(CEng)
Mr. D. Walker

Members are appointed for a period not exceeding three years initially and are unpaid.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes are envisaged to the periods of fire resistance or compartmentation size required in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* My right hon. Friend will shortly be consulting interested bodies on a package of proposed amendments to those parts of the technical standards for compliance with the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations which deal with fire resistance and means of escape from fire and facilities for fire fighting. The detail of the changes which are finally agreed cannot be determined until account has been taken of representations received in response to the consultation exercise.

Training

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out the target number of contract training weeks under *(a)* employment training and *(b)* youth training set by his Department with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise for (i) 1991-92 and (ii) 1992-93, broken down by local enterprise company, with the percentage difference in each case.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* The Scottish Office did not set for 1991-92 or 1992-93 target numbers of contract training weeks for Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and their local enterprise companies. The number of contract training weeks provided by the companies is an operational matter for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I have asked the chairmen of these bodies to write to the hon. Member.

Rising-fives

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the working of the arrangements for admission to school or rising five-year-olds in Scotland; and what guidance his Department gives to education authorities on one term entry and the provision of pre-school education.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* The fixing of school commencement dates is a matter for education authorities to determine in accordance with the provisions of section 31 of the Education (Scotland) Act 19[illegible]. At present, all education authorities set a single school commencement date at the start of the school session and admit children to school on that date if their fifth birthday falls between the preceding and the following February, though they have discretion to admit younger children if they wish. The provision by education authorities of pre-school education is entirely a matter for each authority. My right hon. Friend has issued no guidance on this, nor on the question of whether one or more commencement dates should be set.

A71

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Strathclyde regional council (Stonehouse bypass, A71) compulsory purchase order was originally applied for; if he will now approve it; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* The made compulsory purchase order and all the necessary supporting documents were submitted on 15 June 1988 by Strathclyde regional council to the Secretary of State for his determination. There were five objectors to the order. The council considered that their objections could be resolved by agreement and, at the council's request, no public local inquiry was instituted while discussions took place. Generally, it is in the interests of parties to settle their differences without recourse to an inquiry, and, in order to protect the rights of individuals, that time should be allowed for this process to take place.

The last objection to the order was withdrawn on 25 August 1992. Following this, the council notified my Department on 11 November of the several modifications needed to be made to the order in the light of the agreements reached with the objectors. The order will be determined as soon as the necessary administrative procedures are completed.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with Southdown Cleaning and Maintenance plc about compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* None.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek an early meeting with Fife regional council to discuss compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to review the operation of compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* My right hon. Friend has no plans for any specific review.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding financial irregularities arising from the process of compulsory competitive tendering in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* None.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set up an inquiry into the activities of the private sector company concerned with cleaning and maintenance, the name of which has been supplied to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* My right hon. Friend has no locus to intervene in matters essentially of commercial dispute which fall to be resolved by the parties themselves.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those agencies in his Department which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on 17 November at column *104*. There are no agencies within my Department that have been announced as candidates for privatisation or contractorisation.

HEALTH

NHS Pensioners Trust

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who manages the NHS Pensioners Trust; in what way NHS pensioners are informed of its existence; on what basis grants are made; and when and where the annual accounts are published.

Dr. Mawhinney: The National Health Service Pensioners Trust is managed independently by its trustees. All NHS pensioners were informed of the trust's existence, in its first year of operation—1991-92—by the Paymaster General's Office. Subsequently it has relied upon professional organisations, various staff groups and social work agencies to inform eligible applicants of its existence.

Grants are awarded primarily on the basis of the applicant's level of disposable income. The annual accounts are normally published in October and can be obtained from the trust at 14 Palace court, London W2 4HT.

Expenditure

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide by *(a)* regional health authority, *(b)* district health authority, *(c)* family health services authority and *(d)* NHS trust details of budget over or underspending in 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: The annual budgets for individual regional and district health authorities and those for the cash-limited elements of the expenditure incurred by family health services authorities are matters for regional health authorities and detailed information is not collected centrally. However, the department does monitor cash spending by each region in total and for 1991-92 regional health authorities maintained their spending within the sum allocated by the Department.

NHS trusts are not given set budgets and are allowed some flexibility in managing their finances but they are nevertheless expected to meet financial performance targets.

Income and expenditure-based information derivable from the 1991-92 audited accounts of health authorities and NHS trusts will be available later in the year.

Blood Products

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the cost of purchase to the hospital service of the NHS of *(a)* plasma and *(b)* factor 8 in each year since 1985; and how the cost of the purchaser was shared between (i) NHS-derived material, (ii) non-NHS British material and (iii) imported material;

(2) how much *(a)* plasma and *(b)* factor 8 was used in the NHS in each year since 1985; and what was the country of origin of imported plasma or factor 8, used in each of those years;

(3) what is the item cost of *(a)* blood plasma and *(b)* factor 8 from (i) NHS, (ii) non-HNS British and (iii) imported sources.

Mr. Sackville: Many of these details are not held centrally. Such information as is available is given in the table. The national health service does not import plasma and uses only plasma derived from voluntary unpaid donors in this country.

United Kingdom usage of factor 8 concentrate (millions of international units)

Year	*Number*
1985	74·0
1986	85·3
1987	85·2
1988	98·4
1989	102·5
1990	104·3
1991	127·0

Plasma fractionated by the BIO Products laboratory (tonnes)

Year	*Number*
1985-86	192
1986-87	197
1987-88	294
1988-89	493
1989-90	501
1990-91	451
1991-92	528

A small amount of plasma is not fractionated but is used for therapeutic purposes in hospitals.

NHS Drugs

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the members of the advisory committee on NHS drugs.

Dr. Mawhinney: The advisory committee members are:

	Title
Chairman	
Dr. J. S. Metters	Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health
Members	
Professor A. M. Breckenridge	Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, University of Liverpool
Professor C. M. Castleden	Professor of Medicine for the Elderly, University of Leicester
Mr. D. L. Coleman	Community Pharmacist, Norfolk
Professor H. D. Edmondson	Professor of Oral Surgery and Oral Medicine, Dental School, University of Birmingham
Professor D. Ganderton	Visiting Professor in Pharmacy, King's College, London, Chairman of the British Pharmacopoeia Commission
Dr. I. C. Heath	General Practitioner, London
Dr. D. F. Jones	General Practitioner, South Wales
Professor R. M. Jones	Professor of Anaesthetists, St. Mary's Hospital Medical School, London
Mr. A. G. Kerr	Consultant ENT Surgeon, Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast
Dr. E. M. E. Poskitt	Senior Lecturer in Child Health, Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital
Dr. S. J. Richards	General Practitioner, Exeter
Dr. C. H. J. Swan	Consultant Physician (Gastro-enterology), City General Hospital, Stoke-on-Trent
Professor P. J. Tyrer	Professor of Community Psychiatry, St. Mary's Hospital Medical School, London
Dr. D. M. B. Ward	General Practitioner, Glasgow

We are consulting professional organisations about appointing new members to the committee to advise on the categories of drug to which the selected list arrangements have recently been extended.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the terms of reference of the advisory committee on NHS drugs.

Dr. Mawhinney: The current terms of reference are:

"To advise the UK Health Ministers about the composition of schedules 10 and 11 to the NHS (General Medical Services) Regulations 1992, and the corresponding schedules in the Regulations in Scotland and Northern Ireland (except those items which are in Schedule 10 because the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances has advised that they are not considered drugs in the circumstances of general practice) in order that drugs to meet all real clinical needs at the lowest possible cost to the NHS are available in the following categories: mild to moderate pain-killers, indigestion remedies, laxatives, cough and cold remedies, vitamins, tonics and benzodiazepine sedatives and tranquillisers."

These are currently being reviewed in the light of the changes announced on 12 November and the revised terms of reference will be announced as soon as possible.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to receive the first recommendations of the advisory committee on NHS drugs on the 10 additional therapeutic categories announced on 12 November.

Dr. Mawhinney: The advisory committee will be considering drugs within the new categories as soon as practicable. As now, in examining particular drugs they will consult fully with the manufacturers. Changes to the list of non-prescribable drugs will be made progressively over the next year.

London Health Services

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received following the publication of the Tomlinson report; and how many organisations have been sent a copy of the document for comment.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am undertaking a series of meetings with many of the organisations concerned to listen to their views. In addition, we have received a number of written submissions and letters from interested organisations and individuals.

The report has been sent to all health authorities as well as a wide range of medical education, research and other relevant bodies, with an invitation to comment.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will announce the membership and remit of the London implementation group; and whether the membership of this group will include representatives of the professions and staff organisations working in the NHS in London.

Dr. Mawhinney: We shall confirm the remit of the London implementation group, and its membership, when we announce our full response to the Tomlinson report early in the new year.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will prevent any more beds being closed in London before she announces the Government's response to the recommendations for change outlined in the Tomlinson report.

Dr. Mawhinney: We expect to announce our response to the Tomlinson report early in the new year. Bed numbers in individual hospitals are a matter for determination by local management.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of whether the problems identified by Sir Bernard Tomlinson in his report on London's health services are unique to the capital.

Dr. Mawhinney: The report Sir Bernard Tomlinson has produced is a strategic view of the particular needs of London's health services. Clearly there are likely to be some parallels concerning primary care services and the disposition of hospitals in other cities. We shall need in the future to consider what recommendations of the Tomlinson report, if any, are applicable elsewhere.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how she intends to ensure that full account is taken of the implications for staff of proposals to change the pattern of London's health services.

Dr. Mawhinney: Ministers are holding a series of meetings with medical, nursing and other national health service staff organisations to discuss the Tomlinson report including its potential impact on staff. There will also be consultation locally on any closures or substantial changes in services arising from the report.

Myopia

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to make the treatment of myopia with laser technology available in the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no plans at present to extend the use of lasers to treat national health service patients with myopia.

Appointments (Women)

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will present, as numbers rather than percentages, the number of women who will be members of health authorities and national health service trust boards by 1996.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is not possible to predict the actual number of women who will be appointed to these boards by 1996.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the appointees to the boards of third wave national health service trusts will be women; and how many appointees to each authority by 1996 will be women.

Dr. Mawhinney: Of the 512 third wave appointments made so far—chairmen and non-executive directors—203 are women. We are currently set to reach 40 per cent. set for this wave of appointments.

It is not possible to predict the actual number of women who will be appointed to third wave trust boards by 1996.

Magnetic Resonance Scanners

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many magnetic resonance scanners are available within the NHS; if she will list their locations; and what plans she has to increase the number.

Mr. Sackville: The available information held centrally shows that there are 56 systems available, or on order, for the national health service in England, plus access to one mobile unit. We have provided additional funds this year towards the purchase of new systems.

The location of MR scanners available to the NHS by region is as follows:

Region	*Number*
East Anglia	2
North East Thames	2
North West Thames	6
South East Thames	2
South West Thames	5
Special Health Authority	6
Mersey	3
North Western	5
Northern	1
Oxford	4
South Western	6
Trent	6
West Midlands	3
Wessex	2
Yorkshire	3
Total	56

Epilepsy

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many surgical operations to treat epilepsy took place within the NHS in the latest year for which figures are available; and what guidance she has given to purchasing authorities to increase this figure.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. It is for health authorities, within available resources, to purchase services to meet the needs of their residents including the need for epilepsy surgery.

Nurses, East Cumbria

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many registered general nurses have recently passed the examination in East Cumbria health district; and how many have been offered employment in that district.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

GP Fund Holders

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide the underspend and overspend of each first wave general practitioner fund-holding practice in 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information will not be available until regional health authorities have received final audit reports for all fund-holding practices. Early information is that, overall, fund-holding practices made efficiency savings of about 4 per cent. in 1991-92.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide the percentage of the hospital budget of each first wave general practitioner fund-holding practice spent outside the NHS in 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Qa Business Services

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the terms of reference of the Audit Commission report commissioned by West Midlands regional health authority into Qa Business Services.

Dr. Mawhinney: The decision to audit the management buy-out of the management information services division of West Midlands regional health authority by Qa Business Services Ltd. was made by the statutory auditor. The terms of reference for this report are a matter for the Audit Commission.

Opportunity 2000

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she regards her commitment under Opportunity 2000 to increase the number of women members of health authorities and trusts to 35 per cent. by 1994 as a quota or as a target; and if she will make it her policy to ensure that men are not disadvantaged by her Opportunity 2000 commitment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Our commitment is to selection on merits. We do not believe in positive discrimination or in continuing direct or indirect discrimination.

Patients

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide the number of patients per whole-time equivalent general practitioner in each year since 1989.

Dr. Mawhinney: Figures for the number of patients per whole-time equivalent general practioner were not collected prior to 1990. The table gives the information for England as at 1 October in 1990 and 1991:

Year	*Average number of patients per whole time equivalent GP*
1990	1979
1991	1996

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mortgages

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of those people whose mortgages are being paid by his Department have endowment mortgages and how many have repayment mortgages.

Mr. Burt: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people currently have their mortgages paid by his Department; what is the average monthly payment in such cases; what will be total cost to his Department in mortgage payments this year; and what are the equivalent figures for each year since 1985.

Mr. Burt: The latest available figures are given in the table:

Help with mortgage interest in supplementary benefit/income support 1986-1991

	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
1. Number of owner occupiers receiving help (000)s	356	334	330	281	310	411
2. Totals included in benefit (£ million)	351	335	286	353	554	949
3. Weekly average (£)	18·96	19·31	18·56	24·46	34·42	46·34
4. Weekly average (£) for half interest	—	—	16·71	21·86	33·69	35·61

Notes: From January 1987, claimants aged under 60 receive half mortgage interest for the first 16 weeks of their claim.
No figures are available for 1985.
Source: Supplementary Benefit and Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiries. (Copies are held in the Library.)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to provide help to beneficiaries to keep up insurance payments on endowment mortgages when unemployed.

Mr. Burt: We have no such proposals. The Council of Mortgage Lenders has assured us that people whose full mortgage interest payments are covered by income support will not face repossession. It is not the purpose of income support to help with the acquisition of a capital asset.

Benefits Agency, Yorkshire

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of community care grant applications received in *(a)* the York Benefits Agency office, *(b)* the North Yorkshire Benefits Agency area and *(c)* the United Kingdom are being refused currently and were being refused one, two, three and four years ago.

Mr. Scott: National statistics for the last four years are published in the Secretary of State's annual report on the social fund. Details of community care grant applications and refusals by each Benefits Agency district from April 1990 to September 1992 are in the Library. Earlier information relating to York office is in the table.

	per cent.
1988-89	45·18
1989-90	54·22

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of the annual social fund budgeting loan budget for *(a)* the York Benefits Agency office, *(b)* the North Yorkshire Benefits Agency area and *(c)* the United Kingdom had been allocated in the first six months of the year in each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Scott: Social fund budgets are allocated on an annual basis. Information concerning discretionary social fund budget allocations and expenditure is in the Library.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* single claimants, *(b)* couples, *(c)* single parents, *(d)* couples with dependent children, *(e)* pensioners and *(f)* claimants in total in the North Yorkshire Benefits Agency area are currently having one, two, three, four and five or more deductions made from their benefit; what is the value of the largest and the smallest weekly deduction being made from any claimant in the area; and what is the average amount of all weekly deductions being made in the area.

Mr. Burt: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of recipients of invalidity benefit per thousand of population in each region.

Mr. Scott: The information is in the table.

Standard statistical region	*Invalidity benefit recipients*[1]	*Estimated population mid 1991*[2] *(thousands)*	*Invalidity benefit recipients per thousand of the population*
Scotland	181,400	5,100	36
Wales	146,600	2,886	51
England			
Northern	126,300	3,084	41
Yorkshire and Humberside	124,500	4,954	25
East Midlands	74,200	4,026	18
East Anglia	28,800	2,091	14
South East	219,200	17,558	12
South Western	71,900	4,723	15
West Midlands	105,900	5,255	20
North Western	219,800	6,377	34

[1] Information from a one per cent. sample of claimants as at 30 March 1991.

[2] Information from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys—1991 Census. The Scottish figures supplied by the General Registrars Office for Scotland.

Income Support

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State Social Security what is his estimate of the numbers of *(a)* women, *(b)* men and *(c)* children dependent on income support, distinguishing between claimants above and below state pension age, and showing separately the number of women on whose behalf income support is being claimed by their husbands or partners.

Mr. Burt: The latest available information is in the table.

	Number
Total number of claimants	4,487
of which: male claimants	1,965
female claimants	2,522
Total number of children	2,368
Male claimants aged over 65	269
Female claimants aged over 60	1,136
Total number of couple cases	763
where claimant: Male	726
Female	37

Notes:

1. All figures are thousands, rounded to the nearest thousand.
2. Couple and pensioner cases are included in the total number of claimants.
3. *Source:* Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiry May 1991.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security at what rate benefit will be deducted under the Child Support Act 1991 for mothers aged *(a)* 25 years or over, *(b)* 18 to 24 years and *(c)* 16 to 18 years who refuse to name the father of their children.

Mr. Burt: The rate of benefit reduction will be an amount equivalent to 20 per cent. of the income support adult aged over 25 personal allowance for the first six months and for the next 12 months an amount equivalent to 10 per cent. of the income support adult aged over 25 personal allowance. These rates will apply to all parents who decide, without good cause, not to co-operate in the pursuit of maintenance.

Pensioners' Price Index

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what use is made of the pensioners' price index in calculating the annual old age pension increase.

Miss Widdecombe: Retirement pension is uprated annually in line with the retail prices index (RPI) which is widely accepted as the best indicator of changes in the general price level. Had the single person household pensioners' price index been used to uprate the retirement pension since 1979 instead of the RPI, it would now be worth £6·65 per week less than its current rate.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the level of Christmas bonus payable to senior citizens in *(a)* each of the past 15 years and *(b)* the current financial year; what its level would have been in each of those years had it been linked to inflation or prices, whichever was the higher in each relevant year; and if he will make a statement on the bonus in 1992.

Miss Widdecombe: The Christmas bonus has remained at £10 since its introduction in 1972. No Government have increased its value since then. Because the bonus is paid to all regardless of income, any increase in the amount would be a poorly targeted use of resources. We have, therefore, no plans to increase the amount of the bonus. The £10 bonus will however be paid in 1992 as provided in statute. The table shows the level of the bonus in each of the past 15 years and the current financial year had it been increased annually in line with prices.

Date of Uprating	*Amount-£s*
November 1977	11·30
November 1978	12·20
November 1979	14·30

Date of Uprating	Amount-£s
November 1980	16·50
November 1981	18·50
November 1982	19·65
November 1983	20·40
November 1984	21·45
November 1985	22·95
July 1986	23·20
April 1987	23·70
April 1988	24·70
April 1989	26·15
April 1990	28·15
April 1991	31·20
April 1992	32·50

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the level of Christmas bonus for pensioners which would be required to match the equivalent purchasing power of the £10 bonus paid in 1974.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on Thursday 19 November, at columns *367-68*.

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on what new rights the citizens charter will give to disabled people.

Mr. Scott: The citizens charter calls on public sector organisations to take account of the needs of all their customers—including, where appropriate, those with disabilities—when they are setting service standards.

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on future arrangements for independent living for the most severely disabled people.

Mr. Scott: We have decided to legislate in the current financial year to establish a new fund from 1 April 1993, to help people of working age with the most severe disabilities to live independently in the community. The legislation will also provide for a successor fund for existing cases to meet the commitment I made in May 1991 to continue cash payments to people getting help from the independent living fund—ILF—when it ceases to operate at the end of March 1993.

The ILF has proved very successful in helping severely disabled people to live independently in the community. With the introduction of the new community care arrangements from April, responsibility for arranging care for disabled peole will rest with local authorities. However, the Government recognise that there will be a small group of the most severely disabled people for whom the costs of care in their own home will exceed the cost of a place in residential care or a nursing home.

The new fund for this group will work in partnership with local authorities, reflecting their primary role following the April 1993 community care changes. The local authority will be expected to make a contribution by way of services equivalent to what it would have spent on residential or nursing care and the fund will be able to provide a cash payment in addition. Additional resources will be made available to local authorities in respect of these changes and there will be a further announcement about resources shortly.

The trustees of the ILF have today announced that they intend to close to new applications from midnight on 25 November, in order to ensure an orderly transfer of cases to the successor body. I understand that all applications received before midnight on 25 November will be dealt with in the usual way. Disabled people who meet the new criteria and who would have looked to the fund for help over the next few months will be able to apply to the new body from next April. The vast majority of potential ILF beneficiaries are already receiving help from their local authority.

Over the four years of its existence, the ILF has done a splendid job and I pay the warmest possible tribute to the trustees, the director and the staff who are involved with it.

Pensioners (Income)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for the years 1962 to 1979 and from 1979 to the latest available date the real net increase in pensioner income; and if he will divide this data according to the proportion of the increase resulting from changes in *(a)* national insurance state earnings-related pension entitlement and *(b)* occupational pensions.

Miss Widdecombe: The tables show increases in pensioners' income from 1970 to 1988 and the proportion of those increases resulting from changes in occupational pensions. The earliest data available for pensioner income analysis using the current methodology commences in 1970. Comparable data for earlier years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. It is also not possible to identify SERPS from existing family expenditure survey data, and the occupational pension income is available on a gross rather than net basis.

Table 1: The increase in the average income of pensioner units 1970-88

(i) 1970-79 *(1988 prices)*

	Gross income		Occupational pension income			Net income	
	Average amount	Real increase since 1970	Average amount	Real increase since 1970:		Average amount	Real increase since 1970
				Amount	As a percentage of increase in gross income		
Year	£ per week	£ per week	£ per week	£ per week	Per cent.	£ per week	£ per week
1970	76·20	0·00	12·00	0·00	0	67·50	0·00
1971	70·40	−5·80	9·60	−2·40	41	63·90	−3·60
1972	76·80	0·60	11·70	−0·30	−57	69·60	2·10
1973	79·90	3·70	12·90	0·90	25	72·90	5·40
1974	85·10	9·00	12·40	0·40	4	77·40	9·90
1975	85·50	9·30	11·80	−0·20	−2	77·00	9·50
1976	84·90	8·70	12·30	0·30	3	76·70	9·20

	Gross income		Occupational pension income			Net income	
	Average amount	Real increase since 1970	Average amount	Real increase since 1970: Amount	As a percentage of increase in gross income	Average amount	Real increase since 1970
Year	£ per week	£ per week	£ per week	£ per week	Per cent.	£ per week	£ per week
1977	83·80	7·60	12·00	0·00	0	75·90	8·40
1978	89·10	12·90	14·10	2·10	16	81·10	13·60
1979	86·80	10·70	13·90	1·90	18	79·70	12·20

Table 1: The increase in the average income of pensioner units 1970-88

(ii) 1979-88

(1988 prices)

	Gross income		Occupational pension income	Real increase since 1979:		Net income	
Year	Average amount (£ per week)	Real increase since 1979 (£ per week)	Average amount (£ per week)	Amount (£ per week)	as a percentage of increase in gross income (per cent.)	Average amount (£ per week)	Real increase since 1979 (£ per week)
1979	86·80	0·00	13·90	0·00	0	79·70	0·00
1980	87·50	0·70	13·80	−0·10	−12	81·30	1·60
1981	92·90	6·00	15·10	1·20	20	85·20	5·60
1982	91·50	4·70	15·50	1·50	33	84·50	4·80
1983	102·50	15·60	19·00	5·00	32	93·30	13·70
1984	100·40	13·50	18·20	4·30	32	92·30	12·60
1985	102·90	16·10	21·00	7·10	44	93·80	14·20
1986	107·80	21·00	21·70	7·80	37	98·00	18·30
1987	116·70	29·80	24·40	10·50	35	104·80	25·10
1988	118·10	31·20	27·70	13·80	44	106·30	26·70

Notes to the tables:

1. Estimates are based upon data from the 1970-1988 Family Expenditure Surveys.
2. Components may not sum to totals owing to rounding.
3. Estimates relate to pensioner units, defined as single people over state pension age and couples in which the husband is over state pension age.
4. Real increases in occupational pension income are presented as a percentage of real increases in gross income rather than net income as requested. This is because estimates of pension amounts are available only on a gross basis.
5. Negative signs in column 6 of each table represent changes in occupational pension amounts that are opposite in direction to those in gross income.

Care Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has available regarding the number of claimants who are currently receiving income support *(a)* towards the cost of residence in a care or nursing home within the Wakefield metropolitan district and *(b)* from benefit offices within the Wakefield metropolitan district towards the cost of residence in a care or nursing home outside that district.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 23 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of claimants currently receiving Income Support *(a)* towards the cost of residence in a care or nursing home within the Wakefield Metropolitan District and *(b)* from Benefits Agency offices within the Wakefield Metropolitan District towards the cost of residence in a care or nursing home outside that district.

The complete range of information you requested is not available except at disproportionate cost. This is because the information is not routinely collected by the Benefits Agency. However, a one-off exercise was conducted in the Wakefield Metropolitan District in July 1992. At that time there were 1,055 customers receiving Income Support towards the cost of residential care or nursing home accommodation in the Wakefield Metropolitan District. Those Income Support customers in residential care or nursing homes outside the Wakefield Metropolitan District are dealt with by the appropriate Benefits Agency Office.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Family Credit

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will repay £45·71 to cover bank charges incurred by Miss Sally Howes of the Windmill, Dartington, Totnes, as a result of the delay in processing her claim for family credit.

Mr. Burt: The administration of family credit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. As Miss Howes' claim is a personal and confidential matter, he will reply direct to my hon. Friend.

Public Buildings (Access)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if Her Majesty's Government will make grants available for the installation of hand rails next to steps for public buildings;

(2) if Her Majesty's Government will provide grants for permanent ramps for public buildings to give access to the disabled.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

No. A significant proportion of those who use public buildings are people with disabilities and the responsible building owner or building manager will appreciate that it is his job to see that, to give access to his building, handrails are installed by any steps, or ramps provided.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iran

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information Her Majesty's Government have on the purpose of the nuclear research centres in Tehran and Isfahan, and the nuclear sites at Gorgan, Darkhovin and Saghand in Iran.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave on 13 November, at column *1010*. The International Atomic Energy Agency inspection team which went to Iran in February also visited the nuclear sites at Isfahan, Tehran and Saghand, but not Gorgan or Darkhovin. We are aware of reports that Iran plans to build nuclear power plants at both these sites.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will list the main measures increasing regulation in any area for which his Department has responsibility, which his Department has caused to be put into effect since 9 April;

(2) which Minister in his Department is responsible for the oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters which fall within the responsibility of his Department;

(3) if he will list the main measures of deregulation, or simplification of regulation, which his Department has carried out, or caused to be carried out, since the last general election.

Mr. Goodlad: I would refer the hon. Member to the answer given to his question on 19 October 1992, at column *32*.

Macedonia

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise within the European Community the action of the Greek Government in prosecuting individuals who have dissented from that Government's policy with regard to Macedonia within the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Garel-Jones: No, sir. The decision to prosecute is one for the judicial authorities of Greece and not the Greek Government.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has raised within the European Community the attitude of the Greek Government towards dissension within Greece over the question of Macedonia.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has not raised this issue within the European Community.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Greek Government to dissuade them from prosecuting individuals who have dissented and demonstrated against that Government's policy towards Macedonia in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Garel-Jones: No, sir. The decision to prosecute is one for the judicial authorities of Greece and not the Greek Government.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Greek Government regarding their suppression of dissent over the question of Macedonia.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has not raised this issue with the Greek Government.

Mr. Allan Nicklin

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many times the British ambassador in Saudi Arabia has met Mr. Allan Nicklin during the last six months; and how many meetings the ambassador has had with Saudi officials in order to secure Mr. Nicklin's release.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Her Majesty's ambassador has met Mr. Nicklin on five occasions and the chargé d'affaires twice in the last six months. Since Mr. Nicklin was first detained there has also been very frequent contact between Mr. Nicklin and Her Majesty's consuls in Jedda and Riyadh.

The ambassador has had nine and the chargé d'affaires two meetings with Saudi Ministers and Deputy Ministers, and frequent contact with senior Government officials, in our efforts to secure the Saudi Government's agreement to allowing Mr. Nicklin to leave Saudi Arabia. The ambassador has also spoken with the deputy governor of Mecca.

Files (Disposal)

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for how many years his Department keeps departmental files before shredding or other means of disposal.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: With the exception of files on routine administrative matters, dealing with accounts, transport, office equipment etcetera, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's policy is to keep files intact until they are reviewed in their 28th or 29th year. Duplicate or ephemeral material of no historical value is removed with the agreement of the Public Record Office inspecting officer and files are released to the Public Record Office when they are 30 years old.

African Elections

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking, in conjunction with EC partners, to help ensure that forthcoming elections will be free and fair in Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As presidency of the EC, the United Kingdom works closely with its EC partners in pressing the elections in these, and other countries, to be free and fair. Steps include, where necessary, both public statements and private demarches. In addition, the United Kingdom has provided a wide range of both technical and financial assistance to the electoral process in Kenya and Ghana. This has included the provision of office equipment to the electoral authorities, ballot boxes in Kenya and electoral booths in Ghana. We have also contributed to the training of electoral officers and, through the Commonwealth secretariat, to the election monitoring process in both countries.

It was announced on 17 November that the presidential election in Nigeria has been postponed from 5 December to 12 June. We will be consulting our EC partners about possible assistance to the electoral process when we have more details.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those restaurants and hotels in London used in the 1991-92 financial year for the purposes of ministerial hospitality.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 20 November 1992]*: Publishing a list of establishments commonly used by Ministers of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for official entertainment would have security implications.

For this reason, I am unable to give a reply to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much was spent by Ministers in his Department on official entertainment in the financial year 1991-92.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 20 November 1992]*: Expenditure on both wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on ministerial entertainment for the financial year 1991-92 was £349,678.

This figure includes part of the grant in aid to the Government hospitality fund—which meets the costs of the greater part of all ministerial entertainment.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Bomb Damage

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is his estimate of the date by which all the buildings destroyed and demolished as a consequence of the bomb explosion in Coleraine on 13 November will be rebuilt;

(2) what are the total sums which were agreed for damage to property arising from damage by terrorist action in each of the last three years for which figures are available; and by how much those sums were reduced because of betterment;

(3) how many buildings were damaged in the terrorist bomb explosion in Coleraine on the night of 13 November; and what is his estimate of the cost of repairs;

(4) what is his estimate of the total cost of the damage caused by the bomb explosion in Coleraine on 13 November;

(5) what is his estimate of the cost of damage to property caused by terrorist action since 1 January to the latest available date;

(6) when he expects the repairs on all the buildings damaged by the bomb explosion in Coleraine on 13 November to be completed;

(7) what is his estimate of the betterment element in respect of the commercial buildings damaged and destroyed as a consequence of the bomb explosion in Coleraine on 13 November; and what the total cost of interest charges would be on that betterment element at the present lowest level of bank interest presently prevailing in Northern Ireland;

(8) what is his estimate of the value of the commercial buildings damaged and destroyed or demolished as a consequence of the bomb explosion in Coleraine on 13 November; and what is his estimate of the cost of repairing and replacing those premises;

(9) how many buildings have had to be demolished in Coleraine as a result of the terrorist bomb explosion on 13 November; and what is his estimate of the cost of replacing them.

Mr. Mates: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Compensation Agency under its chief executive, Mr. J. Robinson. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. Robinson to Mr. William Ross, dated 20 November 1992:

I refer to your recent Parliamentary Questions concerning criminal damage compensation and in particular damage to property in Coleraine on 13 November. The Secretary of State has asked me to respond.

Approximately 300 buildings were partially damaged as a result of this incident. The current estimate of damage to these properties is £5 million. Six buildings were so seriously damaged as to require demolition and our preliminary estimate is that the compensation due for these claims will be around £3 million. The estimate for the total amount of compensation that will be payable is respect of damage to buildings, contents and consequential loss is £11 million.

With regard to commercial buildings our loss adjusters estimate that damage amounting to £7·5 million was incurred. An estimate of the value of these buildings is not available. The levels of "betterment" involved cannot be estimated since they can vary significantly depending on the nature and scale of reinstatement.

It is not possible to estimate with any accuracy the time that will be taken to fully repair or reinstate the properties damaged as much depends on matters outside the direct control of the Compensation Agency. However the Agency will ensure that all practical steps are taken to facilitate the processing of claims including, where necessary, the issuing of interim payments to assist claimants in the speedy reinstatement of their property.

The following table details the total settlement value of terrorist related claims cleared in each of the last three calendar years:

Year	*Value £'000*
1989	17,845
1990	13,289
1991	22,934

I regret that I am unable to supply details of "betterment" deductions as such information is not available.

The current estimate for the cost of terrorist related damage incurred in 1992 to date is £76 million.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons are out of work as a consequence of the terrorist bomb explosion in Coleraine on 13 November.

Mr. Hanley: The payment of benefit to unemployed people is the responsibility of the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. Wylie to Mr. William Ross, dated 20 November 1992:

As I am responsible for the payment of benefit to unemployed people your recent Parliamentary Question about the number of people out of work as a consequence of the terrorist bomb explosion in Coleraine on 13 November 1992 has been passed to me for reply.

While the full impact of this attack has yet to be assessed, to date three people have registered as unemployed as a result of the explosion.

I hope you find this information helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report and copies will be placed in the Library.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many fatalities took place in each of the last three years in each health board area from causes associated with *(a)* solvent abuse and *(b)* illegal drugs.

Mr. Hanley: The number of solvent associated deaths in Northern Ireland during the past three years was as follows:

Health and social services board	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Eastern	—	—	8
Northern	1	2	1
Southern	1	2	1
Western	2	—	1
TOTAL	4	4	11

Information about the small number of fatalities resulting from the illegal use of drugs is not available as these cannot readily be distinguished from deaths associated with the overdose—accidental or otherwise—of prescribed medication.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many hospital admissions took place in each of the last three years in each health board area from causes associated with *(a)* solvent abuse and *(b)* illegal drugs.

Mr. Hanley: The number of patients who received hospital treatment for solvent and drug misuse in each board area in the past three years is as follows:

Board	*1989-90*		*1990-91*		*1991-92*	
	Hospitals		*Hospitals*		*Hospitals*	
	Mental illness	*Others*	*Mental illness*	*Others*	*Mental illness*	*Others*
(a) Solvent misuse						
Eastern	0	4	5	[1]—	9	[1]—
Northern	1	0	0	[1]—	4	—
Southern	0	0	0	—	1	—
Western	0	3	0	—	0	—
TOTAL	1	7	5	—	14	—
(b) Drug misuse						
Eastern	35	9	36	—	44	—
Northern	4	0	3	—	5	—
Southern	3	4	5	—	5	—
Western	7	1	3	—	8	—
TOTAL	49	14	47	—	62	—

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[1] Not yet available.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people (i) under 16 years, (ii) under 18 years but over 16 and (iii) over 18 years of age were treated for drug or solvent abuse in each health board area in each of the past three years.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of people treated in hospitals for drug misuse during the past three years are as follows:

	Mental illness hospitals								*Other hospitals*			
	In-patients				*Out-patients*				*In-patients only*			
	Under 16 years	*16-17 years*	*Over 18 years*	*Total*	*Under 16 years*	*16-17 years*	*Over 18 years*	*Total*	*Under 16 years*	*16-17 years*	*Over 18 years*	*Total*
1989-90												
Eastern board	0	0	35	35	0	0	41	41	2	3	8	13
Northern board	0	1	4	5	0	0	7	7	0	0	0	0
Southern board	0	0	3	3	0	0	2	2	0	0	4	4
Western board	0	0	7	7	0	0	8	8	0	1	3	4
Total	0	1	49	50	0	0	58	58	2	4	15	21
1990-91												
Eastern board	0	0	41	41	0	0	49	49	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Northern board	0	0	3	3	3	1	7	11	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Southern board	0	0	5	5	0	0	5	5	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Western board	0	0	3	3	0	1	5	6	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Total	0	0	52	52	3	2	66	71	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
1991-92												
Eastern board	0	0	53	53	0	0	58	58	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Northern board	0	4	5	9	9	7	2	18	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—

	Mental illness hospitals								Other hospitals			
	In-patients				Out-patients				In-patients only			
	Under 16 years	16-17 years	Over 18 years	Total	Under 16 years	16-17 years	Over 18 years	Total	Under 16 years	16-17 years	Over 18 years	Total
Southern board	0	0	6	6	0	0	4	4	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Western board	0	0	8	8	0	0	15	15	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Total	0	4	72	76	9	7	79	95	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—

[1] Information not yet available.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the monitoring procedures employed by each health board to assess and review drug abuse and solvent abuse problems.

Mr. Hanley: Health and social services boards, through their community addiction teams and health education and promotion departments, maintain close contact on drug and solvent misuse with the Royal Ulster Constabulary, voluntary bodies, other health professionals and interested groups within their areas. Each board is represented on the Northern Ireland Committee on Drug Misuse which monitors the extent of drug and solvent misuse in the Province and advises the Department of Health and Social Services on prevention measures.

There is also a statutory requirement for all doctors to notify the Department of Health's Chief Medical Officer of any person who is considered or suspected of being addicted to a drug or drugs controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total financial provision made available by each health board, and the Department of Health and Social Services, in each of the past three years for the purpose of combating solvent and drug abuse.

Mr. Hanley: I regret that this information is not available. Resources to combat solvent and drug misuse are included in overall health and personal social services allocations and cannot be identified separately.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to undertake public awareness campaigns aimed at informing (i) school children and (ii) the general public of the dangers of drug or solvent abuse.

Mr. Hanley: The Department of Education has issued detailed guidance on misuse of drugs to all schools, further education colleges and youth groups in the province. The Department of Health and Social Services has also published an advice booklet on solvent misuse aimed at parents and the issue of a similar booklet on drugs is under consideration. The Northern Ireland Committee on Drug Misuse is at present considering what further measures are necessary to help prevent drug and solvent misuse by young people.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* successful and *(b)* unsuccessful prosecutions for drug and solvent offences have been launched in Northern Ireland in each of the past three years.

Mr. Mates: The requested information is as follows:

Year	Drugs offences		Solvent offences	
	Successful	Unsuccessful	Successful	Unsuccessful
1989	133	15	—	—
1990	113	9	1	—
1991	157	9	—	—
1992[1]	229	16	—	—

[1] To 19 November.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of officers employed on programmes dealing with drug and solvent abuses in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mates: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a similar question from the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) on 16 November 1992, *Official Report*, column 7.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nightwear (Flammability)

Mr. Miller: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will consider amending the Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985 to ensure that chemical additives to cloth are banned where they make the material liable to ignition through a spark.

Mr. Leigh: My Department is not aware of any chemical additives to cloth which would render garments made from that material more liable to ignition from a spark.

Mr. Miller: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will consider the extension of the Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985 to ensure that garments carrying the "keep away from fire" label that might flare from a spark carry a stronger warning.

Mr. Leigh: The Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985 require that children's nightdresses, nightshirts and dressing gowns, except cotton terry towelling bath robes, must pass a test to ensure that they are made from fabric with slow burning qualities and do not therefore flare up quickly. All other nightwear, and garments commonly worn as nightwear, including cotton terry towelling bath robes, must carry a permanent label to show whether or not they pass this test. Such garments which do not pass the slow burning test must carry a "keep away from fire" label in a position where it can readily be seen by a prospective purchaser. I have no plans to amend the regulations.

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those agencies in his Department which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Mr. Heseltine: Of the 10 agencies in my Department, two have been announced as candidates for privatisation or contractorisation, the National Engineering Laboratory and Companies House. We will keep under continued review the prospect of further privatisation.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will meet representatives of the BCCI campaign committee to discuss the BCCI staff benefit fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Mr. Saleem and Mr. Qayyum of the BCCI campaign committees met my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry on 17 November 1992.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what information he has in regard to the role of the Wickman-Bennett machine tool company of Coventry in providing machine tools to Iraq between 1985 and 1989, for use in its nuclear weapons development programme;

(2) what information he has on the use to which United Kingdom origin precision technology exported to Iraq has been put at the *(a)* Hutteen and *(b)* Taji factories in Iraq.

Mr. Needham: I am aware that the inspections in Iraq by the United Nations Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency have revealed the names of many companies around the world which have traded with Iraq, including some from Britain. It is possible that more names will be revealed as time goes on.

Any indications of wrongdoing will be urgently investigated and, if appropriate, will be a matter for the courts. However, it would be quite wrong to conclude, without further analysis, that the companies named have behaved wrongfully. Until the invasion of Kuwait, trade with Iraq was not illegal provided strategic export controls were not breached.

Iran

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about his Department's handling of Wickman's export licence to Iran.

Mr. Needham: No. This Department does not make statements in public about individual export licence applications.

Export Control

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the criteria he adopts in deciding whether to investigate media allegations of violations of export control regulations and end-user certificate commitments.

Mr. Needham: Inquiries following allegations of breaches or attempted breaches of export restrictions are matters for the commissioners of Customs and Excise.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what contribution ministers or officials of his Department will make to the forthcoming seminar to be held by the Export Control Organisation on a practical guide to United Kingdom export controls.

Mr. Needham: The seminar will be chaired by an official from the Export Control Organisation (ECO) of the DTI. Others from the ECO will make presentations on export control matters and will participate in workshops on specific aspects of export licensing procedures.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will now make it his practice to report to Parliament on the details of individual export licence applications.

Mr. Needham: No. For reasons of commercial confidentiality, it has been the practice of successive Administrations not to disclose such information. However, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the minutes of evidence to the Trade and Industry Select Committee, 26 November 1991, pages 37 to 106.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to consider the encouragement of 15-year rolling contracts for renewable energy projects as part of his Department's review into the non-fossil fuel obligation system.

Mr. Eggar: I expect to take decisions on the policy framework for a further renewables order under the non-fossil fuel obligation in the light of the recommendations in the forthcoming report from the Renewable Energy Advisory Group.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to publish the report of the Renewable Energy Advisory Group.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 2 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *60*.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what representations he has made to the European Commission on the desirability of funding both the nuclear and renewable energy sectors when extending the non-fossil fuel obligation;

(2) what representations he has made to European Commission officials within the last six months concerning the extension of the non-fossil fuel obligation and its effect on the Community's competition policy.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is in discussion with the European Commission concerning the 1998 limitation on the non-fossil fuel obligation in respect to renewables. My Department has not made any representations to the Commission about further funding for the nuclear sector.

Pit Closures

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what guidelines have been set by his Department for Boyds Mining Consultants in relation to the assessment of viability of the 21 collieries under current review;

(2) what methodology will be used by Boyds Mining Consultants to assess the viability of each of the 21 collieries currently under review.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 20 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *433*.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the likely cost to the Exchequer for work to be carried out by Boyds Mining Consultants in relation to the viability study on the 21 collieries under current review.

Mr. Eggar: Details of contractual terms between the Department and its consultants are commercially confidential.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many private companies have expressed an interest in operating any number of the 10 collieries at present in the review procedure and due to close in January 1993.

Mr. Eggar: My Department knows of eight private sector companies which have expressed potential interest in operating one or more of the 10 collieries currently subject to statutory consultation.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many consultancies were asked to tender by his Department to assess the viability of the 21 collieries under present review.

Mr. Eggar: John T. Boyd Company was the only consultancy approached. In the light of its previous work for the Department, it is uniquely well-placed to complete the study in the very limited time available. I am satisfied that its appointment represents good value for money.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what external legal advice he has taken over who is responsible for the cost of cleaning any future river pollution arising from the closure of collieries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The relevant legislation on water pollution and, in particular, discharges into the United Kingdom's river system, the Water Resources Act 1991, is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with British Coal and the National Rivers Authority about the environmental effects of proposed colliery closures; what consultancy work is planned and by whom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: None. I understand that there is regular liaison between British Coal and the NRA at local and regional levels on all issues relevant to the NRA's responsibilities for regulating water pollution.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the United Kingdom monthly volumes of imports and exports for each month this year.

Mr. Needham: Information on United Kingdom visible trade in index form is published in "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", which is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of United Kingdom trade was with *(a)* Group of Seven countries, *(b)* EC countries and *(c)* G7 or EC countries, in each year since 1980.

Mr. Needham: The information is given in the table.

Table: United Kingdom total visible trade[1]

Per cent.

Year	*G7*[2]	*EC*[3]	*EC or G7*
1980	39·0	45·2	60·8
1981	40·1	44·5	61·7
1982	41·3	45·7	63·3
1983	43·4	47·4	65·4
1984	43·9	47·4	65·6
1985	45·4	49·0	67·4
1986	46·0	50·3	68·1
1987	47·0	51·3	69·0
1988	47·2	51·4	69·4
1989	47·7	51·6	70·0
1990	47·6	52·7	70·6
1991	47·2	54·0	70·9

[1] Exports plus imports.

[2] G7 countries, other than the United Kingdom, are Canada, US, Germany, including former East Germany, France, Italy and Japan.

[3] EC countries, other than the United Kingdom, are Germany, including former East Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Italy, Denmark, Irish Republic, Greece, Spain and Portugal.

Source: "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics".

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage United Kingdom trade was as a proportion of gross national product for each year since 1980.

Mr. Needham The information is in the attached table.

United Kingdom exports of goods and services as a percentage of GNP at current factor cost

Year	*Exports as percentage of GNP*
1980	30
1981	29
1982	29
1983	29
1984	31
1985	32
1986	28
1987	28
1988	25
1989	26
1990	26
1991	26

Source: CSO Blue Book.

Timber

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what three countries import the most timber into the United Kingdom; what were the comparable countries in 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: In 1991, Canada, Sweden and Finland were the main exporters of timber into the United Kingdom. In 1980, the main sources of timber imports into the United Kingdom were Canada, Finland and the Soviet Union.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much timber was imported into the United Kingdom in each year since 1989; what guidelines are followed to ensure that this timber is not imported from countries defying safe environmental directives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Statistics on timber imports are published in the "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom," a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Her Majesty's Customs and Excise is responsible for enforcing the restrictions on imports provided for under the convention on international trade in endangered species. The Government's policy is to encourage sustainable management of forests; wider restrictions on timber exports are neither practicable nor desirable.

Coal Industry

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make representations at the forthcoming EC Energy Council concerning subsidies to the German coal industry; whether he will consult at the Energy Council with other EC nations concerning the proposed pit closure programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I expect there to be a discussion at the next meeting of the Energy Council on 30 of this month of the coal industry throughout the Community.

Energy Programmes

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals Her Majesty's Government will make to the forthcoming EC Energy Council concerning the ALTENER and SAVE programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: At the Council my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade intends to recommend that the terms of the ALTENER decision are politically agreed and that consideration of the SAVE directive, relating to non-traded goods, should continue. Final adoption of either item is not possible until after the European Parliament's opinion has been received.

Dr. Howells: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the amounts and specific sources of European-sourced funding received by *(a)* the fast reactor programme and *(b)* the Atomic Energy Authority fusion programme in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Eggar: The UK programme in support of the European fast reactor collaboration does not receive any funds from European sources. The AEA's fusion programme receives support from Euratom as part of the AEA's contract of association with Euratom. In 1991-92 the contribution was £3·9 million and in 1992-93 it is expected to be in the order of £2·4 million.

Dr. Howells: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the level of Government funding for 1992-93 and 1993-94 to *(a)* the fast reactor programme and *(b)* the Atomic Energy Authority fusion programme.

Mr. Eggar: 1992-93, provision for the fast reactor and fusion programmes is set out in the Supply estimates for 1992-93, class V, vote 2, section D, copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library. For 1993-94 the allocation of funds for individual nuclear research and development programmes has yet to be determined.

Dr. Howells: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many people are employed in each site currently *(a)* on the fast reactor programme and *(b)* on the Atomic Energy Authority fusion programme.

Mr. Eggar: This is a management matter for the AEA. I am asking the chairman of the AEA to write to the hon. Member.

Insurance Agents

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will outline the powers available to him to resolve a failure to agree between the Securities and Investments Board and the Office of Fair Trading on disclosure rules for insurance agents.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

The Financial Services Act 1986 confers on the Treasury specific functions in relation to competition. In particular, sections 121(2) and (3) and 122(7) mean that the Treasury may exercise certain powers if, after receiving a report from the Director General of Fair Trading under section 122(4) or (6), it considers that any rules made by the Securities and Investments Board in the exercise of functions transferred it to have, or are intended or likely to have, to any significant extent the effect of restricting, distorting or preventing competition and that that effect is greater than is necessary for the protection of investors. The powers available under section 121(3) of the Financial Services Act are *(a)* to make an order resuming all or some of SIB's functions; and *(b)* to direct the agency to take specified steps for the purpose of securing that the rules do not have the relevant effect.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to decide upon, and publish, rules on disclosure for insurance agents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

Rules on disclosure under the Financial Services Act 1986 are primarily a matter for the Securities and Investments Board and self-regulating organisations. The Director General of Fair Trading is currently considering the rules.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to promote discussions between the Securities and Investment Board and the Office of Fair Trading on disclosure rules for insurance agents.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

Any such discussions are a matter for the bodies concerned.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many sets of draft rules on disclosure for insurance agents have been submitted to him.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

The Securities and Investments Board and the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation published detailed new rules on disclosure and standards of advice in connection with the marketing of life assurance on 22 July. They have stated that they will not be bringing the new rules into force until after they have been considered by the Director General of Fair Trading.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to receive the Office of Fair Trading report on the Securities and Investment Board's proposals on disclosure rules for insurance agents.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

The timing of any such report is a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Dr. David Clark: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much of the Export Credits Guarantee Department support for medium-term credit between 1983 and 1987 was extended to defence equipment.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 18 November 1992]:* ECGD does not record figures separately as between cash and credit sales. The figures exclude support provided by the now privatised Insurance Services Group.

1983-87	
Total (£ million)	11,891
Defence (£ million)	1,726
Percentage	14·5

Assisted Areas

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many representations he has received in total for Great Britain to his consultation paper on assisted areas.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 20 November, *Official Report*, column *434*.

WALES

Acid Deposits

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what forecast he has made as to when acid depositions in all areas of Wales will fall below critical load levels.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: As indicated by the maps on page 99 of "This Common Inheritance: The Second Year Report" (Cm 2068), we expect the area of Wales subject to acid depositions in excess of critical loads to be significantly reduced by 2005. It is not yet possible to forecast progress after that date.

Nitrogen Oxide

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many people in Wales currently live in areas which exceed European Community recommended levels of nitrogen oxide;

(2) if he will list the locations in Wales exceeding guidelines on ambient nitrogen dioxide levels published in EC directive 85/203;

(3) if he will list the locations in Wales which currently exceed World Health Organisation air quality guidelines for *(a)* hourly and *(b)* daily mean concentrations for nitrogen dioxide.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A research project "Survey of Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations in the United Kingdom using Diffusion Tubes: July to December 1991", was undertaken in 1991. A copy of the published report is in the Library of the House. This report, based on monitoring carried out in both urban and rural areas, indicates that neither EC nor World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines are being exceeded in Wales. However, in order to gain a picture of the trends in Wales, the Department is currently funding a nitrogen dixoide survey. This survey will be completed in early 1993 and will be published.

Carbon Dioxide

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the projected figures for carbon dioxide emissions in Wales for *(a)* 2005 and *(b)* 2020.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Projections of carbon dioxide emissions in 2005 and 2020 for the UK under a range of scenarios, were published in Energy Paper 59—Energy Related Carbon Emissions in Possible Future Scenarios for the United Kingdom, HMSO, October 1992—a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. The modelling work for these projections was carried out on a UK wide basis. Emissions have not been separately projected for Wales.

Water Pollution

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total tonnage of *(a)* xylene, *(b)* benezene and *(c)* methyl ethyl ketone which has been released into water in Wales in each of the last five years; and if he will list the number of known instances of such discharges which have taken place in each year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally. The consented volumes of discharges and the results of sampling of controlled waters undertaken by the National Rivers Authority are entered on to public registers maintained by the authority.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make representations to water authorities in Wales to secure that information on the monitoring of trade effluent consents and agreements concluded between industrial companies and the water authorities is made available to the general public.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Under the Water Industry Act 1991 details of consents for discharges to sewers issued by sewerage undertakers are available for public inspection. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 all controlled releases are subject to monitoring, upon which, as a condition of authorisation, data must be supplied to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, and placed on public registers.

Ozone Monitoring

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing the total number of days where hourly ozone concentrations were classed as poor or very poor at each monitoring site in Wales in each year from 1985 onwards.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Monitoring of ozone levels in Wales commenced in 1987. Information for 1987-90 is published in Table 3.24 in the "Welsh Office Digest of Environmental Statistics No. 6", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. There were no days when concentrations were classed as poor—over 100 parts per billion—in 1991 and only two days in 1992, and at no time since 1987 have very poor levels—over 200 parts per billion—been recorded.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to produce a national sustainable development plan for Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him on 11 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *791*, by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside.

Conservation Sites

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what guidelines are currently produced by his Department for local authorities concerning the wording of site safeguard policies for conservation sites contained in development plans;

(2) if he will list the local authority development plans which contain specific protection for sites of special scientific interest, Ramsar sites and special protection areas.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Planning policy guidance note 7, "The Countryside And The Rural Economy", includes advice on how local authority policies should take full account of designated areas, including particular references to national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty and sites of special scientific interest. All future development plans will be expected to reflect this advice.

Policies to protect designated areas including sites of special scientific interest are contained in the approved structure plans for Dyfed, Mid Glamorgan, South Glamorgan, Gwent, Powys, Clwyd and Gwynedd. No approved structure plans in Wales refer to Ramsar sites or special protection areas.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local nature reserves have been designated within each county council area of Wales in each of the last five years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Two local nature reserves have been designated within the last five years. These are Mumbles Hill in West Glamorgan designated by Swansea city council in March 1989, and Howardian in South Glamorgan designated by Cardiff city council in July 1991.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidelines to local authorities recommending the inclusion of landscape conservation in policies on nature conservation.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) now requires local authorities, when drawing up their development plans, to include land use and development policies that are designed to secure the conservation of natural beauty and amenity of land and the improvement of the physical environment. Planning policy guidance note 12 (Wales), "Development Plans and Strategic Planning Guidance in Wales", advises that the development plan process should take account of the environmental implications of development, including the impact on landscape quality, and consider local options for conserving and improving the landscape.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the local authorities which have offered specific protection from mineral development to sites of special scientific interest within their structure plans.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Clwyd, Dyfed, Mid Glamorgan and South Glamorgan. In addition, Gwent county council has a structure plan on deposit which includes such a policy.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidelines to local authorities to secure that structural development plans *(a)* regard woodlands as a habitat and *(b)* have regard for the protection of habitats other than woodland.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Advice to local planning authorities on the content of development plans is contained in planning policy guidance note 12 (Wales) "Development Plans and Strategic Planning Guidance in Wales". This indicates that structure plans should include land-use policies on, inter alia, conservation of the natural environment. Further advice will be contained in the forthcoming guidance on nature conservation.

Teachers

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number employed in the teaching profession, primary and secondary levels, in Wales in each of the last 10 years; and how many were employed on short-term contracts in each year.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The number of full-time equivalent teachers in service with local education authorities and grant-maintained schools in the primary and secondary sectors, for each of the last 10 years, is given in the following table:

	Primary	*Secondary*	*Total*
1982-83	12,800	14,968	27,768
1983-84	12,887	15,077	27,964
1984-85	12,404	14,683	27,087
1985-86	12,446	14,537	26,983
1986-87	12,235	14,118	26,353
1987-88	12,689	13,836	26,525
1988-89	12,919	13,622	26,541
1989-90	13,074	13,298	26,372
1990-91	13,268	13,173	26,441
1991-92	13,408	13,224	26,632

At January each year.

Information relating to teachers contracts was first collected in 1991-92, at which time there were 1,112 full-time and 899 part-time teachers in regular service employed on contracts of less than one year's duration in the nursery, primary and secondary sectors. A breakdown of the figures by sector is not available.

Housing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to amend the Use Classes Order so as to allow properties in the private rented and privately owned sectors to be covered by requirements for express consent when a property changes from housing individuals from within a local community to housing people from outside the community.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to review the procedure whereby planning permission is granted for the conversion of farm buildings into second homes.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No. Normal planning procedures apply and appropriate guidance is given in planning policy guidance (PPG) note 7 published in January this year.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department will publish an estimated figure for the new social housing units which will be required in Wales as a direct result of the implementation of the care in the community programme.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is not possible to make such an estimate at present. Information will only become available as a result of assessments of people's needs for social and community care, including housing, from 1 April 1993, when the provisions of the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 come into force. This information will be aggregated and summarised in the social care plans produced by local authorities, jointly with housing authorities, and published by 1 April annually.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the marina developments undertaken in Wales since 1980; how many houses and flats have been constructed as part of the marina schemes; and what proportion of such houses are currently second homes.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Mineral Workings

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many old mineral working areas have been redeveloped within each local authority area of Wales in each of the last two years; and how many such workings have been developed as nature conservation sites.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Road Safety

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps his Department is taking to encourage local highway authorities in Wales to carry out local safety schemes.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Officials are in regular contact with Welsh local authority representatives on the road casualty reduction working group. We also issue guidance to local authorities on such matters.

Shopping Developments

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local authority structure plans in Wales make reference to out-of-town shopping developments; and how many such plans presume against such developments.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Seven of the eight approved structure plans in Wales contain policies related to out-of-town shopping developments. One of the seven plans presumes against all forms of such development.

Population Statistics

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined population of the present districts of Aberconwy and Colwyn, but excluding the community areas of Cefnmeiriadog and Trefnant.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for the area requested are as follows:

(a) 89,100
(b) 108,600

Notes:

1. The Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates for 1991 are not available for community areas. Where estimates of population for community areas have been requested, apportionments of the 1991 district mid-year estimates have been made according to those communities' percentage of their district population from the most nearly corresponding ward figures from the 1981 census.
2. All figures rounded to the nearest 100.
3. Adult population taken to be those aged 16 and over.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined population of the area comprised by the present districts of Neath and Port Talbot, together with the community areas of Pontardwe, Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen, Cwmllynfell, Ystalyfera, Cilybebyll, Ystradgynlais and Tawe-Uchaf.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for the area requested are as follows:

(a) 119,100
(b) 148,900

Notes:

1. The Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates for 1991 are not available for community areas. Where estimates of population for community areas have been requested, apportionments of the 1991 district mid-year estimates have been made according to those communities' percentage of their district population from the most nearly corresponding ward figures from the 1981 census.
2. All figures rounded to the nearest 100.
3. Adult population taken to be those aged 16 and over.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined population of the area comprised by the present district of Rhuddlan, together with the community areas of Llanasa, Trelawnyd and Gwaenysgor, Cefnmeiriadog, Trefnant, Aberwheeler, Henllan, Denbigh, Llandyrnog, Llangynhafal, Llanynys, Llanrhaeadr-yng-Nghinmeirch, Nantglyn, Cyffylliog, Ruthin, Llanbedr, Dyffryn Clwyd, Llanferres Clocaenog, Efenechtyd, Llandegla, Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd, Llanarmon-yn-Ial, Llanelidan, Derwen, Betws Gwerfil Goch, Gwyddelwern, Bryneglwys, Corwen, Llantysilio, Llangollen and Llangollen rural.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for the area requested are as follows:

(a) 77,100
(b) 95,100

Notes:

1. The Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates for 1991 are not available for community areas. Where estimates of population for community areas have been requested, apportionments of the 1991 district mid-year estimates have been made according to those communities' percentage of their district population from the most nearly corresponding ward figures from the 1981 census.
2. All figures rounded to the nearest 100.
3. Adult population taken to be those aged 16 and over.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will give his current estimate of the *(a)* adult and *(b)* total combined population of Ynys Môn.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Description	Adult population	Total population
Ynys	55,400	69,800

Notes:

1. Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates, 1991.
2. Adults assumed to be all those aged 16 and over,
3. All figures rounded to nearest 100.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined population of the area comprised by the present district of Montgomeryshire, together with the community areas of Llansilin, Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant and Llangedwyn.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for the area requested are as follows:

(a) 43,900

(b) 54,600

Notes:

1. The Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates for 1991 are not available for community areas. Where estimates of population for community areas have been requested, apportionments of the 1991 district mid-year estimates have been made according to those communities' percentage of their district population from the most nearly corresponding ward figures from the 1981 census.
2. All figures rounded to the nearest 100.
3. Adult population taken to be those aged 16 and over.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined population of the area comprised by the present districts of Blaenau Gwent and Islwyn, together with the community areas of Bargoed, Gelligaer, Nelson, Aber Valley, Llanbradach, Penyrhoel, Maesycwmmer, Bedwas and Machen, Caerphilly, Van and Rudry.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for the area requested are as follows:

(a) 180,100.

(b) 230,000.

Notes:

1. The Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates for 1991 are not available for community areas. Where estimates of population for community areas have been requested, apportionments of the 1991 districts mid-year estimates have been made according to those communities' percentage of their district population from the most nearly corresponding ward figures from the 1981 census.
2. All figures rounded to the nearest 100.
3. Adult population taken to be those aged 16 and over.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined population of the area comprised by the present district of Wrexham and Maelor, together with the community areas of Chirk, Glyntraian, Llansantffraid Glyn Ceiriog and Ceiriog Ucha.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for the area requested are as follows:

(a) 97,700.

(b) 123,600.

Notes:

1. The Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates for 1991 are not available for community areas. Where estimates of population for community areas have been requested, apportionments of the 1991 district mid-year estimates have been made according to those communities' percentage of their district population from the most nearly corresponding ward figures from the 1981 census.
2. All figures rounded to the nearest 100.
3. Adult population taken to be those aged 16 and over.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total population of Newport district.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Description	Adult population	Total population
Newport	106,000	135,400

Notes:

1. Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates, 1991.
2. Adults assumed to be all those aged 16 and over.
3. All figures rounded to nearest 100.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total population of the Cynon valley district.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Description	Adult population	Total population
Cynon Valley	51,800	65,800

Notes:

1. Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates, 1991.
2. Adults assumed to be all those aged 16 and over.
3. All figures rounded to nearest 100.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined population of the present districts of Rhondda and Taf-Ely, but excluding the community area of Pentyrch.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for the area requested are as follows:

(a) 136,200

(b) 172,400

Notes:

1. The Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates for 1991 are not available for community areas. Where estimates of population for community areas have been requested, apportionments of the 1991 district mid-year estimates have been made according to those communities' percentage of their district population from the most nearly corresponding ward figures from the 1981 census.
2. All figures rounded to the nearest 100.
3. Adult population taken to be those aged 16 and over.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total population of Ceredigion district.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Description	Adult population	Total population
Ceredigion	54,600	66,700

Notes:

1. Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates, 1991.
2. Adults assumed to be all those aged 16 and over.
3. All figures rounded to nearest 100.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined population in the present districts of Preseli Pembrokeshire and south Pembrokeshire together with Caldey island and St. Margaret's island.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Description	*Adult population*	*Total population*
South Pembrokeshire and Preseli Pembrokeshire	90,200	113,700

Notes:

1. Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates, 1991.
2. Adults assumed to be all those aged 16 and over.
3. All figures rounded to nearest 100.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined populaton of the present districts of Alyn and Deeside and Delyn, but excluding the community areas of Llanasa and Trelawnyd and Gwaenysgor.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for the area requested are as follows:

(a) 109,000
(b) 137,800

Notes:

1. The Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates for 1991 are not available for community areas. Where estimates of population for community areas have been requested, apportionments of the 1991 district mid-year estimates have been made according to those communities' percentage of their district population from the most nearly corresponding ward figures from the 1981 census.
2. All figures rounded to the nearest 100.
3. Adult population taken to be those aged 16 and over.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined population of the present district of Ogwr, but excluding the community areas of Wick, St. Bride's Major, Ewenny and Coychurch Lower.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for the area requested are as follows:

(a) 101,200
(b) 127,600

Notes:

1. The Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates for 1991 are not available for community areas. Where estimates of population for community areas have been requested, apportionments of the 1991 district mid-year estimates have been made according to those communities' percentage of their district population from the most nearly corresponding ward figures from the 1981 census.
2. All figures rounded to the nearest 100.
3. Adult population taken to be those aged 16 and over.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined population of the area comprised by the present district of Merthyr Tydfil, together with the community areas of Rhymney, Darran valley and New Tredegar.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for the area requested are as follows:

(a) 61,100
(b) 78,200

Notes:

1. The Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates for 1991 are not available for community areas. Where estimates of population for community areas have been requested, apportionments of the 1991 district mid-year estimates have been made according to those communities' percentage of their district population from the most nearly corresponding ward figures from the 1981 census.
2. All figures rounded to the nearest 100.
3. Adult population taken to be those aged 16 and over.

Mr. Morgan To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined population of Arfon and Dwyfor districts.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Description	*Adult population*	*Total population*
Arfon and Dwyfor	67,200	83,300

Notes:

1. Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates, 1991.
2. Adults assumed to be all those aged 16 and over.
3. All figures rounded to nearest 100.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined population of the present districts of Carmarthen Dinefwr and Llannelli.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Description	*Adult population*	*Total population*
Carmarthen, Dinefwr and Llanelli	137,600	170,500

Notes:

1. Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates, 1991.
2. Adults assumed to be all those aged 16 and over.
3. All figures rounded to nearest 100.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined population of the area comprised by the present district of Cardiff, together with the community area of Pentyrch.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for the area requested are as follows:

(a) 233,400
(b) 295,400

Notes:

1. The Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates for 1991 are not available for community areas. Where estimates of population for community areas have been requested, apportionments of the 1991 district mid-year estimates have been made according to those communities' percentage of their district population from the most nearly corresponding ward figures from the 1981 census.
2. All figures rounded to the nearest 100.
3. Adult population taken to be those aged 16 and over.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined population of the area comprised by the present district of Meirionnydd together with the community areas of Cynwed and Llandrillo.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for the area requested are as follows:

(a) 27,700
(b) 34,200

Notes:

1. The Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates for 1991 are not available for community areas. Where estimates of population for community areas have been requested, apportionments of the 1991 district mid-year estimates have been made according to those communities' percentage of their district population from the most nearly corresponding ward figures from the 1981 census.
2. All figures rounded to the nearest 100.
3. Adult population taken to be those aged 16 and over.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total population of Torfaen district.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Description	*Adult population*	*Total population*
Torfaen	71,700	91,200

Notes:
1. Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates, 1991.
2. Adults assumed to be all those aged 16 and over.
3. All figures rounded to nearest 100.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined population of the area comprised by the present district of Swansea, together with the community areas of Gowerton, Llwchwr, Gorseinon, Grovesend, Pontardulais, Mawr, Pont-Lliw, Penllergaer, Llangyfelach and Clydach.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for the area requested are as follows:

(a) 183,900
(b) 230,100

Notes:
1. The Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates for 1991 are not available for community areas. Where estimates of population for community areas have been requested, apportionments of the 1991 district mid-year estimates have been made according to those communities' percentage of their district population from the most nearly corresponding ward figures from the 1981 census.
2. All figures rounded to the nearest 100.
3. Adult population taken to be those aged 16 and over.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined population of the area comprised by the present district of Vale of Glamorgan, together with the community areas of Wick, St. Bride's Major, Ewenny and Coychurch Lower.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for the area requested are as follows:

(a) 96,000
(b) 121,800

Notes:
1. The Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates for 1991 are not available for community areas. Where estimates of population for community areas have been requested, apportionments of the 1991 district mid-year estimates have been made according to those communities' percentage of their district population from the most nearly corresponding ward figures from the 1981 census.
2. All figures rounded to the nearest 100.
3. Adult population taken to be those aged 16 and over.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total population of Monmouth district.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Description	*Adult population*	*Total population*
Monmouth	61,400	76,600

Notes:
1. Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates, 1991.
2. Adults assumed to be all those aged 16 and over.
3. All figures rounded to nearest 100.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current estimate of *(a)* the adult and *(b)* the total combined population of the present districts of Brecknock and Radnorshire, but excluding the community areas of Ystradgynlais and Tawe-Uchaf.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for the area requested are as follows:

(a) 44,400
(b) 55,200

Notes:
1. The Registrar General's provisional mid-year estimates for 1991 are not available for community areas. Where estimates of population for community areas have been requested, apportionments of the 1991 district mid-year estimates have been made according to those communities' percentage of their district population from the most nearly corresponding ward figures from the 1981 census.
2. All figures rounded to the nearest 100.
3. Adult population taken to be those aged 16 and over.

Milk

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the amount of milk produced in 1991.

Mr. David Hunt: Total sales of milk off farms in Wales through the milk marketing schemes amount to 1,470 million litres in 1991.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money was invested by the Welsh Development Agency to companies in Anglesey in 1990 and 1991; how much money was invested in Halal Co.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Development Agency invested £375,000 in companies in Ynys Môn district in the year to 31 March 1990 and £367,000 in the year to 31 March 1991. No investment has been made in Halal Company.

Abattoirs

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the criteria by which companies are given permission to operate abattoirs in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Until 31 December 1992 companies may only operate slaughterhouses if they are currently licensed by their local authority under the Slaughterhouses Act 1974. From 1 January 1993 they will also need to be licensed by the Welsh Office Agriculture Department in accordance with the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992. The procedures for Agriculture Departments' licences will ensure that operators have a fair chance to make any improvements needed and that, as far as possible, any special circumstances are considered before a decision on licensing is taken. The overriding criterion will be whether the hygiene status of the meat is put at risk by the method of operation in or the construction of the premises. In the event of the refusal of a licence, an operator will be able to appeal to the Meat Hygiene Appeals Tribunal.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a list available of those who made submissions regarding the review of assisted areas in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have placed in the Library of the House a list of all those who responded and who did not ask for their responses to be treated confidentially.

Sheep Scab

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of sheep scab were reported in Wales in 1992; what were the comparable figures for 1991 and 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of confirmed cases of sheep scab in Wales in the years 1989, 1991 and 1992 are given in the following table. The figure for 1992 is for the period 1 January 1992 to 30 June 1992 after which controls on the disease were deregulated.

Year	*Number of reported cases*
1989	5
1991	15
1992	13

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to combat recent outbreaks of sheep scab in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The control of sheep scab is a matter for individual flock owners, who are well aware of the preventive measures and procedures needed to deal with it. All sheep farmers are being sent an advisory leaflet reminding them how to identify and deal with the disease. Where veterinary field staff see suspected disease at markets or on farms, advice is given and, where appropriate, action to safeguard animal welfare is taken. Following the outbreak in north Wales veterinary officers met farmers and undertook inspections in order to assess the extent of the disease and to ensure that animal welfare was protected.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the October 1992 figures for male adult unemployment in the area covered by the valleys initiative programme *(a)* by district and *(b)* in total for each of the years 1979, 1988, 1991 and 1992, showing the percentage changes and also figures for the economically active percentage of the adult male population.

Mr. David Hunt: The existing programme for the Valleys Area covers all of the borough of Rhondda and part of 15 other districts. The earliest year for which data comparable with present coverage are available for local areas in 1983. The information requested is given in the following tables:

Male Unemployed Claimants—At October

District (a)	*1983*	*1988*	*1991*	*1992*	*Per cent. change 1983-1992*
Dinefwr	1,115	943	1,039	1,181	5·9
Llanelli	2,728	2,111	2,298	2,298	−15·8
Blaenau Gwent	4,167	3,045	2,767	2,820	−32·3
Islwyn	2,419	1,940	1,821	1,798	−25·7
Torfaen	3,896	2,735	3,288	3,532	−9·3
Cynon Valley	2,900	2,625	2,800	2,848	−1·8
Merthyr Tydfil	2,874	2,212	2,393	2,482	−13·6
Ogwr	5,424	3,581	4,348	4,753	−12·4
Rhondda	3,705	2,682	3,196	3,220	−13·1
Rhymney Valley	5,216	3,561	4,199	4,287	−17·8
Taff Ely	3,702	2,756	2,999	3,297	−10·9
Brecknock	893	687	810	1,001	12·1
Lliw Valley	2,058	1,591	1,681	1,770	−14·0
Neath	2,763	1,913	1,982	2,059	−25·5
Port Talbot	2,993	1,546	1,500	1,527	−49·0
Swansea	9,738	6,769	6,944	7,260	−25·4
Total Valleys Programme Area	31,009	23,328	25,198	25,954	−16·3

Source: Employment Department.

(a) District figures include areas outside the valleys programme boundary.

The percentage of economically active adult males is not available for the years 1979, 1988 and 1992. Data for 1991 and, for comparison, 1981 are presented in the following table. Figures for the valleys area are not readily available.

Percentage of economically active population (males aged 16-64)

District[1]	[2]*1981*	[3]*1991*
Dinefwr	85·8	78·3
Llanelli	87·1	77·4
Blaenau Gwent	84·8	77·1
Islwyn	87·1	79·4
Torfaen	87·6	81·5
Cynon Valley	85·6	76·2
Merthyr Tydfil	84·8	76·2
Ogwr	86·3	80·7
Rhondda	83·1	74·6
Rhymney Valley	86·7	77·2
Taff Ely	88·3	81·4
Brecknock	87·3	82·0
Lliw Valley	87·1	79·9
Neath	87·4	78·4

District[1]	[2]*1981*	[3]*1991*
Port Talbot	85·8	75·3
Swansea	87·2	79·3

Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

[1] District figures include areas outside the valleys programme boundary.

[2] 1981 data are extracted from the 1981 census.

[3] 1991 data are extracted from the Census County Monitor Series CEN 91 CM.

The 1981 census recorded all students as economically inactive whereas the 1991 census distinguishes between those economically active and inactive.

Valleys Programme

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the areas covered by the valleys initiative programme by *(a)* district, *(b)* community council and *(c)* constituency boundaries.

Mr. David Hunt: The present boundary of the valleys programme area is not coterminous with district, community council or constituency boundaries. The area covered is set out in the following table:

(a) *District*	*(b)* *Community council(s)*	*(c)* *Constituency*
Borough of Dinefwr (part)	Ammanford	Llanelli
	Betws	Llanelli
	Community of Cwmamman comprising the community wards of Glenig and of Pistillwyd	Llanelli/Carmarthen
	Community of Llandybie comprising the community wards of Penygroes and of Saron	Carmarthen/Llanelli
	Community of Quarter Bach falling outside the Brecon Beacons national park	Carmarthen
Borough of Llanelli (part)	Llanedi	Llanelli/Carmarthen
	Llanon	Llanelli
	Pontyberem	Llanelli/Carmarthen
	Community of Llanelli rural comprising the community wards of Felinfoel, Glyn and Swiss valley	Llanelli/Carmarthen
	Community of Llangennech lying north of the Llangennech bypass (A4138)	Llanelli
Borough of Blaenau Gwent (part)	Abertillery	Torfaen/Monmouth
	Beaufort	Blaenau Gwent
	Brynmawr	Blaenau Gwent/Monmouth
	Cwm	Blaenau Gwent
	Ebbw Vale	Blaenau Gwent
	Llanhilleth	Blaenau Gwent/Torfaen
	Nantyglo and Blaina	Blaenau Gwent/Torfaen
	Tredegar	Blaenau Gwent/Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney
Borough of Islwyn (part)	Abercarn	Islwyn
	Argoed	Islwyn
	Blackwood	Islwyn
	Cefn Fforest	Islwyn
	Crosskeys	Islwyn
	Crumlin	Islwyn
	Newbridge	Islwyn
	Pengam	Islwyn
	Penmaen	Islwyn
	Pontllanfraith	Islwyn
	Ysysddu	Islwyn
Borough of Torfaen (part)	Abersychan	Torfaen/Blaenau Gwent and Monmouth
	Blaenavon	Torfaen/Blaenau Gwent and Monmouth
	Panteg	Torfaen
	Pen Tranch	Torfaen/Blaenau Gwent
	Pantymoile	Torfaen
	Community of Trevethin, comprising the community ward of Trevethin	Torfaen
Borough of Cynon Valley (part)	Aberaman	Cynon valley
	Abercynon	Cynon valley
	Aberdare	Cynon valley
	Cwmbach	Cynon valley
	Llwydcoch	Cynon valley
	Mountain Ash	Cynon valley
	Penrhiwceiber	Cynon valley
	Pen-y-Waun	Cynon valley
	Rhigos	Cynon valley
	Ynysybwl and Coed-y-Cwm	Cynon valley
	Community of Hirwaun comprising the community ward of Hirwaun	Cynon valley

(a) *District*	*(b)* *Community council(s)*	*(c)* *Constituency*
Borough of Merthyr Tydfil (part)	**Bedlinog**	**Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney**
	Cyfarthfa	**Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney**
	Dowlais	**Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney**
	Gurnos	**Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney**
	Merthyr Vale	**Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney**
	Park	**Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney**
	Penydarren	**Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney**
	Town	**Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney**
	Treharris	**Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney**
	Troed-y-Rhiw	**Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney**
Borough of Ogwr (part)	**Llangynwyd Middle**	**Ogmore/Bridgend**
	Maesteg	**Ogmore**
	Ogmore Valley	**Ogmore/Rhondda**
	Community of Garw Valley comprising the community wards of Blaengarw, Llangeinor and Pontycymmer	**Ogmore**
Borough of Rhondda (all)	**Treherbert**	**Rhondda**
	Maerdy	**Rhondda**
	Pentre	**Rhondda**
	Ystrad	**Rhondda**
	Cwm Clydach	**Rhondda**
	Tonypandy	**Rhondda**
	Pen-y-Graig	**Rhondda**
	Ferndale	**Rhondda**
	Tylorstown	**Rhondda**
	Ynyshir	**Rhondda**
	Trealaw	**Rhondda**
	Porth	**Rhondda**
	Cymmer	**Rhondda**
	Trehafod	**Rhondda**
	Llwyn-y-pia	**Rhondda**
	Treorchy	**Rhondda/Ogmore**
Rhymney Valley (part)	**Aber Valley**	**Caerphilly/Pontypridd**
	Bargoed	**Caerphilly**
	Caerphilly	**Caerphilly**
	Darren Valley	**Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney**
	Gelligaer	**Caerphilly**
	Lanbradach	**Caerphilly**
	Maesycwmmer	**Caerphilly**
	Nelson	**Caerphilly/Pontypridd**
	New Tredegar	**Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney/Caerphilly**
	Penyrheol	**Caerphilly/Pontypridd**
	Rhymney	**Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney**
Borough of Taff Ely	**Pontypridd**	**Pontypridd/Caerphilly**
	Community of Gilfach Goch comprising the community wards of Garden Villages and Gilfach Goch	**Ogmore/Pontypridd**
	Community of Llantrisant comprising the community wards of Beddau and of Tyn-y-Nant and of part of the community wards of Talbot Green and Llantrisant Town	**Pontypridd**
	Community of Llantwit Fardre comprising the community wards of Church Village, Llantwit Fardre and of Tonteg	**Pontypridd**
	Community of Taffs Well comprising the community ward of Nantgarw	**Pontypridd**
	Community of Tonyrefail comprising the community wards of Coedely, Collena, Penrhiwfer, Tylcha and of Tynybryn	**Pontypridd/Ogmore**
Borough of Lliw Valley (part)	**Cilybebyll**	**Neath**
	Clydach	**Neath/Gower**
	Cwmllynfell	**Neath**
	Gwaen-Cae-Gurwen	**Neath**
	Mawr	**Gower**

(a) *District*	*(b)* *Community council(s)*	*(c)* *Constituency*
	Pontardawe	Neath/Gower/Llanelli
	Pontardulais	Gower
	Pont Lliw	Gower
	Ystalyfera	Neath
Borough of Neath (part)	Blaengwrach	Neath
	Blaenhonddan	Neath
	Clyne	Neath
	Crynant	Neath
	Dyfryn Clydach	Neath/Aberavon
	Glynneath	Neath
	Onllwyn	Neath/Brecon and Radnor
	Pelenna	Neath
	Resolven	Neath
	Seven Sisters	Neath/Brecon and Radnor
	Tonna	Neath
Borough of Port Talbot (part)	Bryn	Aberavon
	Cwmavon	Aberavon
	Glyncorrwg	Aberavon
City of Swansea	Birchgrove	Swansea East
County of Powys (part)	Borough of Brecknock comprising those parts of the communities of Tawe Uchaf and of Ystradgynlais that are not included in the Brecon Beacons national park	Brecon and Radnor

Mrs Carolyn Jones

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the resignation of Mrs. Carolyn Jones from the board of the South Glamorgan health authority; when he expects to fill the vacancy; and what procedures he will use with regard to the soliciting of suggested names of qualified individuals and the drawing up of a short list.

Mr. David Hunt: I accepted Mrs. Jones' resignation with great regret as I believe she had a great deal to contribute to the running of the health service in South Glamorgan.

I intend filling the vacancy as soon as a suitable candidate has been identified. As concerns procedures, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave him on 6 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *473*.

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the interim report of the director general of the Health and Safety Executive on market testing will be published and placed in the Library.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. This is an internal working document addressed to the Health and Safety Commission, whose advice on the feasibility of market testing those of HSE's activities not covered by its existing programme we are awaiting.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals she has to market-test the management board and executive of the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have no such proposals. The Health and Safety Executive has a programme to market-test its service functions and the director general has been asked to investigate the feasibility of market testing those activities not covered by the existing programme, but not including policy advice or assistance to the Health and Safety Commission.

Household Statistics

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of children lived in households with a head in full-time employment *(a)* in 1987 and *(b)* 1990.

Mr. McLoughlin: Estimates from the labour force survey show that, of the children aged 15 and under living in private households in Great Britain, the proportions whose head of household was in full-time employment was 73·5 per cent. in spring 1987, and 76·3 per cent. in spring 1990.

Parental Leave

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the proposal by the European Commission for a European parental leave directive providing parents with three months paid leave following the birth of a child.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government believe that such matters are best dealt with voluntarily, between employers and employees, according to their particular circumstances, and remain strongly opposed to the introduction of any such prescriptive measures.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees entitled to maximum compensatory awards from industrial tribunals in 1991 failed to obtain payment.

Mr. McLoughlin: I regret that the information is not available.

Wages Councils

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will indicate, separately for each wages council, the number of *(a)* males and *(b)* females living in (i) the city of York, (ii) North Yorkshire and (iii) Yorkshire and Humberside who are currently covered by wages council minimum pay rates.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is estimated that some 225,000 workers, aged 21 or over, are covered by the wages councils in the wages inspectorate's Yorkshire and Humberside division. I regret that there is no breakdown for men and women, for the workers covered by each council or for areas within the wages inspectorate division.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workplaces in *(a)* the city of York, *(b)* North Yorkshire and *(c)* Yorkshire and Humberside are currently covered by each wages council minimum wage rates.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is estimated that some 35,000 establishments are covered by the wages councils in the wages inspectorate's Yorkshire and Humberside division. I regret that there is no breakdown of the number of establishments covered by each council or for areas within the wages inspectorate division.

Training

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what support is given by her Department to support training initiatives for young homeless people.

Mr. McLoughlin: All young people under 18 not in full-time education or employment are guaranteed the offer of a suitable training place on youth training if they want one. There is no requirement for trainees to have a permanent address.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of employment training leavers in the North Yorkshire training and enterprise council area found paid employment in *(a)* the 12 months to March 1991 and *(b)* the 12 months to March 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the proportion of ET leavers from North Yorkshire TEC who were in paid employment three months after leaving ET.

Proportion of leavers from the North Yorkshire TEC area going in to paid employment

January 1990 to December 1990 leavers	51 per cent.
January 1991 to December 1991 leavers	53 per cent.

Source: ET national follow-up survey.

Notes:

1. Paid employment = in a full time job, self-employment or part-time job three months after leaving ET.
2. The figures are for those people who responded to the survey.

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish figures showing the costs in 1991-92 and forecasts of the cost in 1992-93 of each of the training and job creation programmes for which her Department is or was responsible distinguishing in each case between allowances payable to scheme participants and other costs.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is given in the table. The 1992-93 figures exclude provision transferred to the Department of Trade and Industry with effect from 1 May 1992.

	1991-92 (note 1) £ million	*1992-93 (note 2) £ million*
Youth Training and Training Credits		
Programme costs	737·963	698·549
Bridging allowance	8·375	6·890
Employment Training		
Programme costs	376·906	339·526
Allowances	360·445	310·516
Business and Enterprise	161·752	149·264
Career Development Loans	5·860	6·335
Grant Support training local authority careers officers	0·584	0·648
Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme	31·779	1·758
Youth Enterprise Initiative	4·375	4·900

Sources: 1991-92 Appropriation Accounts (October 1992) 1992-93 Class 6 Vote 1 Summer Supplementary Estimate (June 1992).

Note 1: 1991-92 outturn is for England and Wales.

Note 2: 1992-93 provision is for England only.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of employment training leavers in the Cumbria training and enterprise council found paid employment in *(a)* the 12 months to March 1991 and *(b)* the 12 months to March 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the proportion of ET leavers from Cumbria TEC who were in paid employment three months after leaving ET.

Proportion of leavers from Cumbria TEC going into paid employment

January 1990 to December 1990 leavers	41 per cent.
January 1991 to December 1991 leavers	43 per cent.

Source: ET national follow-up survey.

Notes:

(1) Paid employment = into full-time job, self-employment or part-time job three months after leaving ET.

(2) The figures are for those people who responded to the survey.

Appointments (Women)

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are her objectives for the numbers of women to be appointed to public bodies in order to fulfil her percentage targets by 1996; and what number of men will be appointed to public bodies over the same period.

Mr. McLoughlin: The goal is that by 1996 30 per cent. of the public appointments made by my Department should be held by women. The current objectives to achieve this goal were announced on 16 November in "Public Appointments and Equal Opportunities", which is available in the Library. It is, however, not possible to forecast the numbers of men and of women who will be appointed over this period.

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how she will use greater publicity to interest women in public bodies.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend intends to launch a series of regional "opportunity shops" for women in the new year to promote women's participation in all areas of public life. Their aim will be to publicise the whole range of opportunities open to women, including appointments to public bodies, regional and community appointments and voluntary work as well as employment and training.

Jobcentres

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State (1) for Employment what are the staff to customer ratios at *(a)* the Haslingden (Rossendale) jobcentre and *(b)* the Rawtenstall (Rossendale) jobcentre;

(2) if she will list the number of clients passing through *(a)* the Haslingden (Rossendale) jobcentre and *(b)* the Rawtenstall (Rossendale) jobcentre for each month since January;

(3) what studies have been undertaken, to assess the viability of the Haslingden (Rossendale) jobcentre as an integrated jobcentre/benefits office.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M.E.G. Fogden to Ms. Janet Anderson, dated 24 November 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Questions to her about Haslingden and Rawtenstall Jobcentres. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

My letter of 4 November explained that the decision to close the office at Haslingden was taken only after a full consultation process involving local interested parties. Prior to this, there had been a full review of the way services were being delivered in this part of Lancashire. A number of options were considered and it was concluded that we could make best use of our resources by transferring services to the new integrated office in Rawtenstall. Setting up an integrated office in Haslingden was not considered a feasible option because of the close proximity to the office in Rawtenstall; the lack of suitable premises and the relatively small number of clients involved.

You asked for information about the number of clients passing through the local offices at Haslingden and Rawtenstall. Unfortunately, we do not have this information since we do not count numbers of people who use certain enquiry aspect of our services. Even if figures were available, however, they would not provide a safe basis for comparison between the offices because of the very different nature of the services being provided at Haslingden and Rawtenstall.

At Haslingden clients attend for information about job vacancies and to declare continuing unemployment, but the full range of services is not available. At Rawtenstall there is a wide range of services and clients regularly attend to make claims for benefit; to declare their continuing unemployment; to receive advice on benefit queries; to be given help on jobsearch and for advisory interviews. Many people who use the Haslingden office need also to go to Rawtenstall for the wider range of help it provides.

There are three staff permanently based in Haslingden. They are primarily responsible for the delivery of services to aid jobsearch. At Rawtenstall there are 20·9 staff and two of them travel to Haslingden on one day per week to take evidence of unemployment. It is not possible to provide meaningful staff to customer ratios at either office.

Finally, let me reassure you that we monitor very closely the performance of our offices and keep our network closely under review.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committees of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Employment Agencies

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the systems of licensing employment agencies; why it is necessary to have such licences; and what plans she has to abolish them.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is responsible only for the licensing system in the Employment Agencies Act 1973. We believe that some arrangement of this kind is necessary to safeguard the interests of users. Experience has shown that such protection is real.

Nevertheless, we are always concerned to reduce the number of licences involved in business activities wherever possible. We shall therefore keep the operation of the 1973 Act under review.

Licensing systems for seamen's and nurses' agencies are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for Health respectively.

Redundancies

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many redundancies there have been in the west midlands in the last three months.

Mr. McLoughlin: Data on redundancies are now obtained from the quarterly labour force survey. The latest information available relates to spring 1992. This shows that in the three months prior to the survey 32,000 people were made redundant in the west midlands region.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many redundancies in Renfrew district have been notified to her Department since July; how many of these have been confirmed redundancies; if she will publish a table breaking down these redundancies by employer, job centre, standard industrial classification and those resulting from company closure or bankruptcy; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Figures on notification of redundancies are not held for areas smaller than economic regions.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which Minister in her Department is responsible for the oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters which fall within the responsibility of her Department.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am responsible for the oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters within the Employment Department.

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if she will list the main measures of deregulation, or simplification of regulation, which her Department has carried out, or caused to be carried out, since 9 April;

(2) if she will list the main measures increasing regulation in any area for which her Department has responsibility, which her Department has caused to be put into effect since 9 April.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Industrial Training (Road Transport Board) (Revocation) Order 1992 wound up the road transport industrial training board, leaving employers to decide how and what to spend on training.

The following measures have been approved by Ministers and, subject to parliamentary approval, will come into effect from 1 January 1993, implementing EC directives on health and safety:

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations;
The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations;
The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations;
The Manual Handling Operations Regulations;
The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations;
The Display Screen Equipment Regulations.

The Health and Safety Commission, with the approval of my right hon. Friend, has taken the opportunity presented by the need to implement these directives to rationalise existing law and remove unnecessary requirements. Taken together, they will repeal nearly 80 regulations in whole or part, and some 40 sections of Acts.

National Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what qualifications are required by those engaged in assessing national vocational qualifications.

Mr. McLoughlin: The national standards for assessment of national vocational qualifications (NVQs), published in 1991, have been endorsed by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications.

Nearly all NVQ awarding bodies have already made a commitment to move towards requiring their assessors to be qualified to these national standards. The National Council for Vocational Qualifications is meeting with awarding bodies shortly to agree a time scale for the introduction of such a requirement.

Remploy

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what arrangements have been put in place for improving the effectiveness of Remploy.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My noble Friend the Viscount Ullswater, on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, has written to the chairman of Remploy approving the first annual performance agreement between the Department and the company. This agreement covers the year from 1 April 1992. It has been negotiated by the chief executive of the Employment Service, on behalf of my right hon. Friend, since new financing arrangements were established between the Department and Remploy in March 1992.

We have agreed targets which are realistic but stretching. These are:

The average number of disabled people employed by Remploy Ltd. will be 8,650, subject to a tolerance of ± 3 per cent.

At least 190 disabled employees will move from Remploy factories to opportunities under the Interwork scheme or to open employment, or from Interwork to open employment.

The average number of disabled people employed in opportunities under the Interwork scheme will be 675, subject to a tolerance of ± 5 per cent.

Remploy will keep within an operating deficit of £81·25 million—which, on average numbers of 8,650, will give a cost per disabled worker of £9,393.

I have arranged for the text of the annual performance agreement to be placed in the Library today.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Weapons

10. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to meet the US defence chiefs to discuss nuclear weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I next expect to meet Secretary Cheney when we are both in Brussels on 10 and 11 December for the meeting of NATO's defence planning committee.

27. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent studies he has commissioned or received about the safety of British nuclear weapons.

Mr. Aitken: The only recent authoritative study of the safety of UK nuclear weapons has been the review undertaken by a working group led by the Ministry of Defence's chief scientific adviser. The report of this review was publsihed in July this year and copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library. The review provides welcome corroboration of our confidence in the safety of our nuclear weapons.

Regiments (Amalgamation)

11. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now reconsider the proposed amalgamation of the Staffordshire and Cheshire regiments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. The amalgamation of the Cheshire regiment and the Staffordshire regiment is due to take place in August 1993 and there is currently no reason why it should not go ahead.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on plans to amalgamate Scottish regiments and battalions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have received numerous representations, all of which I have noted.

Royal Naval Reserve

13. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received regarding the future of the Royal Naval Reserve; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have received a number of representations. Following the publication of the open government document "The Future of Britain's Reserve Forces", work is under way on the future use of the Royal Navy's volunteer and ex-regular reserves and this will take due account of relevant representations received.

European Fighter Aircraft

14. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made on the future of the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Rifkind: The two studies that were commissioned by the four Governments in August have now reported and I plan to meet with my German, Italian and Spanish counterparts in December to discuss the results. The industrial study has shown that significant reductions in the cost of the aircraft are possible. The report on the second study—a reassessment of the operational requirement by our chiefs of staff—has only just been received and I am considering its conclusions.

22. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the current situation regarding the intergovernmental talks concerning the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave today to my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans).

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from trade unions concerning the European fighter aircraft and its implications for future employment.

Mr. Aitken: On 29 October I met a trade union delegation representing employees at Rolls-Royce, British Aerospace, Lucas Aerospace and GEC-Ferranti. My Department has also received letters from trade union representatives at GEC-Ferranti in Edinburgh and at GEC Avionics at Rochester.

Shipbuilding Industry

15. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to assist the shipbuilding industry by his policy for procurement.

Mr. Aitken: Our policy is to place orders for ships by competition wherever possible, inviting all yards capable of undertaking the work to tender. This has encouraged the great efforts shipbuilders have been making to reduce overheads and improve their efficiency and competitiveness.

Arms Sales (Middle East)

16. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about his Ministry's policy towards the export of military equipment and technology to Iran and Iraq.

Mr. Aitken: Our policy is to support the UN embargo on exports to Iraq, and to permit exports to Iran only within the policy announced by the then Foreign Secretary on 29 October 1985.

23. **Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the advice given by his Department concerning the export of military technology to the middle east prior to the Gulf war.

Mr. Aitken: My Department gave and continues to give advice to other Government Departments on the military implications of specific defence exports.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek permission from Mr. Frank Machon of the Polmadie Storage and Packing Company Ltd. of Glasgow to make public his correspondence with Her Majesty's Government on the matter of military equipment sales from the United Kingdom to Iraq, Iran and other states on the list of sensitive nations for United Kingdom exports.

Mr. Aitken: Mr. Machon may, if he wishes, publish his own letters to Ministers and officials in my Department and their replies to him. He has repeatedly been asked to produce evidence to substantiate his allegations which have already been published in the press.

Bosnia

17. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies have been carried out into the ability of the armed forces to carry out discretionary commitments in addition to deployment in Bosnia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We attach great importance to ensuring that future force levels are appropriate for the tasks which the armed forces are asked to undertake and that we do not impose upon them any requirement to which they cannot properly respond. We continue to monitor the position carefully in the light of present and likely future commitments.

25. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the latest progress on the deployment of troops in Bosnia.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member of Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) today.

WE177 Nuclear Bomb

18. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb is expected to reach the end of its operational life.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb is expected to remain serviceable well into the first decade of the next century.

Animals (Tests)

19. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which species of animals are currently used by his Department or its agents for test purposes; and what tests are carried out.

Mr. Aitken: The species of animals currently used for experimental purposes are rats, mice, rabbits, guinea pigs and rhesus monkeys. All experiments involving the use of animals fully meet the spirit and letter of the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Yugoslavia

20. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the latest information available to him about the position of United Kingdom troops in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Rifkind: Regular reports are now placed in the Library of the House each Thursday.

29. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the further participation of British troops in former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no plans for any additional use of British troops over and above those escorting humanitarian aid convoys, including convoys of detainees.

30. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the level of air

cover generally and operational aerial intelligence and surveillance available to the United Kingdom commander and his convoys in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Air support is not part of the concept of the deployment and would fundamentally alter the nature of the operation, risking escalation. NATO airborne early warning aircraft are conducting air surveillance of the Adriatic and Bosnia-Herzegovina, but this is to detect violations of UN sanctions and the no-fly zone, not to provide cover for ground forces.

RAF Sealand

21. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will visit RAF Sealand to discuss future developments on the site.

Mr. Aitken: I intend to visit RAF Sealand on Wednesday 9 December.

British Aerospace

24. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with the chief executive of British Aerospace about defence procurement.

Mr. Aitken: My right hon. Friend last met the chief executive of British Aerospace at the Farnborough air show in September.

Western European Union

26. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the secretary-general of the Western European Union to discuss the future of the union.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has met the secretary-general of WEU on a number of occasions since taking up office. Their discussions have covered a wide range of issues.

"Options for Change"

28. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress he is making with the implementation of the changes outlined in "Options for Change".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. and learned Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) earlier today.

Autumn Statement

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be able to report on the implications of the autumn statement on defence expenditure for defence establishments in Wiltshire.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The new expenditure plans announced in the autumn statement will allow us to maintain the direction for Defence set out in "Britain's Defence for the 90s" and the requirements of the defence policies most recently set out in the 1992 Statement on the Defence Estimates. We will continue to implement the present plans for restructuring and reorganisation, including those affecting defence establishments in Wiltshire. Any further adjustments to individual defence commitments and capabilities will be considered during the course of the normal annual recosting of the defence programme as a whole and will be announced in due course where appropriate.

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received in response to defence issues raised by the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Three parliamentary questions, including the hon. Member's, have sought information or a statement from Defence Ministers in the light of the autumn statement. One letter has been received from a Member of Parliament. The Government remain committed to armed forces which, while smaller, will be properly manned and supported and better equipped.

Trooping the Colour

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much Trooping the Colour was estimated to have cost in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 30 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *513*.

Low Flying

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many investigations into incidents involving low-flying jets in Wales were conducted in each year since 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of RAF police investigations following complaints about low-flying aircraft in Wales in each year since January 1989 is as follows:

	Number
1989	61
1990	73
1991	74
[1]1992	85

[1] Up to 31 October 1992.

Stolen Documents

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the nature of Ministry of Defence documents stolen from post office premises in Kilbirnie street, Glasgow.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A Ministry of Defence document was stolen from the Parcelforce Glasgow distribution centre, Kilbirnie street, Glasgow on 17 November 1992 but was recovered within the depot. It is not the policy to disclose the nature of stolen documents.

Files (Disposal)

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for how many years his Department holds files before shredding or other means of disposal.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The retention and disposal of Ministry of Defence files are governed by the requirement of the Public Records Acts of 1958 and 1967. Files are reviewed at various stages after closure, in the light of their possible administrative or historical value, and those which are not selected for ultimate permanent preservation at the Public Record Office may be destroyed almost immediately or held for periods up to 85 years, depending upon their content and continued departmental utility.

Trident

12. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about planned expenditure on the Trident programme in 1993-94.

Mr. Aitken: Our current estimate for capital expenditure on the Trident programme in the financial year 1993-94 is £827 million.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to paragraph 1, page 28, of the Statement on the Defence Estimates, if possible future revisions of the assessment of the number of nuclear warheads that need to be deployed on each Trident submarine will include raising the self-imposed maximum limit of 128.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government have long made it clear that their planning for the Trident force is based on deploying in each Trident submarine no more than 128 warheads.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it is his policy to deploy a front-end on the United Kingdom's Trident missiles that will be capable of carrying more than eight warheads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The actual number of warheads which will be carried by the D5 missile in United Kingdom service, and the maximum number that could be, is classified information. The Government have, however, made it clear that each United Kingdom Trident submarine will carry no more than 128 warheads.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 25 November 1992

HOME DEPARTMENT

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all of the reports his Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the last three years; for each of the last three years, how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Information on reports produced by external consultants working in the Home Office during the past three years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) hows many unaccompanied children aged under 18 years applied for refugee status in 1991; and what was the country of origin of these children;

(2) how many unaccompanied children under 18 years have applied for refugee status on a monthly basis since 1 January; and what was the country of origin of these children;

(3) how many asylum applications made by unaccompanied children aged under 18 years were determined in 1991; and how many of these were determined *(a)* by the granting of refugee status, *(b)* by the granting of exceptional leave to remain or *(c)* by the refusal to either;

(4) how many asylum applications were made by unaccompanied children aged under 18 years in the calendar year 1990; how many of these applications have now been determined; and how these were determined.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information on unaccompanied children applying at the ports in 1991 and in January to September 1992 is given in tables A and B. Corresponding information for 1990 is not available. Information on in-country applications by unaccompanied children is not available in this form.

Information on decisions on applications by unaccompanied children is not readily identifiable and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Table A. Unaccompanied[1] children[2] applying for asylum on their arrival in the United Kingdom, by nationality, 1991

	Number
Afghanistan	5
Angola	5
Bangladesh	1
Ethiopia	13
Ghana	1
India	1
Iran	1
Somalia	22
Sri Lanka	66
Turkey	7
Uganda	1
Yugoslavia	2
Zaire	3
Total	128

[1] Unaccompanied at the point of their arrival and not known to be joining a close adult relative in the United Kingdom.

[2] Aged 16 or under. Information on those aged 17 is not available.

Table B. Unaccompanied[1] children[2] applying for asylum on their arrival in the United Kingdom, by nationality, 1992

	January	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*
Afghanistan	—	3	—	—	1	—	—	2	1
Angola	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ethiopia	1	—	6	—	—	1	2	1	—
Ghana	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Iran	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Iraq	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lebanon	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
Malaysia	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Pakistan	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sierra Leone	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Somalia	2	4	2	4	—	2	9	5	3
Sri Lanka	4	3	3	2	1	3	1	4	5
Turkey	1	—	1	1	1	1	—	2	1
Uganda	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Yugoslavia	1	—	2	—	2	1	1	1	3
Zaire	2	—	—	—	4	—	—	1	—
Total	15	14	14	8	11	8	14	16	15

[1] Unaccompanied at the point of their arrival, and not known to be joining a close adult relative in the United Kingdom.

[2] Age 17 or under.

999 System

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what representations he has received regarding proposed changes in the 999 system; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions he is having, and with whom, regarding proposed changes in the 999 system.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The review of the 999 system is primarily a matter for the Director General of OFTEL. Any representations that we have received against OFTEL's proposals for a call handling agency have therefore been passed to his office. Some organisations have represented to us that changes should not lead to any deterioration in the service to the public. We share their views, as does the Director General of OFTEL.

Matters relating to 999 calls are discussed by the Home Office's 999 liaison committee which has representatives from the emergency authorities and the public telecommunications operators as well as from OFTEL. There are also bilateral discussions, as appropriate, between the Home Office and the police and fire services.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the adequacy of the powers of the courts to deal with juvenile offenders; what proposals he has for a change in the law; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We have received a number of representations about juvenile offending, especially about frequent offending by what appears to be a comparatively small number of youngsters. My right hon. and learned Friend and I understand and share the concerns that have been expressed. We are therefore looking urgently at the existing arrangements for responding to this kind of offending behaviour before deciding what new measures, including possible changes in the law, it might be sensible to introduce.

Primary Purpose Rule

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applicants for permanent residency in the United Kingdom have been refused under the primary purpose rule in each year since 1985.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on reasons for refusal, and thus on refusals under the primary purpose rule, is only available centrally for the Indian sub-continent and is given in the table. It is known that the vast majority of refusals under the primary purpose rule relate to persons applying in the Indian sub-continent.

Number of persons refused[1] entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom under the primary purpose rule, 1986-92

Number of persons

	Primary purpose refusals	
	Solely for this reason	*Partly for this reason*
1986	1,080	130
1987	1,090	210
1988	1,240	420
1989	1,550	1,170
1990	1,280	1,040
1991	1,260	550

[1] Refusals minus successful appeals.

Prisons (Payphones)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the London prisons which now have payphones that can be used by inmates.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Cardphones are available for prisoners' use at all the London prisons save Wormwood Scrubs, where installation work is in progress and should be completed shortly.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which Minister in his Department is responsible for the oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters which fall within the responsibility of his Department.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I am.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were granted entry to the United Kingdom from former Yugoslavia *(a)* in the two weeks prior to 5 November and *(b)* from 5 November to 19 November.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Comprehensive information on admissions of passengers to the United Kingdom is collected on a monthly, but not a weekly basis.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the main measures of deregulation, or simplification of regulation, which his Department has carried out, or caused to be carried out, since 9 April.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Deregulatory measures have been taken to improve immigration controls.

Service standards for the time taken for passenger clearance at Heathrow and Gatwick were published in July 1992. A separate channel for the rapid clearance of cars occupied by European Community nationals was introduced at Dover on 1 July 1992.

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the main measures increasing regulation in any area for which his Department has responsibility, which his Department has caused to be put into effect since 9 April.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No measures increasing regulation have been put into effect since 9 April 1992.

Oxford Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans his Department has as to the long-term future role of Oxford prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Oxford prison is currently being used on a temporary basis to hold prisoners from London establishments while refurbishment work is carried out, and from Cardiff prison to avoid use of police cells. It is intended to return the buildings to Oxford county council but no decision has yet been taken on when this will be.

Music

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to treat live and recorded music in pubs in the same way in respect of licensing.

Mr. Charles Wardle: At present, music and singing may take place without a public entertainment licence in a public house where they are provided solely either by the reproduction of recorded sound, or by not more than two performers. We have no plans to amend this exemption.

Prisons (Drugs)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been charged with attempting to smuggle drugs into prisons while visiting a prison inmate at a prison in England or Wales during the period 1 January to 1 November.

Mr. Jack: Information is not available on the number of persons charged. The number of visitors suspected of involvement in such offences and apprehended by the police in this period is 202.

House Burglaries

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many house burglaries were recorded in the Blyth and north Tyneside areas in 1990 and 1991; and how many arrests were made in each of those areas in each year in connection with house burglaries.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not collected centrally for the Blyth and north Tyneside areas. The table shows the number of prosecutions at Blyth Valley and north Tyneside petty sessional divisions for burglary in a dwelling in 1990 and 1991 (provisional).

Number of prosecutions at Blyth Valley and north Tyneside magistrates courts for burglary in a dwelling, 1990-91[1]

Petty sessional division	*Burglary in a dwelling*	*Aggravated burglary in a dwelling*
Blyth Valley		
1990	80	2
1991[1]	43	5
North Tyneside		
1990	122	1
1991[1]	106	10

[1] Provisional.

Operation Container

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what he now expects to be the total cost of Operation Container in looking after remand prisoners in police cells in Greater Manchester and elsewhere.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is given in the following table which relates to the whole police cells operation in England and Wales. Separate figures for remand prisoners are not collected centrally.

Financial period	*Payments to Greater Manchester police* £	*Payments to other police forces* £
1990-91	15,931,767	37,581,143
1991-92	20,522,278	74,217,700
Current year to 27 October 1992	10,225,349	32,374,518
Total	46,679,394	144,173,361

Immigration (Members' Inquiries)

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what review process has been undertaken of the direct telephone answer service for right hon. and hon. Members who have inquiries relating to immigration and asylum applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Details of the direct telephone answer service to Lunar house for Members who have inquiries relating to immigration and asylum applications were outlined in my letter of 26 May to all Members.

I am not aware of any problems arising from those arrangements which might call for a review and I encourage my colleagues to make full use of this facility.

Interpretation Services

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what statutory obligations the prison department lies to provide interpretation services to serving prisoners in appropriate circumstances in gaols in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The prison service is not under any statutory obligations to provide interpretation services to prisoners, but makes every effort to meet such needs where they arise.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what statutory obligation the police authorities in England and Wales lie to provide interpretation services in appropriate cases for persons being interviewed in pursuance of criminal investigations.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The codes of practice issued under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 prescribe that a person who has difficulty in understanding English may not be interviewed by police officers except in the presence of an interpreter.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what statutory obligation the Crown or magistrates courts lie to provide interpretation services in appropriate circumstances in criminal proceedings in England and Wales.

Mr. Jack: Section 3 of the Welsh Courts Act 1942 allows the Lord Chancellor to make rules for the provision of interpreters of the Welsh and English languages for the purposes of proceedings before courts in Wales, while section 1(1) of the Welsh Language Act 1967 requires that provision for interpretation shall be made in legal proceedings in Wales. In other circumstances the provision of interpreters is not governed by statute. I understand, however, that an interpreter is provided as a matter of course when required and that a trial of a defendant who was unable to speak or understand English and who was not provided with a suitable interpreter would be a nullity.

Emergency Underground Facilities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the underground facilities for war-time or emergency use in the regions of England and Wales which are to be *(a)* retained and *(b)* sold.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are two protected sites in each of the nine home defence regions in England and Wales, except for London (region 5), which has one. We do not plan to retain any. Only four can be sold; the other 13 are leasehold.

Regional Crime Squads

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each regional crime squad in England and Wales the dates of publication of each report.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Before April 1992, reports of inspections of regional crime squads were confidential.

The first published report was that of the inspection of No. 8 regional crime squad. It was published on 15 September 1992. The inspection report of No. 9 regional crime squad is expected to be published on 27 November 1992.

Sirens

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many sirens are being disposed of as a result of reviewing civil defence requirements; and of these, how many are hand-held and how many are fixed units.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are some 6,700 power sirens and 9,760 hand sirens. All will be disposed of except for an estimated 300 power sirens which are used for flood warning purposes where the local authorities concerned wish to retain them.

False Statements

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have taken place under the Magistrates Courts Act 1980 for false statements made in witness statements, taken pre-trial, or under any similar legislative provision re-enacted in the 1980 Act since 1980.

Mr. Jack: The information, available centrally for the years 1980 to 1991 (provisional), is given in the table. It is not possible to distinguish offences under section 106 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, from other offences of perjury involving untruthful written statements or unlawful statements under oath.

Number of prosecutions for perjury involving untruthful written statements or under oath[1]
1980 to 1991[2]
England and Wales

	Number of prosecutions
1980	57
1981	84
1982	75
1983	59
1984	85
1985	55
1986	48
1987	72
1988	86
1989	120
1990	37
[2]1991	89

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[1] Perjury Act 1911, Section 1; Criminal Justice Act 1967, Section 89; Magistrates' Court Act 1980, Section 106.

[2] Provisional.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many underground facilities for use in wartime or emergencies in England and Wales are to be *(a)* retained and *(b)* disposed of.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* I plan to dispose of as many as possible of the 17 sites.

Departmental Records

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how many years his Department holds files before shredding or other means of disposal.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* The Home Office reviews and disposes of its records in accordance with the Public Records Act 1958 and 1967. The majority of files are destroyed after five to 10 years and most of the remainder after 30 years.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many public interest immunity certificates he has signed in each of the past six months; and in what circumstances.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* I signed two certificates, one in June and the other in September, in connection with the proceedings in R. v. Henderson and Others. They related to the disclosure of any oral or documentary evidence relating to certain aspects of the work of the security and intelligence services. In July, I siged a certificate relating to communications between police forces or prosecuting authorities in connection with the detection and investigation of crime and the apprehension of offenders, in proceedings brought for judicial review of a decision by magistrates to commit a defendant on charges of dishonesty. I signed another certificate in July, relating to the disclosure of certain categories of information contained in the Prison Service Control and Restraint Manual, in proceedings for damages for personal injuries brought by prison officers.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Wages Councils

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people in employment in Northern Ireland are covered by wages council agreements.

Mr. Atkins: A total of 34,310 at 31 December 1991.

TRANSPORT

Private Detectives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what use his Department has made of private detectives in each of the last five years; at what cost; and if he will list the firms involved.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle My Department has used private investigators and similar firms:

(a) to hand serve summonses when taking prosecutions for failure to pay vehicle excise duty;

(b) to hand serve papers on people who have trespassed on the Department's land and to photograph trespassers;

(c) to establish the whereabouts of people believed to have caused damage to the Department's roads and structures for the purpose of making claims against them;

(d) to trace former employees who were overpaid before they left the Department's employ and

(e) in one case to investigate the activities of an employee

Several firms have been used and the full cost for each year could be established only at disproportionate cost but the cost of tracing an individual is usually in the range of £60 to £90 per case.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions since 1979 his Department has engaged private detective agencies to investigate the activities of British citizens; and if he will list the date and purpose of each investigation.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 18 November 1992]:* As far as can be established without disproportionate cost, my Department has engaged a private detective on only one occasion since 1979 to investigate the activities of a British citizen. A detective was employed in 1992 to investigate a member of staff following complaints received from members of the public.

M3, Winchester

Mr. Malone: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that the contracts for the work of the final link of the M3 at Winchester are able to proceed effectively;

(2) if he will make a statement about the progress on the measures to preserve the ecology on the M3 road scheme at Winchester.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: This work is not progressing as well as we would have expected. Work to facilitate the removal of valuable plant material from the Itchen valley water meadows and replanting at an alternative site in the Test valley has been completed, but similar rescue work in the Dongas has been hampered by protestors. If this rescue work is not completed, valuable plants will be lost, and damage is already being done to these plants by the trespassers on the Dongas site.

It is of much regret that these disruptive forces are now affecting our main works contract which started on 19 October. The schedule for completion is very testing for our contractors in line with our aims of completing this missing section of the M3 motorway, reducing the harmful effects of congestion and improving road safety. In respect of both the ecological rescue work and the main construction, we and our contractors will be using all reasonable means to remove trespassers.

Illegal action of this sort jeopardises effective rescue and puts both workers and protestors at risk.

Untaxed Vehicles

Mr. Bendall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to change the law relating to untaxed vehicles parked or abandoned on the public highway so as to allow them to be removed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Local authorities and the police have powers to remove vehicles that are illegally, obstructively or dangerously parked, abandoned or broken down. The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency works closely with local authorities in cases where unlicensed vehicles appear to be abandoned. We have no plans to introduce powers to enable untaxed vehicles to be removed from the road.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what proportion of his Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances becomes controlled waste in terms of section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990;

(2) what measures have been taken to ensure that ozone-destroying substances in use by his Department identified as controlled waste under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 do not reach the atmosphere;

(3) what action has been taken to ensure that ozone-destroying substances consumed by his Department are identified as controlled wastes when they are no longer in use.

Mr. MacGregor: Records are not kept centrally for the disposal of controlled waste. The Department's policy is to comply with the duty of care which came into force on 1 April 1992 under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The duty makes producers of controlled waste responsible for ensuring that it is disposed of safely and legally.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how the departmental green Minister has promoted protection of the ozone layer with specific policy measures; which possible measures have been considered and rejected; and on what grounds.

Mr. MacGregor: My Department participates in interdepartmental discussions about measures to protect the ozone layer. Our Procurement Manual specifically covers the need to avoid ozone—depleting substances. These substances will also be covered in the environmental guidance which we are preparing for the management of our properties. It is already our policy to phase out all halon fire extinguishers in the accommodation we occupy.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many chlorofluorocarbon and hydrochlorofluorocarbon installations are contained within his Department's buildings; and how many CFC domestic fridges are contained within his Department buildings;

(2) what quantity of HCFC 22 is purchased by his Department per annum;

(3) how many refrigeration and air conditioning systems in his Department are equipped with automatic leak detection systems;

(4) if he will provide details from the maintenance and servicing record of the quantity and type of ozone-destroying chemicals used annually in his Department's refrigeration and air conditioning equipment for servicing and in leakages; and what proportion is removed for recycling;

(5) what is the quantity of ozone-depleting substances recycled within his Department and returned to the manufacturer.

Mr. MacGregor: The Department does not keep central records of plant and equipment installed or held in premises used by its staff; or items subject to local procurement and recycling arrangements. It is the Department's policy to phase out the use of ozone-depleting chemicals as soon as possible.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance has been sought and received on alternatives or substitutes for the ozone-destroying chemicals in use by his Department.

Mr. MacGregor: The Department of the Environment is the main source of guidance. Its advice is circulated to all procurement and property managers in the Department.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) by what date his Department's use of ozone-depleting chemicals will conform to EC regulations on limits on these chemicals;

(2) which current uses of ozone-depleting chemicals by his Department are considered essential.

Mr. MacGregor: The Department's policy is to phase out the use of ozone-depleting chemicals as soon as possible. The Department is reviewing the detailed application of the policy with the managers responsible for property and procurement.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much funding has been allocated or spent to deal specifically with measures to reduce his Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances.

Mr. MacGregor: Measures to reduce the consumption of ozone-depleting substances are included in the Departments general maintenance programme. The costs are not recorded separately.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many catastrophic leaks of ozone-depleting substances have occurred within his Department buildings in the last five years.

Mr. MacGregor: The Department does not have records going back five years. There was a failure at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre, Swansea in May 1991. An air-conditioning unit failed and released 800 kg of refrigerant R12 into the atmosphere.

Speed Limiters

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to make representations to the car industry concerning the installation of mechanical speed limiters on all new cars.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. This should be a decision for vehicle manufacturers and purchasers.

Rail Services (Franchising)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the individuals and organisations who responded to the consultation document, "The Franchising of Passenger Rail Services"; and if he will publish a summary of the views expressed by each respondent, within the limits of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Freeman: In inviting responses to the consultation document, we undertook that all responses would be treated as strictly confidential. It would not be appropriate, therefore, for me to list those who have responded or to summarise their views.

Shipping Records

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy for new arrangements for the General Register and Record Office of Shipping and Seamen to include requirements which specifically protect the whole range of interdependent records currently held by the office in their entirety and in perpetuity.

Mr. Norris: The records are retained under Public Records Office (PRO) rules and we will want to ensure that this continues to be the case in the future.

Acquired Rights Directive

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the need to satisfy the provisions of the Acquired Rights directive and the protection of employment rights in the event of any transfer of undertakings operated by his Department or responsible to his Department.

Mr. Norris: The provisions of EC Directive 77/187 ("The Acquired Rights Directive") are given effect in the United Kingdom by the Tranfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations, 1981. These regulations provide that transfers which fall within their scope will not operate to terminate the employees' contracts of employment, which will continue as if made between the transferee and the employees. Whether any particular transfer is covered by the regulations will depend on the circumstances of each case.

Disabled Passengers

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what specific protection he intends shall be provided for disabled people in the event of any change in the organisation, structure or funding of the rail network.

Mr. Freeman: Our privatisation proposals envisage a duty on the rail regulator to take into account the interests of persons with disabilities which would be reflected in obligations imposed on railway operators through the regulator's licensing regime.

British Rail

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when Her Majesty's Government were informed of British Rail's decision to make 5,000 staff redundant.

Mr. Freeman: My Department was aware that the British Railways Board was considering a voluntary severance scheme to enable it to reduce costs in line with falling income. The specific plans were advised to my Department on 19 November 1992.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the planned subsidy for British Rail for each year in the period 1993-94 to 1995-96 in real terms.

Mr. Freeman: The specific allocation of the planned external financing limits for British Rail for 1993-94 to 1995-96 between grant and borrowing has yet to be agreed and will be announced, as usual, in due course.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on the Government's current plans for the privatisation of the British Rail network.

Mr. Freeman: We continue to make good progress on the detailed arrangements for rail privatisation based on the principles set out in the White Paper "New Opportunities for the Railways" (Cm. 2012). Legislation will be introduced in this session.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if it remains the policy of Her Majesty's Government to abolish the subsidy for Network SouthEast.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend will be discussing in due course with the chairman of British Rail objectives for the board in the period from 1 April 1993. Our policy is to invite the private sector to operate BR services through franchising. This will bring greater responsiveness to passengers' needs, better services and improved efficiency. Should subsidy still be required for socially necessary services it will be provided.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the level of Government subsidy to British Rail in real terms in each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is in the following table:

£ million—1992-93 prices

	PSO grant	*Level crossing grant*	*Total*
1987-88	1,031	31	1,062
1988-89	676	29	705
1989-90	592	31	623
1990-91	669	32	701
1991-92	930	28	958

Market Testing

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to subject the General Register and Record Office of Shipping and Seamen to market testing.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* The registry will be market tested in line with the White Paper Cmnd 1730, "Competing for Quality", which set out the Government's intention to give new impetus to the drive for better value for money and improved service to the public.

The functions will be tested against the quality of service and value for money available from alternative sources and the tender process will follow the Department's normal rules for competitive tendering.

The existing staff at RSS will have the opportunity to put forward an in-house bid on the same basis and timescale as outside bidders.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy for market testing which involves any part of his Department or a body responsible to his Department to include the status quo as one of the options, against which any other options are to be measured before any decision is taken.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* My right hon. Friend will follow the procedures for market testing Department of Transport functions set out in the White Paper, "Competing for Quality", (Cmnd 1730).

Road Schemes, East Anglia

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the prospects for road schemes in Suffolk and Norfolk in 1993-94, particularly the A12 and the A47, in the light of the autumn statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* The settlement announced in the autumn statement should enable my Department to maintain spending on new trunk road provision at record levels. While I expect all schemes planned to start works next year to go ahead I cannot at this stage confirm the exact position on individual schemes as other factors, such as the completion of any remaining procedures, have to be taken into account.

Schemes to improve the A12 and A47 in Norfolk and Suffolk are currently at varying stages of development largely at the beginning of processes. The timing of future events could be influenced by this and by competing demands on available resources.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he proposes to take on the representations he has received from the Magistrates Association for stronger enforcement and penalties for overloaded and unsafe heavy goods vehicles, including penalty points on operators' licences.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* I am concerned to ensure that enforcement in respect of heavy goods vehicles, including the penalties imposed on offenders for overloading and operating vehicles in a mechanically unsafe condition, should provide an adequate deterrent. I will give careful consideration to proposals I receive from the Magistrates Association which will help to ensure that operators fulfil their obligations under the Licensing regime.

Road Signs (Tourism)

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what reasons his Department has not yet responded to *(a)* applications made in September 1991, for permission to have tourist directional signs erected saying Historic Harwich and Harwich Redoubt on the roadside at the Parkeston junction A120 and *(b)* an application made in April 1992, for signs at Main Road/Barrack Lane A136 in Harwich; if he will now give permission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* On 13 August this year my Department received a request from Essex County Council for authorisation of a tourist sign saying "Harwich Redoubt" to be erected at the junction of Main road and Barrack lane in Harwich, not at the A120 Parkeston roundabout. Authorisation was given on 28 August.

The Department has received no other applications for similar signs but we understand that Essex county council has been in correspondence with the promoters of such signs, and the county surveyor is writing to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many applications for permission to erect tourist directional signs are currently pending with his Department; and if he will state for how long each has been pending.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* There are currently 22 applications pending. Applications frequently call for detailed negotiation with the tourist board, the local highway authority, and the attraction operator. These negotiations can take some time; successful conclusion requires the agreement of all parties. At present pending applications have been with the Department as follows:

	Applications
Less than 1 month	9
Between 1 and 3 months	5
Between 3 and 6 months	3
Between 6 and 12 months	3
Over 12 months	2

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria he considers when asked to approve or reject applications for tourist directional signs to be erected.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* To be eligible for signing, tourist attractions must be recognised by the appropriate regional tourist board and the highway authority. The criteria used to consider applications are set out in the Department's circular, Roads 1/91, a copy of which is in the Library.

Nuclear Material

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had concerning the principle of unlimited and absolute state liability for damage to citizens and the environment in the event of an accident involving the proposed shipment of plutonium from Sellafield to Japan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

No arrangements have been made at this stage for the shipment of plutonium from the United Kingdom to Japan. Liability for an accident arising from shipments of plutonium would be governed by relevant domestic and foreign law.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Correspondence

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Delyn of 15 July, acknowledged on 1 September, concerning the rights of claimants of the disability living allowance under the citizens charter where there is a delay in processing their application for disability living allowance.

Mr. Waldegrave: This case was referred to the Department of Social Security on 22 July and acknowledged by them on 1 September. Any further questions should be directed to that Department.

Leukaemia

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much Government funding is available for research into leukaemia.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The Medical Research Council, the main Government agency for the promotion of medical and related research in the United Kingdom, is funded by grant-in-aid from the science budget through this Department, and is an independent body which normally decides its research priorities on its own expert judgment. In the last financial year, 1991-92, the council's expenditure on projects directly on and related to leukaemia research was £5·4 million. Information on expenditure on leukaemia research by university departments and medical schools or health departments and authorities is not collected centrally.

Citizens Charter

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on progress toward the implementation of the citizens charter.

Mr. Waldegrave: A White Paper on the citizens charter will be published today. This will give details on progress so far. I shall be making a statement this afternoon.

Research Centres

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list *(a)* the interdisciplinary research centres established to date by each research council and those planned to be established in the future, *(b)* the percentage of the total budget of each research council spent on interdisciplinary research centres each year since the programme began and *(c)* the total number of staff employed in interdisciplinary research centres and the percentage of those staff who are seconded to interdisciplinary research centres from universities; and if he will make a statement on interdisciplinary research centres.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* The Government recognise the value of interdisciplinary research across classical discipline boundaries, and have already provided substantial additional funding of £75 million for such research through the interdisciplinary research centre (IRC) initiative.

The information requested is as follows:

(a) Interdisciplinary research centres established to date

Research council	*Name of interdisciplinary research centre*	*Date established*
Agricultural and Food Research Council (AFRC)	Centre for Genome Research, University of Edinburgh	January 1990
Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)	Human communications research centre, Edinburgh and Glasgow universities	April 1989
	Centre for research on micro-social change, Essex university	April 1989
	Centre for economic performance, London School of Economics	April 1990
Medical Research Council (MRC)	Molecular science, Oxford university	April 1989
	Centre for protein engineering, Cambridge university	January 1990
	Cell biology, University College, London (UCL)	January 1992
Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)	Centre for population biology, London university	April 1989
Science and Engineering Research Council (SERC)	Superconductivity in Cambridge, Cambridge university	March 1988
	Surface science, university of Liverpool	June 1988
	Centre for molecular sciences, (15 per cent. funded by Medical Research Council), Oxford university	October 1988
	Engineering design, Glasgow university (closed November 1991)	February 1989
	IRC for semiconductor materials, University of London	April 1989
	Process engineering, Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, London university/University College, London	August 1989
	Polymer science and technology, Leeds, Bradford and Durham universities	October 1989
	High performance applications, Birmingham university	October 1989
	Optoelectronics research centre, Southampton university and University College, London	October 1989
	Biomedical materials, University College, London	October 1991
	Advanced centre for biomedical engineering, University College, London	October 1991
	Centre for neuroscience, Sussex university	October 1991

Only the MRC has current plans for additional IRCs. The human toxicity IRC at Leicester university is due to open in March 1993, and an IRC in brain repair is planned for Cambridge.

(b) Percentage of total budget each Research Council spent on IRCs

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	[1]*1992-93*
AFRC	—	—	1·00	1·20	1·20
ESRC	0·17	3·20	5·80	6·30	6·30
MRC	0·19	0·72	2·28	3·80	3·23
NERC	—	0·75	1·07	0·45	0·47
SERC	0·43	2·78	3·84	2·41	3·70

[1] Provisional.

(c) 868 staff (in full-time equivalents) are employed in IRCs. These are generally employees of the host university.

ENVIRONMENT

Emissions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take on the decision of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to allow public access to emissions data of power stations run by PowerGen and National Power.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) on 19 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *304*.

Caravan Sites

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many spaces have been provided at sites for travellers, under the Caravan Sites Act 1968, in each local authority area since 1979.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) on 23 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *536*.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total capital expenditure on the provision of sites under the Caravan Sites Act 1968, listed by local authorities since 1979.

Mr. Baldry: Information is not available in the form requested. A total of £56·2 million was expended on the provision of local authority gipsy sites in England between 1979-80 and 1991-92 inclusive. £12·5 million has been allocated for gipsy sites grant in England for the current financial year.

Urban Programme

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what effect the changes to the urban programme will have on voluntary organisations in Lancashire.

Mr. Robin Squire: Commitments arising from voluntary sector projects approved as part of Blackburn, Burnley and Preston's urban programmes in 1992-93 and previous years will be honoured.

In addition, the urban partnership fund, part of the capital partnership programme which was announced by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Environment on 13 November 1992, will provide up to £20 million in 1993-94 in uncommitted urban programme resources to support capital and directly linked revenue projects in the 57 urban priority areas. It is open to local authorities to involve voluntary organisations in particular projects.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources have been made available, under the Government's urban programme, to meet the housing needs of Wythenshawe.

Mr. Robin Squire: The urban programme has offered substantial help with the regeneration of run down private sector housing and local authority estates but it is not the Government's policy that UP resources are used for direct housing investment. The urban programme has complemented other initiatives such as support for environmental improvements and enterprise initiatives on estates benefitting from estate action or equivalent treatment, and to secure benefits for the community as a whole rather than individual households.

This year over £700,000 has been specifically marked from the urban programme for Wythenshawe of which £17,000 is to fund a strategic action plan for the economic regeneration of the Benchill area to complement estate action work. The action plan will recommend a range of measures to improve local resident's access to employment and training.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the *(a)* gross and *(b)* net capital allocation in outturn figures for local authority housing in each district council in the north-east, expressed as a cost per dwelling unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The table shows the allocation of annual capital guideline and estate action resources in 1992-93 to local authorities in the Northern region and expresses this as an amount per local authority dwelling (based on 1991 estimates). Allocations reflect the varying condition of local authority stock throughout the region, and the impact of targetting resources on the worst housing estates through the estate action programme.

The table does not include resources allocated during the year under other special initiatives such as the rural housing initiative and "Living over the Shop", which are channelled through the local authority to enable housing associations to develop new or improved dwellings. Allocations are also made to local authorities to deal with the improvement of the private sector stock.

Northern region

Local authority	*1992-93 Annual Capital Guideline, Estate Action new and continuation resources, and Energy Efficiency Programme £ thousands*	*1991 Local authority stock Number*	*Allocations per local authority dwelling £*
Alnwick	2,316	2,556	906
Berwick	470	3,238	145
Blyth Valley	1,891	8,888	213
Castle Morpeth	478	3,600	133
Chester-le-Street	1,254	6,499	193
Darlington	953	7,681	124
Derwentside	5,925	11,201	529
Durham	3,403	9,852	345
Easington	6,685	16,087	416
Gateshead	5,527	31,387	176
Hartlepool	6,368	9,674	658
Langbaurgh on Tees	3,897	14,143	275
Middlesbrough	3,995	15,960	250
Newcastle	16,683	42,201	395
North Tyneside	9,268	24,874	373
Sedgefield	2,027	13,291	152

Local authority	1992-93 Annual Capital Guideline, Estate Action new and continuation resources, and Energy Efficiency Programme £ thousands	1991 Local authority stock Number	Allocations per local authority dwelling £
South Tyneside	5,276	26,483	199
Stockton on Tees	6,451	16,750	385
Sunderland	15,315	47,077	325
Teesdale	246	1,227	200
Tynedale	633	4,218	150
Wansbeck	1,087	8,234	132
Wear Valley	1,562	7,007	223
TOTALS	101,710	332,128	306

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the raising borrowing limits on local authority housing activity in real terms for the financial years 1979-80 to date, excluding the use of capital receipts.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 16 November 1992]*: The available information, which relates to housing investment programme (HIP) allocations, is given below. The figures for the years up to 1989-90 are borrowing approvals for housing capital expenditure. Changes were made to the capital control regime at the beginning of 1990-91 which mean that borrowing approvals are no longer issued for capital expenditure on specific services; borrowing approval is now conveyed by a single, all service credit approval. The HIP allocations are now an assessment of relative need for housing capital expenditure. The table also gives figures for local authority housing capital expenditure.

Housing investment programme allocations and local authority gross housing capital expenditure, England, 1979-80 to 1992-93

£ million

	Allocations[1]		Gross capital expenditure[2]	
	Cash	1992-93 prices[3]	Cash	1992-93 prices[3]
1979-80	2,544	6,144	2,947	7,117
1980-81	2,203	4,496	2,729	5,569
1981-82	1,795	3,341	2,632	4,898
1982-83	2,192	3,808	3,235	5,619
1983-84	2,233	3,708	3,571	5,929
1984-85	1,852	2,927	3,501	5,532
1985-86	1,605	2,406	3,023	4,529
1986-87	1,459	2,117	3,017	4,380
1987-88	1,400	1,926	3,272	4,502
1988-89	1,331	1,707	3,604	4,623
1989-90	1,095	1,318	5,126	6,169
New capital finance system				
1990-91	1,889	2,105	3,164	3,526
1991-92	1,861	1,940	[4]2,720	[4]2,836
1992-93	1,827	1,827	[5]2,600	[5]2,600

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[1] Allocations for the years up to and including 1989-90 are final allocations, ie the initial allocation plus any increases to the initial allocation made in-year. The allocations figures for 1990-91 and subsequent years are the HIP allocations (housing annual capital guidelines plus specified capital grants) issued prior to the start of the financial year. They exclude any subsequent increases approved through the issue of supplementary credit approvals (SCAs). SCAs issued for 1990-91 and the provisional total for 1991-92 are £216 million and £317 million respectively. A total of £464 million has been set aside for 1992-93 for distribution as SCAs.

[2] Includes housing capital expenditure within the Urban Programme.

[3] Cash figures converted to 1992-93 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP market prices deflator.

[4] Provisional.

[5] Estimated.

Housing for the Elderly

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the Ernst and Young management consultative study commissioned by his Department into the housing needs for the elderly to be completed and published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Department anticipates that the study of the housing needs of elderly and disabled people currently being undertaken by Ernst and Young management consultants will be completed by the end of this year. It is expected that there will then be a series of reports covering different elements of the study with the first being published at the beginning of next year. The Department does not consider it necessary to make a statement at this stage but may do so when the first report is published.

Mortgage Arrears

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce a mortgage benefit or mortgage-to-rent scheme to assist home owners who are in arrears with their mortgage and who face the prospect of their homes being repossessed and the prospect of homelessness.

Mr. Baldry: Lenders have introduced a range of measures this year, following the discussions between the Government and the Council of Mortgage Lenders in December 1991, including mortgage-to-rent to help borrowers at risk of repossession. Lenders estimate that these measures will save some 55,000 repossessions this year.

Interest rates have been reduced by 3 per cent. in the last two months, bringing the total reduction since October 1990 to 8 per cent. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his autumn statement a package of £750 million for the purchase of empty properties overhanging the housing market.

We have no plans to introduce a mortgage benefit scheme.

Housing, North-west England

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the regional housing needs indicator figures published by the Housing Corporation for the north-west; and how far the housing investment programme is meeting the urgent need for local authority homes to be improved and repaired in the Wythenshaw constituency.

Mr. Baldry: The Housing Corporation recently published the Housing Needs Indicator (HNI) for 1993-94. The score for the corporation's north-west region has risen from 10·39 per cent. this year to 10·8 per cent. next year. After compensation for the differing costs between regions, the share of the corporation's annual development programme (ADP) allocated to the north-west will be 9·21 per cent. in 1993-94 compared with 8·92 per cent. this year.

The HNI is a composite, relative indicator of the incidence of housing needs in different geographical areas in England. It is reviewed annually by a working group of the Department of the Environment, the Housing Corporation and the National Federation of Housing Associations.

Manchester's housing investment programme allocation for 1992-93 was £34·867 million. The need for local authority homes to be improved and repaired is taken into consideration when determining the size of this allocation. It is for the Manchester city council to decide how best to distribute these resources to meet the needs of the city.

Sheltered Housing

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a current estimate of the numbers of sheltered housing units which exist in England; how many more units will be built in the years 1993-94 to 1994-95; and if he will provide details of how many of these units will be provided by *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* housing associations.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities report numbers of their annual housing investment programme (HIP1) returns of their own sheltered dwellings, and estimates of those owned by housing associations, by other public sector organisations and in the private sector.

The estimated total of such dwellings in England at 1 April 1992 appears in column A2a5 of "1992 HIP1—Regional Grossing", a copy of which is in the Library.

The Department has no information about future provision.

Urban Development Councils

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each urban development council the budget now to be provided for 1993-94, compared with the budget for 1992-93 and previously planned budget of 1993-94; and what changes have been made in the planned lifespan of any urban development council.

Mr. Robin Squire: The allocation of resources among urban development corporations has yet to be finalised. No changes have yet been made to the planned lifetimes of the corporations.

West Midlands (Grants)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which parts of Staffordshire currently fall within the west midlands intermediate area for assisted area status; how much grant was awarded to these areas for each of the last three years; how that money was spent; and how much assistance from EC funds was subsequently available.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* Assisted area status applies to those parts of Staffordshire lying within the Birmingham, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Dudley travel-to-work areas.

RAS grant is awarded to support capital investment projects which create or safeguard jobs and grant offered to the above areas over the last three years was as follows:

	£
1989-90	986,500
1990-91	991,500
1991-92	89,500
	totalling £2,067,500 in all.

None of these awards has been assisted from EC funds.

Superstore, Greenwich

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what considerations will affect his decision to order a public inquiry into the planning applications for superstores at *(a)* Well Hall and *(b)* Shooters Hill in London SE9.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* The general approach to calling in applications is as stated in circular 2/81. Applications will in general be called in only if planning issues of more than local importance are involved. Such cases may include, for example, those which in our opinion could have wide effects beyond their immediate locality, which give rise to substantial regional or national controversy, which may conflict with national policy on important matters, and those where the interests of national security or of foreign Governments may be involved.

PSA Projects

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he can now give final details of the sums paid for the purchase of PSA Projects.

Mr. Redwood: Final details of the sums paid in respect of the purchase of PSA Projects will not be available for some considerable time as this will depend on the number of transferred staff remaining with the business for more than five years from the date of the sale.

When contracts were exchanged for the sale of PSA Projects to Tarmac, the negative consideration payable to Tarmac at completion was estimated at £49·75 million, subject to changes in the net liabilities to be transferred which should be finalised by October 1993. The most recent changes will mean that at completion Tarmac will receive the benefit of a cash subscription for shares in the privatised company of £44·4 million and a cash asset of £13·3 million for which Tarmac will pay the Government £2·8 million—a negative consideration of £54·9 million.

The net cash asset of £10·5 million relates to the excess of the estimated value of amounts owed by PSA Projects to sub-consultants and others for work done up to the point of sale over the estimated value of assets being transferred to Tarmac.

These assets exclude the estimated £40 million owed by customers to PSA Projects at the point of sale which will be collected by PSA and retained in Government. In addition to the net liabilities at the point of sale, the negative consideration reflects PSA Projects' requirements for financing working capital, investment in new systems, marketing and training and forecast losses on existing work pending PSA Projects restructuring itself to become fully competitive.

The negative consideration will be adjusted pound for pound upwards or downwards as appropriate, after preparation of a completion statement to compare actual net liabilities at the point of sale with the estimate of £10·5 million. It will be further increased by between £3·1 million and £6·3 million after one year depending on the number of ex-civil service staff still in the business. The sale agreement also provides for the completion statement to be reopened for up to two years after the sale in the event of late submission of sub-consultant bills for which accruals were not included in the completion statement as the income for any related work would have been retained within government.

The Secretary of State's liability for severance payments to PSA Projects staff now in the business, whether or not they transfer to Tarmac, is limited to £40·33 million. Of this, severance payments by the Government to staff not willing to transfer permanently with the privatised business are likely to fall in the range of £30 million to £35 million and therefore the balance of payments to Tarmac to reimburse severance payments for up to approximately 165 ex-civil servants who did transfer are expected to fall in the range £5 million to £10 million.

The Government have previously announced their commitment to guarantee the redundancy entitlements of transferring staff against the purchaser's bankruptcy for up to five years post-sale. The maximum value of this contingency liability is now estimated at £30 million. The departmental minute laid on 26 June 1992 indicated that the maximum contingent liability to be undertaken in the course of sale negotiations was estimated not to exceed £70 million.

The replacement pension scheme will be fully funded as at the point of sale. The value of the bulk transfer from the principal civil service pension scheme is not yet known, as it depends on the number of staff opting to transfer their pension rights to the new scheme. PSA will add 6 per cent. of the transfer value to the pension fund to take account of differences in the forecast average retirement age and commutation arrangements.

Community Care

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what specific resources have been made available to local authorities to assist them in meeting the special needs of the elderly and physically disabled people, drug and alcohol misusers, people with learning disabilities, and people with HIV or AIDS under the community care legislation which comes into force in April 1993.

Mr. Yeo: I have been asked to reply.

A special transitional grant of £539 million will be made available to local authorities in England next year for their new responsibilities for community care. This covers all relevant client groups, and will be additional to authorities' general funding through the revenue support grant and specific grants for mental illness, HIV/AIDS and alcohol and drugs misuse of £34·4 million, £12·4 million and £2·3 million respectively.

PRIME MINISTER

Iraq

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister if briefing material for the Ministry's folder for Question Time while he was *(a)* Chief Secretary to the Treasury, *(b)* Foreign Secretary, *(c)* Chancellor of the Exchequer and *(d)* Prime Minister still exists; and if he will make it available to the Scott committee of inquiry.

The Prime Minister: The briefing material prepared for my use at Question Time while I was Chief Secretary to the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer and since I have been Prime Minister is still in existence. Not all the briefing material prepared for me for Question Time while I was Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has been retained, although that which relates to Iraq still exists. Material which is asked for by Lord Justice Scott's inquiry will be made available to him.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Prime Minister how the Iraqi defence procurement network's activities in relation to United Kingdom-based companies were monitored by the Government in the period *(a)* 1985 to December 1988 and *(b)* since December 1988.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* It is not the Government's practice to comment on intelligence matters.

Devaluation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of *(a)* the degree to which the sterling price of imports has been maintained and *(b)* the change in demand for imported manufactures, following the fall in the value of sterling.

The Prime Minister: It is not possible to separate the impact of the recent fall in the value of sterling from other factors influencing the sterling price of United Kingdom imports. Nevertheless, improved competitiveness is expected to restrain the growth of manufactured import volumes in 1993.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the benefits of devaluation to the financing needs of the coal industry.

The Prime Minister: The new external financing limits for British Coal announced last week, which are provisional pending decisions on the coal review, already take account of recent changes in exchange rates.

Pit Closures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what account he took in agreeing to the pit closures of the expenditure implications as regarding unemployment benefit; if he will publish a table showing for each mine in the current year and for each of the next five years *(a)* the estimated direct and indirect costs to the Exchequer of those made unemployed, *(b)* the estimated operational loss at each mine in 1991 and in the current year to date and *(c)* the estimated loss in 1993 of disposing of surplus production on the international market at the world price.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 23 October 1992]*: I had regard to the likelihood that, in the light of market assessments, continuing to mine coal for which there was no economic market would involve a substantial ongoing cost to public expenditure and that we were proposing a wide range of measures to help those made redundant secure new jobs and to enhance job prospects in the areas affected. I have asked the chairman of British Coal to write to the hon. Member about the information at *(b)*. On *(c)*, this too would be an operational matter for British Coal but even in the event that a suitable contractual arrangement could be established on commercial grounds there would also be the matter of compliance with the United Kingdom's GATT and other international trade obligations.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Prime Minister how many public interest immunity certificates were signed by Ministers *(a)* from 1974 to 1979 and *(b)* since 1979.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 24 November 1992]*: Public interest immunity certificates were signed by Ministers periodically throughout the period in question, but no central record is held of the number involved.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Budget Figures

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish the figures for his budget for 1992-93 broken down by the arts, heritage, sport, film, broadcasting, tourism and departmental administration.

Mr. Brooke: The information requested is as follows:

1992-93

	£ million
Museums and galleries	214
Performing arts	236
Libraries	141
The heritage	200
Sport	50
Film	22
Broadcasting	19
Tourism	46
Administration	10
Central Government total	938
Local authorities credit approvals for sport and recreation	30
Total departmental programme	968

However, provision for 1992-93 is subject to amendment by winter Supplementary Estimates and changes to cash limits. In particular, subject to parliamentary approval, a Supplementary Estimate of £42 million is being sought to provide funds for the Welsh Fourth Channel Authority, as well as an Estimate for an increase in administration costs. Assets accepted in lieu of tax will continue to be a claim on the Reserve.

Royal Parks

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish a list of all the new capital projects in the royal parks referred to in his Department's news release of 12 November, together with the estimated cost of each such project.

Mr. Key: Final decisions have not been taken yet on next year's programme of capital projects in the Royal parks, and design work is still in hand in some cases. However, I envisage that as a result of the additional allocation of funds announced on 12 November it will be possible to carry out the following projects:

map and signposting in all the parks;
restoration of Speakers corner, Hyde park;
floodlighting the lake in St. James's park;

subject to satisfactory design and acceptable costings.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the main measures of deregulation, or simplification of regulation, which his Department has carried out, or caused to be carried out, since 9 April.

Mr. Key: The Department of National Heritage took over responsibility for a small number of regulations when it was formed after the last general election. Although the Department's responsibilities in this area are not extensive, officials are reviewing the modest scope for deregulation and simplification of regulation in consultation with the deregulation unit of the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which Minister in his Department is responsible for the oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters which fall within the responsibility of his Department.

Mr. Key: I am the Minister responsible for the oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters which fall within the responsibility of the Department of National Heritage.

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the main measures increasing regulation in any area for which his Department has responsibility, which his Department has caused to be put into effect since 9 April.

Mr. Key: None.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Guyana

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of assistance provided by the United Kingdom Government to Guyana; what additional assistance was already committed or programmed prior to the elections; and which additional types and levels of assistance Her Majesty's Government expect to offer as a consequence of Guyana achieving democratic status.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Between 1989-90 and 1991-92 we provided to the Government of Guyana £13·7 million in programme aid and a continuing programme of technical assistance running at approximately £1·5 million per year. For 1992-93 no new capital aid commitment was made because of delays in holding free and fair elections. The technical assistance programme continued, albeit at a slightly reduced level. We also contributed £60,000 to the Commonwealth Secretariat Guyana elections monitoring mission. We have started discussing future assistance with the new Guyana Government, but no decisions have yet been reached.

Iraq

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessments of humanitarian needs have been conducted for Iraq outside the safe haven and Kurdish areas of northern Iraq and of the numbers of people affected; what funding his Department will provide; and by what mechanisms aid will be delivered.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 20 November 1992]*: In September of this year, the director of UNICEF and the under-secretary for the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs visited Iraq to assess needs in preparation for a United Nations plan of action covering the whole country, which was published in November. In view of the grave difficulties of access to many areas of southern Iraq, the United Nations has been unable to conduct a detailed needs survey in the south, or to provide detailed estimates of the numbers of people in need of assistance.

But the United Nations needs to further consider how to channel assistance to the more inaccessible areas, following their signature of a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Iraq. WHO and UNICEF have procured drugs and medical supplies for distribution in the south.

We maintain regular contacts with the non-governmental organisations, which are able to gain access to parts of the south. They report that conditions are grim, particularly in the marshes, mainly due to the actions of the Iraqi armed forces.

We continue to support the work of NGOs such as Iraqi civilian aid and the Amar appeal which provide valuable, though of necessity small scale, assistance to some of the most needy people in southern Iraq, and in the refugee camps of Iran. So far in 1992 we have provided nearly £2 million to such agencies, including a recent contribution of £255,000 to the Amar appeal for work in the marshes. We have agreed with Iraqi civilian aid that they will spend the final portion of their £625,000 grant to buy winter clothing for refugees. We are currently considering further medical aid through NGOs to the south. We stand ready to respond to further requests for assistance if conditions permit.

WALES

Phosphate Pollution

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the sites of special scientific interest in Wales that have been damaged by phosphate pollution.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Three terrestial SSSIs in Wales have been subjected to phosphate pollution. These are Rhyd y Foel (Clwyd), Coedydd a Chorsydd Aber Teifi (Dyfed) and Gweunydd Ty-brith (Powys).

Road Safety

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what resources he has set aside for local safety schemes for trunk roads in Wales for 1993-94.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend will shortly decide the allocation of resources for 1993-94.

Forestry

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which local authorities currently have structure plans including policies on afforestation; and how many such policies give guidance on the types of species to be planted.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Clwyd, Gwynedd, Mid Glamorgan and Powys have policies dealing with afforestation in their approved structure plans. All counties in Wales have policies relating to tree planting in forests and woodlands in their approved structure plans. None give guidance on the types of species to be planted.

Rural Parishes

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many classified rural parishes there are in Wales; how many such parishes do not have *(a)* a permanent shop, *(b)* a post office, *(c)* a school, *(d)* a village hall and *(e)* a daily bus service; and if he will publish the equivalent figures for (i) 1961, (ii) 1971 and (iii) 1981.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of civil parishes in rural districts in Wales in 1961 and 1971 was 899. Rural districts and civil parishes were abolished in 1974. Information on amenities is not collected centrally.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many pupils there are in each grant-maintained school in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is as follows:

	Pupils on roll [1]*September 1992*
Cwmcarn grant-maintained school	330
Bishop Vaughan catholic comprehensive school	927
Brynmawr comprehensive school	477

[1] Provisional.

Fluoride

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those district health authorities that have requested Welsh Water plc to increase the fluoride content of water supplies, indicating (i) those that have had their request met, (ii) those whose applications are pending and (iii) those whose applications have been refused.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Gwynedd health authority have a long-standing agreement with Welsh Water dating from 1955 to fluoridate water supplies on Anglesey. They have requested Welsh Water plc to replace the equipment used to fluoridate the water supply on Anglesey which has not been in operation for about four years. The company has not yet acceded to that request. The Department is not aware of any other requests of Welsh Water plc by health authorities concerning fluoridation.

Dentists

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide specific funding for citizens advice bureaux in Wales to launch local publicity campaigns to enable the general public to know which general dental practitioners are taking on new national health service patients.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This action is not necessary nor would it be appropriate. The management of general dental services is the responsibility of family health services authorities which have up-to-date information on the services available in their areas. That information is readily available to members of the public and citizens advice bureaux. The decision on whether a publicity campaign is required rests with the authority in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the guidelines issued by health authorities and family health service authorities in Wales to ensure that the ratio of community dentists to salaried dentists is appropriate throughout Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is for the district health authorities to determine the appropriate number of community dentists in the light of local needs. The number of salaried dentists employed by family health services authorities is dependent on local circumstances and endorsement by the Department in the light of the criteria laid down in WHC(92)55, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. Both authorities are expected to liaise with one another in considering appointments needs and circumstances.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it a requirement of family health service authorities in Wales to inform all national health service patients de-registered by a general dental practitioner of the locations and operating times of the community dental service.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This decision is one which should be taken by family health services authorities in the light of local needs and circumstances. Normally, authorities would direct "de-registered" patients to another general dental practitioner still accepting patients under the NHS. Only if this option is in some way unsuitable or impracticable would authorities direct patients to the community dental service in its "safety net" capacity. In those circumstances, authorities would supply patients with all relevant information.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will summarise the decision-making process which determines whether family health service authorities employ a salaried dentist or the area health authority employs a community dental officer.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is for the family health services authority to decide whether to apply to the Department for permission to employ salaried dentists. Each application is considered in light of the criteria outlined in circular WHC(92)55. Briefly, these are that the numbers of independent practitioners are not sufficient to ensure adequate provision of general dental services and that the FHSA should give a clear indication of the geographical area where the deficiency exists, along with reasons why the deficiency cannot be met by other methods. Similarly, a district health authority is responsible for determining the number of community dental officers it employs. I expect the authorities to liaise with one another in considering appointments which should be made in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps are being taken to attract more dentists to the county of Gwynedd who are able to treat national health service patients.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This is a matter for the Gwynedd family health services authority. The authority has applied for permission to employ salaried dentists and my right hon. Friend has given permission for four whole-time equivalent salaried dentists to be employed. The authority has also attracted general dental practitioners to its area by utilising the Department's location incentive grants and by local initiatives.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dentists in Gwynedd currently provide services under the national health service.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: As at 30 June 1992, the latest available date, there were 63 general dental practitioners in contract with Gwynedd family health services authority.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Gwynedd are unable to register with dental practices.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not available.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps are being taken to re-open the emergency dental treatment centre in Bangor, Gwynedd.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is the responsibility of general dental practitioners to ensure that emergency treatment is available for those patients registered with them. Discussions are now taking place between the Gwynedd family health services authority and Gwynedd health authority with a view to providing a weekend emergency service in Bangor for those patients who are not registered with a general dental practitioner.

National Museum

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet the director of the national museum of Wales to discuss the continuance of the museum's school lending service.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am aware of the Director's views on funding for the museum school service in Wales. In considering this matter in the public expenditure round, I am taking into account that five local education authorities already fund the service, and the possibility of continued support from these and other sources.

Bad Smells

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many complaints have been made to environmental health officers in Wales concerning bad smells in each of the last 10 years; and what are the numbers of such complaints relating to *(a)* industrial processes and *(b)* agricultural practices.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office does not hold this information.

Pollution Monitoring

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to designate additional monitoring sites in *(a)* urban and *(b)* rural areas of Wales to assess levels of (i) sulphur dioxide and (ii) nitrogen oxides.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In line with the commitment in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance" (Cm 1200) the Government recently extended the United Kingdom's urban air monitoring network. Among new urban stations opened was one in Cardiff which became operational in May 1992. More stations are planned and will monitor sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxide as well as other pollutants.

There are no plans to extend rural monitoring from its present level which, on the basis of current expert advice, is considered adequate.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures for emissions of *(a)* sulphur dioxide, *(b)* black smoke, *(c)* nitrogen dioxide, *(d)* volatile organic compounds and *(e)* carbon monoxide in Wales, by sector and, where appropriate, by fuel type.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on these emissions, by sector and fuel type, is available for the United Kingdom as a whole only. The latest published data is in the Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics No. 14, copies of which are held in the Library of the House.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether Welsh local authorities will be allowed to use capital receipts from the sale of council houses for the purposes of new build.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: We do not encourage authorities to undertake new build themselves when better value for money can be obtained by other means.

Pen y Gelli Quarry

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what costed proposals Clwyd county council have forwarded to his Department in relation to proposals to develop Pen y Gelli quarry, Lloc, near Holywell, as an itinerant transit camp; and what has been his response to date.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Clwyd county council applied in September 1990 for approval in principle of grant aid for the establishment of this transit gipsy site. They were asked to reconsider the proposals and are currently doing so.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what commitments his Department has given with regard to the costs of the compulsory purchase order and the potential public inquiry with regard to the proposal to develop Pen y Gelli quarry, Lloc, near Holywell, as an itinerant transit camp; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No such order has yet been submitted to my right hon. Friend and no commitments have been given.

Pensioners (Transport)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the local authorities in Wales who *(a)* allow pensioners to travel free of charge on public transport in Wales, *(b)* allow pensioners to travel at discounted rates and *(c)* offer no concessions to pensioners travelling on public transport.

Sir Wyn Roberts: All local authorities in Wales operate concessionary fares schemes which give discount rates to pensioners. Those allowing free travel are Cardiff city council for persons over 75 years of age and Rhuddlan borough council which provides a free bus service for pensioners holding concessionary passes.

Sand Dredging

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the volume of sand dredged off the Welsh coast over each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the volume of sand dredged off the Welsh coast is not available. Figures on the amount of all sea-dredged aggregates entering Welsh ports are given in the table.

One-port traffic: sea-dredged aggregates entering Welsh ports[1]

	Thousand tonnes
1982	1,230
1983	1,504
1984	1,503
1985	1,412
1986	1,400
1987	2,305
1988	2,019
1989	2,450
1990	2,161
1991	1,687

Source: Department of Transport and British Ports Federation.

[1] One-port traffic comprises off-shore traffic, sea-dredged aggregates and materials shipped for dumping at sea. Sea-dredged aggregates comprise dredged sand, gravel etc. landed at a port for commercial purposes.

Road Repairs

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he intends to meet local authorities in Wales to discuss the financing of repairs to Welsh bridges and minor roads.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have no plans to do so. Local authorities fund such projects from unhypothecated resources.

Welsh Language

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the results of the consultation on the role of the Welsh language development committee of the Welsh joint education committee.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Nearly 30 organisations and individuals responded to the consultation paper issued in August, representing a broad range of opinion. I will be announcing our conclusions very soon.

Energy Saving

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what efforts are currently being undertaken by his Department to encourage applications for THERMIE programme money from companies involved in energy saving and renewable energy sources in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: For the past five years my energy efficiency office has held annual seminars on THERMIE which have attracted large audiences from all sectors of the economy. Prior to this year's seminar, held in July, they also wrote to all engaged in energy research in Wales promoting this programme in particular. After the event they followed up with a further letter to offer further assistance in particular cases if required.

Water Supplies

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which geographical areas of Wales are currently served by water supplies that have been fluoridated.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Parts of Mid Glamorgan, Powys and Anglesey are served by water supplies which have previously been fluoridated. However, none of these water supplies are currently fluoridated.

Child Protection Registers

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children appeared on child protection registers in Wales in each year since 1981.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the number of children in Wales on child protection registers was not centrally collected prior to 1988. Information for the years from 1988 to 1991 is given in the following table:

Year ended 31 March	*Number of children*
1988	1,903
1989	2,062
1990	2,302
1991	2,460

Information on the registers is used by local authority social services departments to manage their child protection work. It is not intended specifically to establish the extent of child abuse and comparisons between years may be affected by changes in the administrative arrangements of local authorities.

Housing

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will appoint a representative from Welsh district councils to serve on the board of Tâi Cymru.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Appointments to the board of Housing for Wales are not made on a representational basis.

A55

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what improvements he intends to make to roads which feed onto the A55 in north Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Plans for improvements are set out in the 1992 supplement to "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s".

Police

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the organisations and individuals who have *(a)* responded to his invitation to be consulted or *(b)* submitted comments, suggestions or representations about the future structure and funding of police authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: These matters are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. Future arrangements for the police, following local government reorganisation in Wales, were, however the subject of advice submitted to the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government by the Home Office and electoral issues sub-group. Copies of that advice are in the Library of the House.

Health Service Waiting Lists

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what mechanism his Department uses to ensure that the 1992-93 waiting times initiative moneys allocation to area health authorities is not used for extra contractual referrals.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The allocation of waiting times initiative funds in Wales are based on application from district health authorities which specify the nature and amount of treatment to be purchased for their residents, and indicate the effect upon immediate hospital waiting times for those residents.

The exact way in which this is achieved is a matter for the authorities themselves. An evaluation of the expenditure is undertaken on behalf of the Department at the end of each year.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the planned allocation of funds by his Department for each health authority in Wales for the waiting times initiative for 1993-94.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No decision has yet been taken on resources for waiting times initiatives in Wales in 1993-94.

Nature Reserves

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what amount of public money was spent by the Countryside Council for Wales for the purchase of national nature reserves in 1991-92; and what is the expected spend for 1992-93.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Countryside Council for Wales expenditure on the purchase of national nature reserves was £631,562 in 1991-92 and is expected to be £201,000 in 1992-93.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what amount of grant was made by the Countryside Council for

Wales under section 38 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to voluntary conservation bodies for the purposes of land purchase in 1991-92; and what is the expected spend for 1992-93.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Section 38 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 was repealed on 1 April 1991. The Countryside Council for Wales operates its land purchase grant scheme under the provisions of section 134 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and section 9 of the Local Government Act 1974, which enable the Countryside Council for Wales to provide grants to partners in the voluntary and public sectors to purchase land for nature and landscape conservation. The amount of grant for land purchase provided in 1991-92 to voluntary conservation bodies was £232,106. Grants totalling £333,325 have been offered for 1992-93.

Emergency Medical Treatment

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each of the Welsh health authorities the number of patients who received *(a)* emergency in-patient treatment and *(b)* any emergency treatment who resided outside the particular health authority area where they were treated in the quarters of 1990, 1991 and the first three quarters of 1992; and if he will divide up the figures by specialty.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* In the light of the size and number of tables of information which are available, I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the information in the Library of the House.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxes and Duties

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all indirect taxes and duties which have increased by more than the rate of inflation since 1978-79, giving for each *(a)* the rate in 1978-79 and 1992-93 and *(b)* the real increase since 1978-79.

Sir John Cope: The information is given in the table. The question is taken to refer to specific excise duties rather than ad valorem taxes and duties. Exceptionally the figures shown for cigarettes comprise both ad valorem and specific duty. Aviation gasoline was not subject to duty in 1978-79.

	Duty Unit	*Duty Rates*		*Percentage changes*
		1978-79	*1992-93*	*in real terms*
Hydrocarbon oils				
Leaded petrol	**pence per litre**	**6·60**	**27·79**	**120·2**
Unleaded petrol	**pence per litre**	**6·60**	**23·42**	**95·4**
Derv	**pence per litre**	**7·70**	**22·85**	**73·6**
Sparkling wine of fresh grape	**£ per hectolitre**	**87·22**	**208·00**	**51·8**
Cider and Perry	**£ per hectolitre**	**5·32**	**21·32**	**112·6**
Tobacco				
Cigarettes	**£ per 1,000**	**17·70**	**67·53**	**105·4**
Cigars	**£ per kilogram**	**20·94**	**67·89**	**83·9**
Hand rolling	**£ per kilogram**	**20·28**	**71·63**	**94·8**

CFCs

Mr. Pike: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to the use of fiscal incentives in connection with capital costs involved in the phasing out of chlorofluorocarbons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The existing tax regime provides relief for capital investment on machinery and plant, including equipment used in the production of CFC-free products. By providing a broadly neutral tax system for businesses, with a common rate of capital allowances for investment in most equipment, we allow businesses to decide where investments should be made. The increase in first-year capital allowances from 25 per cent. to 40 per cent. which was announced in the autumn statement, will provide an additional incentive for investment by businesses in the year to October 1993.

Statistical Returns

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the range of penalties possible under section 4 of the Statistics of Trade Act 1947 for failure to make statistical returns; and in how many cases in the year 1991-92 action was taken on his behalf that could have led to such penalties being incurred.

Mr. Nelson: The maximum penalty under section 4 of the Statistics of Trade Act 1947 for failure to make statistical returns is a fine of a £1,000.

The number of cases taken on the Chancellor's behalf in the year 1991-92 that could have led to such penalties being incurred was 884. Of these, 877 responded to this action and only the remaining seven were prosecuted.

Taxation

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number and percentage of standard rate and higher rate taxpayers in *(a)* each county, *(b)* each region and *(c)* the United Kingdom for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimates for 1989-90 are as shown in the table. Married couples are counted as one unit in this last year before independent taxation.

Basic and higher rate taxpayers 1989-90

Regions and counties	*Taxpayers liable at only basic rate*		*Taxpayers liable at higher rate*	
	Thousands	*Percentage*	*Thousands*	*Percentage*
United Kingdom	20,100	92·0	1,750	8·0
North	1,020	96·2	40	3·8
Cleveland	141	95·5	7	4·5
Cumbria	189	96·8	6	3·2
Durham	209	95·4	10	4·6
Northumberland	107	95·6	5	4·4
Tyne/Wear	374	96·8	12	3·2
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,670	94·0	106	6·0
Humberside	295	92·0	26	8·0
North Yorkshire	266	91·6	24	8·4
South Yorkshire	411	94·9	22	5·1
West Yorkshire	694	95·3	34	4·7
North West	2,140	94·0	136	6·0
Cheshire	355	91·6	33	8·4
Greater Manchester	824	94·3	50	5·7
Lancashire	513	94·6	29	5·4
Merseyside	445	94·8	24	5·2
East Midlands	1,350	92·7	107	7·3
Derbyshire	319	92·4	26	7·6
Leicestershire	317	92·2	27	7·8
Lincolnshire	214	94·7	12	5·3
Northamptonshire	188	90·0	21	10·0
Nottinghamshire	317	93·9	21	6·1
West Midlands	1,780	93·9	116	6·1
Hereford and Worcestershire	251	92·4	21	7·6
Shropshire	143	93·6	10	6·4
Staffordshire	403	95·1	21	4·9
Warwickshire	189	89·2	23	10·8
West Midlands	793	94·9	42	5·1
East Anglia	767	93·5	54	6·5
Cambridgeshire	255	92·9	19	7·1
Norfolk	280	94·3	17	5·7
Suffolk	232	93·2	17	6·8
South East	6,260	88·0	850	12·0
Bedfordshire	176	88·1	24	11·9
Berkshire	245	86·4	39	13·6
Buckinghamshire	210	82·0	46	18·0
East Sussex	287	92·1	25	7·9
West Sussex	314	89·3	37	10·7
Essex	534	89·0	66	11·0
Greater London	2,480	88·5	321	11·5
Hampshire	546	90·2	59	9·8
Hertfordshire	397	85·5	67	14·5
Kent	517	89·8	59	10·2
Oxfordshire	161	87·2	23	12·8
Surrey	337	80·6	81	19·4
Isle of Wight	53	93·6	4	6·4
South West	1,590	92·9	121	7·1
Avon	303	93·1	23	6·9
Cornwall	149	95·8	7	4·2
Devon	383	95·6	18	4·4
Dorset	240	93·5	17	6·5
Gloucestershire	190	89·7	22	10·3
Somerset	146	89·4	17	10·6
Wiltshire	180	90·8	18	9·2
Wales	903	94·7	50	5·3
Dyfed	106	93·4	7	6·6
Clwyd	161	96·3	6	3·7

Regions and counties	*Taxpayers liable at only basic rate*		*Taxpayers liable at higher rate*	
	Thousands	*Percentage*	*Thousands*	*Percentage*
Gwent	142	92·8	11	7·2
Mid Glamorgan	165	95·9	7	4·1
South Glamorgan	132	95·3	6	4·7
West Glamorgan	99	95·8	4	4·2
Gwynedd	69	92·8	5	7·2
Powys	29	91·9	3	8·1
Scotland	1,940	93·9	126	6·1
Border	44	91·9	4	8·1
Central	96	92·4	8	7·6
Dumfries and Galloway	46	92·6	4	7·4
Fife	135	95·7	6	4·3
Grampian	231	92·7	18	7·3
Highland	69	97·3	2	2·7
Island Authorities	17	90·3	2	9·7
Lothian	312	93·4	22	6·6
Tayside	138	95·3	7	4·7
Strathclyde	849	94·1	54	5·9
Northern Ireland	453	93·8	30	6·2

Duty Free Allowances

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the change in revenue which will result from the changes in duty free allowances from 1 January 1993.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* The completion of the single market on 1 January 1993 will not result in any change in duty free allowances for excise goods. The main change for travellers will be the abolition of duty paid allowances for intra-EC travellers. As shown on page 56 of the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1992-93 published in March 1992, we expect the increase in personal importation of drink and tobacco products will result in a revenue loss to the United Kingdom Exchequer of around £250 million.

As an unrelated issue, negotiations have been taking place for some time with our EC partners over an increase in the "other goods" allowance for non-excisable projects, currently set at 45 ECU (£32). An objective of our presidency has been to make progress in this area. A provisional agreement has now been reached increasing the allowance to 175 ECU (£139) for third country travellers and to 90 ECU (£71) for intra-EC travellers, subject to reserves by Germany and Denmark. These increases would cost the United Kingdom exchequer around £35 million in a full year.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to seek to remove from liability for VAT payments made for the private care of elderly persons.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* My right hon. Friend has no plans to change United Kingdom VAT law relating to the domiciliary care of elderly people by private care agencies.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits Agency, Yorkshire

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the full range of furniture and household goods which social fund officers in the York Benefits Agency office were being advised to treat as high-priority items in October in each year since 1988.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Hugh Bayley, dated 24 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about priority levels for furniture and household goods in the Agency's York office.

Social Fund Officers (SFO) decide the overall priority of individual applications by looking at all the circumstances of the case. They are obliged to take account of guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Social Security, and by the District Manager acting as Area Social Fund Officer (ASFO).

Since 1988, guidance issued by the Secretary of State has indicated that only those items of furniture and household equipment that are essential to the applicant, should be afforded high priority. Over the same period the ASFO has also indicated that high priority should generally be afforded to essential items. However, I should point out that, since SFOs look at all the circumstances surrounding an application, what is an essential item for one applicant may not be for another.

Budgeting Loans are aimed at those on Income Support who find it difficult to budget for intermittent expenses, but Community Care Grants are targeted on specified circumstances. The Secretary of State guidance on the level of priority for grants is therefore in terms of the circumstances of the applicant, rather than the item requested. No advice is therefore provided on the level of priority accorded to grant applications for furniture and household equipment. This is for the SFO to decide.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in the benefits agency district covering Kilmarnock and Loudoun qualify for payment under the cold weather scheme.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. William McKelvey, dated 24 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many households in the Benefits Agency District covering Kilmarnock and Louden qualify for payment under the cold weather scheme.

Kilmarnock and Louden is covered by the Agency's Irvine and Kilmarnock District. It is not possible to give an exact figure of how many customers would qualify for a Cold Weather payment except at disproportionate cost. However, based on figures for those claiming Income Support in August 1992 it is estimated that approximately 11,000 customers in that District may qualify for a Cold Weather payment should the area be triggered. Parliamentary Constituencies and District boundaries do not correspond however and therefore a proportion of these may live outside the constituency.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cold weather payments were made in each region in each year since 1987.

Mr. Scott: All the information available on cold weather payments made since 1987 is held in the Library.

State Earnings-related Pension Scheme

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing the annual costs in each year since 1988-89, along with estimates for 1992-93, of the national insurance rebates, tax refunds and other incentives paid in respect of personal pensions used for contracting out of SERPS.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) on 23 June, *Official Report*, columns. *138-39*. Estimates for 1992-93 are in the table.

£ million

NI rebates	*Incentives*	*Tax refunds*	*Total*
1,950	650	225	2,825

Family Credit

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing the proposed family credit ceilings in 1993-94 for *(a)* a married couple with one child aged under five years, *(b)* a married couple with two children aged under 11 years, *(c)* a married couple with two children aged over 11 years, *(d)* a married couple with three children aged under 11 years, *(e)* a married couple with three children aged over 11 years and *(f)* a married couple with two children aged under 11 years and two children over 11 years.

Mr. Burt: At the new benefit levels proposed for April 1993 the family credit ceilings represented by the highest amount of net earnings and other relevant income a family can have and still qualify for family credit at the minimum payment of 50p will be as follows:

	£
Married couple with one child under 5 years	144·36
Married couple with two children under 11	159·71
Married couple with two children over 11 (but under 16)	180·00
Married couple with three children under 11	175·07
Married couple with three children over 11 (but under 16)	205·50
Married couple with two children under 11 and two children over 11 (but under 16)	210·71

Industrial Diseases

Dr. Blackburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will publish the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council report on bronchitis and emphysema in coal miners and metal production workers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has today laid the council's report before Parliament (Cm 2091). As with all IIAC reports, we will give it careful consideration. We will announce our decision about implementing the recommendations once the medical, administrative and financial issues raised by the report have been examined.

Pensioners Resident in Spain

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received from groups representing British pensioners resident in Spain; what reply he has given; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: We have received two representations concerning British pensioners resident in Spain, including the one from the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe dated 22 October. This was transferred to the Secretary of State for Health as the matters raised were mainly for her consideration.

EDUCATION

School Performance Tables

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to develop the comparative tables of school performance in future years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patten: Under the parents charter, the information about schools' performance made available to parents in comparative tables will build up systematically over the remainder of the decade.

Public examination results

The Department published this month the first comparative tables of GCSE and A/AS examination results in all maintained schools and those independent schools which volunteered to take part. From 1993, the published information will cover all secondary schools in England, including all independent ones. The Department will also be considering how to incorporate information about the vocational qualifications obtained in each school as increasing numbers of pupils try for these.

National curriculum test results

The Department will shortly publish the national results of the 1992 national curriculum tests of seven-year-olds in English, mathematics, science and technology and an analysis of the results in each LEA. The results in each LEA will be set alongside information about expenditure per nursery/primary pupil in the LEA so that judgments can be made about value for money at local level. Equivalent national and LEA analyses of the results of NC tests will be published every year after this as the assessment arrangements are extended to new subjects and key stages. The Department is also publishing this year a national analysis of the results of the 1992 pilot tests of 14-year-olds in mathematics and science in which 75 per cent. of secondary schools took part.

The Department published for consultation on 21 October proposals for the inclusion of information about the results of the tests of 7, 11 and 14-year-olds in the comparative tables of school performance. Under these proposals information will be published annually, school by school, about the proportion of pupils in each age group reaching or exceeding a target level. The information will cover every maintained school and those independent schools which participate in the tests.

This means that the publication of comparative information about NC test results will be introduced to the following schedule:

from 1993 and subsequently:
  the results of 7-year-olds in English, mathematics, science, technology, history and geography;
  the results of 14-year-olds in English, mathematics, science and technology.
from 1994 and subsequently:
  the results of 11-year-olds in English, mathematics, science and technology;
  the results of 14-year-olds in history and geography;
from 1995 and subsequently:
  the results of 11-year-olds in history and geography;
  the results of 14-year-olds in modern foreign languages.

The proposals do not envisage the publication of comparative information about results in music, art and PE because these subjects will not be assessed on the NC 10 level scale.

Comparative information about the enhancement of pupils' learning over time achieved by schools

The Department's October proposals also foreshadow the publication in comparative tables of a standard measure of the extent to which schools have enhanced pupils' attainments between one key stage of the National Curriculum and another—the "value-added". These measures will be phased in as and when pupils assessed at one age are assessed again at another. This implies the following timetable:

from 1995 and subsequently:
  the enhancement beween testing at seven (key stage 1) and at 11 (key stage 2);
  the enhancement between testing at 14 (key stage 3) and at 16 (key stage 3).
from 1997 and subsequently:
  the enhancement between testing at 11 (key stage 2) and 14 (key stage 3).
from 1999 and subsequently:
  the enhancement between testing at 11 (key stage 2) and 16 (key stage 4).

Attendance rates

From *1993*, it is intended that the comparative tables will contain information about the annual unauthorised pupil absence, and the numbers of pupils involved, in all maintained and independent schools.

Pupils' routes to further and higher education, training and employment

From *1993*, it is intended that the comparative tables will contain information about the routes taken by pupils at age 16. The information published will cover both maintained and independent schools.

Further information

In addition to the comparative tables, each maintained school is required to produce a prospectus each year. The school can include any information which it feels would be helpful, but must include:

full details of all public examinations taken by pupils, including vocational qualifications, broken down by subject and gender;

rates of unauthorised absence for each term and each year group;

and, from 1993, we propose:

national curriculum test results;

routes taken by pupils once they reach school leaving age.

The prospectus must also summarise curriculum and examination policies and arrangements made for pupils with special educational needs. We propose to require in addition a statement about how the school promotes the moral, spiritual, social and cultural values of pupils.

From September 1993 full inspection reports on every maintained secondary school will be published every four years. Four-yearly inspections of other maintained schools will start in 1994. The inspections will be arranged by OFSTED (the Office for Standards of Education) and will report on the quality of education, standards achieved, efficiency of management and development of values in the school. All parents will be sent a summary of the report on their children's school. The full report on each school will be available at the school and in local libraries.

School Inspectors

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what criteria have been used for the selection of those being currently trained as registered secondary school inspectors;

(2) how many registered secondary school inspectors are to be appointed for the school year 1993-94;

(3) how many registered secondary school inspectors currently being trained and employed are currently *(a)* local educational advisers and *(b)* former local educational advisers.

Mr. Forth: The training and registration of inspectors under the Education (Schools) Act 1992, and the arrangements under which they will carry out inspections under section 9 of that Act, are all the responsibilities of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools.

Pupil Assessments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of the children who are tested at the key stage one national curriculum assessment are aged *(a)* seven and *(b)* six at the time of the test.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not held centrally. In 1992 teachers were able to administer the end of key stage 1 tests from the mid-point of the spring term until the mid-point of the summer one. Estimates based on quarterly birth rate statistics recorded by OPCS reveal that by the end of this testing period less than 25 per cent. of pupils tested would not have reached their seventh birthdays.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many hours of teacher time he expects to be allocated to the administration and management of key stage one tests in primary schools *(a)* currently and *(b)* when the full range of national curriculum subjects is tested.

Mr. Forth: The test of reading expected, teachers were able to administer the 1992 statutory tests for seven-year-olds in English, mathematics and science in 24 hours, on average, for each class. This was well within the maximum of 30 hours allowed for. In addition teachers took on average nine hours to test individual pupils' reading ability by hearing them read aloud. Teachers were able to choose to administer the tests at any time between the mid-point of the spring term and the mid-point of the summer term.

The 1993 tests in English, mathematics and science will be to the same model and should take the same time.

Assessments in the other foundation subjects will be based on teachers' own assessments of pupils' school work, although teachers will have available voluntary tests in technology, history and geography to use at their own discretion.

Free School Meals

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils received free school meals in Blyth Valley and Northumberland at *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools for each year since 1988.

Mr. Forth: Information for schools in Blyth valley is not available centrally. The numbers of children taking free school meals in maintained primary and secondary schools in Northumberland local education authority for each year from 1988 to 1992 (provisional) are given in the table.

Pupils taking free school meals

Northumberland LEA	[1]*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Total*
[2]1992	3,210	2,403	5,613
1991	2,814	2,162	4,976
1990	2,563	2,017	4,580
1989	2,512	2,036	4,548
1988	2,181	1,991	4,172

[1] Primary figures 1989 to 1992 include pupils in nursery schools. Primary figures in relation to 1988 do not include such pupils.

[2] Provisional.

Education Associations

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the number of different schools he expects to be conducted by a single education association constituted under section 194 of the Education Bill.

Mr. Forth: The number will vary according to factors such as the timing of the identification of failing schools and their location. The Education Bill sets no upper limit.

"15000 Hours"

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what public funding was used for Professor Sir Michael Rutter's study "15000 Hours" into successful schools; and if he will list the names of the schools in the study.

Mr. Forth: The report on this project was published in 1979. The Department made grants of £71,045 to support the work which was also supported by the former Inner London education authority. The identities of the schools involved in the study were not made known to the Department.

Parents Meetings

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of annual parents' meetings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Annual parents' meetings are an important aspect of involving parents in the life of their children's schools. Research commissioned by the Department has added weight to anecdotal evidence that, in general, parental attendance is disappointing, whilst also finding instances of very successful meetings. We are considering how this might be followed up.

Ozone-depleting Substances

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much funding has been allocated or spent to deal specifically with measures to reduce his Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances.

Mr. Forth: A total of £4,911 has been spent in the current financial year to replace halon fire extinguishers with environmentally friendly alternatives.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance has been sought and received on alternatives or substitutes to the ozone-destroying chemicals in use by his Department.

Mr. Forth: Property Holdings, or their appointed contractors, maintain all the Department's refrigeration and air-conditioning plant, under their standard option arrangements. The Department depends on these arrangements to control the use of ozone-destroying chemicals, and to introduce suitable alternative or substitute materials in our premises.

In addition, for more general applications like the use of cleaning materials etc, the Department adheres to guidance and advice disseminated by the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many portable halon fire extinguishers are contained within departmental buildings; and what measures are being taken to ensure their recycling and replacement.

Mr. Forth: There are 45 portable halon fire extinguishers contained within the Department. All these extinguishers will be replaced by the end of 1992 and be properly recycled.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what targets have been set for the recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals within departmental buildings.

Mr. Forth: A replacement programme for Halon fire extinguishers will be completed by the target date of December 1992. All other ozone-depleting chemicals which have to be replaced are properly recycled under the terms of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many catastrophic leaks of ozone-depleting substances have occurred within Department buildings in the last five years.

Mr. Forth: None.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what proportion of his Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances becomes controlled waste in terms of section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990;

(2) what action has been taken to ensure that ozone-destroying substances consumed by his Department are identified as controlled wastes when they are no longer in use;

(3) what measures have been taken to ensure that ozone-destroying substances in use by his Department identified as controlled waste under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 do not reach the atmosphere.

Mr. Forth: The disposal of controlled waste is governed by the Duty of Care Regulations which came into force on 1 April 1992 under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. These regulations make producers of controlled waste responsible for ensuring that it is disposed of safely and legally. There is no Crown immunity from these regulations and the Department takes care to observe them.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many refrigeration and air conditioning systems in his Department are equipped with automatic leak detection systems.

Mr. Forth: None.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) by what date his Department's use of ozone-depleting chemicals will conform to EC regulations on limits on these chemicals;

(2) which current uses of ozone-depleting chemicals by his Department are considered essential.

Mr. Forth: Both the Montreal protocol and EC regulations seek to control the production but not the use of substances which deplete the ozone layer. However, the Department is helping to phase out ozone-depleting substances by refraining from purchasing or using them unless no suitable alternative is available.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will provide details from the maintenance and servicing record of the quantity and type of ozone-destroying chemicals used annually in his Department's refrigeration and air conditioning equipment for servicing and in leakages; and what proportion is removed for recycling.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally. Property Holdings, or its appointed contractors, maintain all the Department's refrigeration and air-conditioning systems and keep associated service records, under its standard option arrangements.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many CFC and HCFC installations are contained within departmental buildings; and how many CFC domestic fridges are contained within departmental buildings.

Mr. Forth: Property Holdings is responsible for the maintenance of the air-conditioning and refrigeration plant in all the Department's buildings. Technical information on these installations is not held by the Department.

The Department has 57 CFC domestic fridges.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what quantity of HCFC 22 is purchased by his Department per annum.

Mr. Forth: The Department does not make any direct purchases of HCFC22. Property Holdings, or its appointed contractors, is responsible for making purchases of such material for the Department under its Standard Option arrangements.

Ozone Layer

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how the departmental green Minister has promoted protection of the ozone layer with specific policy measures; which possible measures have been considered and rejected; and on what grounds.

Mr. Forth: The Department's policy is not to purchase new materials which are known to be harmful to the ozone layer as set out in the Montreal protocol and its revisions. Where existing equipment containing substances harmful to the ozone layer is to be renewed or subject to major maintenance it will be replaced by materials which are understood to be ozone friendly wherever this is possible.

No specific measures have been considered and rejected.

Teachers' Salaries

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list teachers' salaries as a percentage of average non-manual earnings for each year since 1974.

Mr. Forth: The figures are given in the table:

Table 1: Trends in school teachers relative pay 1974-92

Average gross weekly earnings (£) at April each year of full-time men and women workers on adult rates whose pay was not affected by absence.

	Teachers £	*All non-manual* £	*Teacher/ non-manual ratio*
1974	47·0	43·4	108
1975	65·2	56·2	116
1976	81·4	67·5	121
1977	86·2	73·6	117
1978	94·2	82·5	114
1979	98·1	92·2	106
1980	115·5	115·4	100
1981	156·9	133·6	117
1982	159·4	145·7	109
1983	172·2	159·1	108
1984	180·8	172·2	105
1985	191·2	184·6	104
1986	211·0	200·9	105
1987	225·2	217·4	104
1988	259·4	240·7	108
1989	277·7	264·9	105
1990	305·7	291·2	105
1991	349·8	312·5	112
1992	394·2	335·0	118

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Further Education

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students in further and higher education there were in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* the last year for which figures are available; and what was the average amount of money spent by the Government per student in each of those years.

Mr. Forman: Data are shown in the table for financial years 1979-80, 1985-86 and 1989-90, the latest year for which data are available. Further details are available from table 8 of Statistical Bulletin 10/92, a copy of which is in the Library.

Numbers of students and net institutional expenditure per FTE student in further and higher education[1] 1979-80, 1985-86 and 1989-90

	1979-80	*1985-86*	*1989-90*
UGC/UFC-funded universities			
FTE students (thousands)	266·1	274·2	304·8
Unit funding per FTE student (£ cash terms[2] [3])	3,215	5,335	6,410
LEA maintained establishments[4]			
FTE students (thousands)	735·1	794·1	692·0
Net institutional expenditure per FTE student (£ cash terms[2])	1,725	2,590	2,790
PCFC institutions[4]			
FTE students (thousands)	—	—	297·7
Unit funding per FTE student (£ cash terms[2])	—	—	3,910

[1] Territorial coverage is as follows: LEAs and PCFC—England; UGC/UFC—Great Britain.

[2] Rounded to nearest £5.

[3] Includes funding for research.

[4] Figures reflect the transfer of a number of institutions formerly maintained or assisted by local education authorities to the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC) in April 1989.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the level of expenditure in 1992-93 on tertiary and further education and those related services to be transferred from local authority responsibility in 1993 by each local authority; and what reduction in standard spending assessment for each local authority will occur in 1993-94 as a result of this transfer of responsibility.

Mr. Forth: This information is not currently available. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be announcing shortly his proposals for the 1993-94 local government settlement, including proposals for standard spending assessments. He also intends to announce proposals to specify a relevant notional amount for each authority to be used as the basis of comparison for the exercise of his capping powers for 1993-94 reflecting, inter alia, his estimate of authorities' budgeted expenditure in 1992-93 on those functions which will become the responsibility of the Further Education Funding Council from 1 April 1993.

Examination League Tables

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what amounts were paid to *(a)* Bath university and *(b)* PMS Communications Ltd. for compiling the recently published schools examination league tables.

Mr. Forth: The value of the contracts for the compilation of the school performance tables was as follows: *(a)* Bath university, £90,046; *(b)* PMS Communications Ltd., £65,000. These sums are exclusive of VAT.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when the contract to compile the schools examination league tables was advertised; how many organisations submitted tenders to carry out the work; which body carried out the tender evaluation; who drew up the tender specifications; and who was responsible for the award of the contract.

Mr. Forth: The procedures adopted in inviting tenders for this work and deciding on the award of contract were fully in line with established Government purchasing policy. It is not the Department's policy to advertise all contracts. In the case of the school examination results data preparation contract the Department was aware, through extensive supplier research, of 18 potential tenderers with the right level of expertise to undertake the work. This was felt to be a sufficient number to ensure a high level of competition and good value for money, without the need to advertise.

The tender specifications were drawn up by officials from a number of branches within the Department, who offered professional guidance on specific issues. Eighteen invitations were sent out, and five tenders were received for the work. These were evaluated by a project board comprising Departmental officials, also from a number of branches. The decision to award the contract to PMS Communications Ltd. was taken by the project board.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he is considering against Bath university and/or PMS Communications Ltd. under their contract for the compiling of the schools examination league tables in relation to inaccuracies in the work carried out.

Mr. Forth: All alleged inaccuracies in the examinations data for individual schools are being investigated individually. Where definite inaccuracies are proved to be the fault of the contractors, these will be rectified free of charge, in accordance with their contractual obligations. As at 24 November, this has happened in five cases only. About half the alleged inaccuracies have been supplied or agreed by schools themselves; the others relate to cases where the amendments sought were invalid, unsubstantiated or arrived after the given deadline.

"Choice and Diversity"

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will place in the Library a list of the respondents to the White Paper "Choice and Diversity".

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has today placed in the Library a list of respondents to the White Paper "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools", and to the two related consultation documents on special educational needs and religious education.

As well as those included on the list, a further 750 responses were received from governing bodies, headteachers, teachers, parents and members of the public. It would not be appropriate to list such respondents, some of whom may not wish their names to be disclosed.

Delinquency

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the current per capita spending on children in special schools for delinquents in London; and if he will outline the measures taken to reduce delinquency and its consequences.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

There is one young offender institution in the London area, at Feltham, Middlesex. The per capita cost of running that establishment was £456 per week in the 1991-92 financial year.

Measures taken with juvenile offenders at Feltham YOI to help them to avoid further offending include group work on drug and alcohol abuse, temper control and sexual behaviour and relationships. In addition, members of a local victim support scheme come in to discuss the effects of offending on its victims, and members of inmates' families are invited in once a month to engage in discussion groups which deal with offending among other issues.

DEFENCE

Contractors

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the top 100 contractors to his Department in terms of size of the total contracts.

Mr. Aitken: The information for 1990-91, which is the latest available, is published at table 1.17 of the 1992 edition of "Defence Statistics", a copy of which is available in the Library.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the future sales potential of the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Aitken: We expect that the EFA project will result in an even more exportable aircraft than Tornado which has created tens of thousands of jobs in the United Kingdom.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the capacity of the United Kingdom defence industry to construct the European fighter aircraft on its own.

Mr. Aitken: We are confident that our requirement for a new fighter aircraft can continue to be met through collaboration with our European allies. In the now unlikely event that this is not possible it would be technically feasible to complete the project on our own, although the cost implications would need careful consideration.

Export Controls

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution Ministers or officials of his Department will make to the forthcoming seminar held by the Export Control Organisation on a practical guide to United Kingdom export controls.

Mr. Aitken: My Department's officials regularly attend such seminars to provide guidance to industry on the export of defence and defence-related equipment. They participated in the seminar held on 20 November for this purpose.

Unexploded Bombs

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each of the past five years and for each maritime county in England, Scotland and Wales the number of unexploded bombs and shells that have been rendered safe by units within his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information is not held in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Fylingdales

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was *(a)* the capital cost of the new installation at Fylingdales moor and *(b)* the annual running cost.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The total capital cost of the modernised ballistic missile early warning system at RAF Fylingdales was £160 million. It is estimated that the annual running cost will be around £15 million.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will support the transfer of responsibility for inspections under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty from the International Atomic Energy Agency to a United Nations special commission under the direction of the Security Council.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

The Government believe that the IAEA continues to be the appropriate agency to verify that states meet their commitments for the safeguarding of nuclear materials under the NPT and similar treaties.

Nuclear Proliferation

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has made to the United Nations Security Council concerning improved intelligence-gathering procedures in world-wide nuclear proliferation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has made no representations to the United Nations Security Council on this issue.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has made to the Government of North Korea regarding obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no personal contacts with representatives of North Korea. The United Kingdom continues to stress in international forums the importance we attach to North Korea abiding by her obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. We also did so in talks with North Korean officials in June.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make representations to the United Nations Security Council to ensure that the non-proliferation regime is based on the possession of nuclear explosive materials as distinct from completed nuclear devices.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

There is no need for such a step. The treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons represents the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime and the obligations it places on states parties cover both nuclear devices and nuclear materials.

EMPLOYMENT

Disability Quotas

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what steps she is taking to encourage employers to meet the disability quotas of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944;

(2) if she will list the criteria to be met by an employer before a permit to engage people not registered disabled can be issued; and in what circumstances such a permit can be renewed;

(3) how many permits to engage people not registered disabled are issued by her Department each year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Eric Illsley, dated 25 November 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the steps being taken to encourage employers to meet the disability quota of the Disabled Persons Employment Act 1944 and two Parliamentary Questions about permits. These are matters which fall within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

We put a considerable amount of resource into persuading employers to recruit and retain suitable registered disabled people that is people who count towards the 3% quota under the Disabled Persons Employment Act.

My Disability Advisory Service (DAS) and the Disablement Resettlement Officers (DROs) have been brought together to form Placing Assessment and Advisory and Advisory Teams (PACTS). These teams provide a professional integrated and trained network of help and advice for both employers and people with disabilities.

There are seventy one Placing Assessment and Counselling Teams (PACTs) nationwide. An important part of their duties is to encourage employers to try to recruit registered disabled people thus helping employers towards meeting the 3% Quota. PACTs can offer employers practical assistance towards helping employers recruit registered disabled people through our Special Schemes. Two schemes give specific help to employers through:

(i) grants of up to £6,000 to enable employers to adapt their premises or equipment to employ a person with a disability;

(ii) a Job Introduction Scheme providing a grant towards a person's wage for a trial period of usually six weeks.

Other Special Schemes provide particular help for the individual through:

(i) assistance with fares to work for people with disabilities who are unable to use public transport;
(ii) special tools and equipment that a person needs to do their job;
(iii) financial aid for certain visually handicapped people towards the cost of setting up a business.

We also produce the Code of Good Practice for employers which is available from the PACT. This is a reference document which gives guidance about recruiting and retaining people with disabilities.

Our Disability Symbol was launched in September 1990. It helps employers who are committed to good practice in employing people with disabilities to communicate that fact to potential job applicants. The Symbol is being strengthened both by the addition of a strap line "Positive about Disabled People" and from the 1 June 1993 requiring employers who use the symbol to make five specific commitments to action.

There is a press advertising campaign under way aimed at raising employers interest in employing people with disabilities. The campaign aims to encourage employers to adopt good policies and practices in the recruitment, training, career development and retention of people with disabilities and to generate more vacancies for people with disabilities. The campaign is backed up both by advice and information including a new booklet "Employing People with Disabilities".

I enclose copies of both the Code of Good Practice and Employing People with Disabilities for your information.

I now turn to your questions about the criteria for issuing a permit and the numbers of permits issued each year.

There are two types of permit. The basic test applied for both is whether suitable registered disabled people are available. An individual or immediate permit authorises the engagement of one or more people who are not registered disabled, to fill actual vacancies when no suitable registered disabled people are available. Bulk permits give the employer authority in advance to engage a specified number of people who are not registered as disabled (usually based on the employer's estimate of their likely vacancies), in particular occupations for a specific period of time. Bulk permits are issued on the understanding that, the employer will notify vacancies to the Jobcentre and will sympathetically consider the engagement of any suitable registered disabled people who may become available. These conditions apply whether an employer is applying for a first or a subsequent permit.

We do not keep centralised records of the numbers of permits that are issued and I am unable to say how many permits are issued each year. However I hope it will be helpful if I give the total number of employers issued with permits during each of the last five years for which data is available. The figures relate to a twelve month period ending 1 June each year.

Employers issued with permits in twelve month period ending 1 June

	Number
1987	18,577
1988	18,594
1989	18,530
1990	18,038
1991	17,649

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive Replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if she will list the local authorities to which permits to engage people not registered disabled have been issued this year;

(2) for how long permits to engage people not registered disabled have been issued to Barnsley metropolitan borough council.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It has been the policy of successive Governments to treat as confidential, information about the issue of permits in accordance with the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 to individual employers, and not to disclose such information without their agreement.

Ingol Rehabilitation Centre

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations she has received regarding the proposed closure of Ingol rehabilitation centre; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department has recieved representations from some hon. Members and from Lancashire county council. Preston borough council and one or two groups representing people with disabilities suggesting that the proposed closure of Ingol rehabilitation centre be reconsidered.

I believe that the major changes we are making in employment rehabilitation, of which the proposed closure is part, will lead to a better service for people with disabilities. Those changes involve replacing most of the Employment Service's network of centres with a network of local rehabilitation agents which has wider geographical coverage and which harnesses sources of commitment and expertise in the community. Adequate alternative provision, including residential provision, is now available, through agents, for clients of Ingol rehabilitation centre, and we are therefore satisfied that the closure should proceed.

Wages Councils

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many checks were carried out by the wages inspectorate which found workers underpaid in each region for each year since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 22 May 1992 to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden), *Official Report*, columns 339–46, tables 7 and 8.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many establishments in each region since 1979 have been *(a)* found failing to post wages council notices, *(b)* found failing to keep adequate records of wages paid, *(c)* found failing to keep adequate records of hours worked and *(d)* the subject of criminal prosecutions against employers under the Wages Act 1986.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is shown in the tables. In most cases the information is divided into two tables of changes in divisional boundaries in 1986.

Table 1
Establishments found failing to post Wages Council notices
1979-1986

Division	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
London (East)	620	612	413	415	295	429	288	700
London (West)	346	365	277	343	314	375	438	[1]—
South East	623	843	457	759	906	1,058	859	1,108
Southern	529	534	375	302	295	548	591	433
Eastern	358	580	683	425	414	652	616	644
South West	846	981	783	647	756	853	781	670
Midlands (East)	444	485	420	434	652	473	347	258
Midlands (West)	451	451	243	374	406	695	781	504
North West (East)	555	419	240	296	367	388	447	688
North West (West)	621	558	376	340	489	629	605	685
Yorkshire and Humberside	990	770	675	726	934	763	638	668
Northern	389	540	421	267	271	394	466	528
Scotland (East)	644	689	370	437	489	495	524	409
Scotland (West)	530	679	394	299	371	329	386	289
Wales	609	682	695	502	429	444	603	473
TOTALS	8,555	9,188	6,822	6,566	7,388	8,525	8,370	8,057

[1] Included in London (East) figure.

Table 2
Establishments found failing to post wages council notices 1987 to 1991

Divisions	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
London	480	540	304	371	672
South East	1,049	725	910	575	629
Eastern	935	1,127	863	692	474
South West	983	1,265	1,354	1,297	1,185
Midlands	512	928	1,145	1,075	1,350
North West	894	1,395	1,686	2,223	1,710
Yorkshire and Humberside	485	673	857	803	934
Northern	413	474	593	693	932
Scotland	524	821	887	929	1,052
Totals	6,275	7,948	8,599	8,658	8,938

Table 3
Establishments found failing to keep adequate records of wages paid 1979-1986

Division	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
London (East)	446	377	226	144	214	150	85	128
London (West)	143	122	82	72	62	54	89	[1]—
South East	361	459	242	368	375	270	148	190
Southern	440	358	200	138	159	161	144	69
Eastern	224	270	324	159	140	181	152	129
South West	223	268	176	137	117	114	96	66
Midlands (East)	127	125	94	90	121	127	77	37
Midlands (West)	160	166	94	137	128	139	83	51
North West (East)	244	163	118	102	134	71	69	81
North West (West)	220	135	117	59	86	93	82	106
Yorks and Humberside	514	428	354	312	583	193	136	99
Northern	231	210	159	92	86	54	131	141
Scotland (East)	143	174	91	120	106	96	84	81
Scotland (West)	206	264	124	95	131	105	123	111
Wales	376	409	350	292	158	91	99	44
Totals	4,058	3,928	2,751	2,317	2,600	1,899	1,598	1,333

[1] Included in London (East) figure.

Table 4
Establishments found failing to keep adequate records of wages paid 1987-1991

Divisions	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
London	47	32	18	20	73
South East	348	304	301	240	273
Eastern	155	211	207	119	58
South West	108	183	155	181	266
Midlands	71	120	175	176	235
North West	168	258	336	324	399

Divisions	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Yorkshire and Humberside	133	161	184	197	259
Northern	95	97	127	152	228
Scotland	124	181	196	139	182
Totals	1,249	1,547	1,699	1,548	1,973

Table 5

Establishments found failing to keep adequate records of hours worked 1979-86

Division	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
London (East)	1,522	1,326	911	693	752	686	349	899
London (West)	707	628	486	585	615	625	829	[1]—
South East	1,180	1,465	790	1,302	1,631	1,558	1,277	1,739
Southern	1,718	1,609	947	814	779	1,003	1,056	771
Eastern	821	985	1,124	658	680	1,001	942	903
South West	1,474	1,538	1,172	940	1,229	957	924	659
Midlands (East)	652	671	576	438	513	695	564	338
Midlands (West)	581	527	449	513	508	597	630	485
North West (East)	782	687	453	474	473	448	490	713
North West (West)	1,031	828	451	381	588	738	650	733
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,771	1,380	1,185	1,070	1,240	1,108	854	877
Northern	1,049	907	664	434	452	478	687	734
Scotland (East)	1,008	957	676	594	798	847	917	780
Scotland (West)	1,099	1,065	575	437	470	408	448	395
Wales	1,045	1,202	1,048	879	638	467	618	432
Totals	16,440	15,775	11,507	10,212	11,366	11,616	11,235	10,458

[1] Included in London (East) figure.

Table 6

Establishments found failing to keep records of hours worked 1987-1991

Divisions	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
London	430	269	111	151	310
South East	1,404	1,010	1,141	808	963
Eastern	1,011	1,119	1,009	732	460
South West	759	970	911	743	771
Midlands	511	649	675	714	995
North West	926	1,254	1,211	1,189	1,162
Yorkshire and Humberside	548	647	609	686	825
Northern	432	422	487	580	857
Scotland	722	889	816	757	1,048
Totals	6,743	7,229	6,970	6,360	7,391

Table 7

Prosecutions under the Wages Councils Act 1979 and the Wages Act 1986 for the period 1979 to 1991

Divisions	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
London	4	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
South East	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	4	2	0
Eastern	1	1	2	3	1	1	0	1	0	2	1	0	0
South West	4	2	4	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	2	1	2
Midlands	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	1	1	0	1
North West	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	1
Yorkshire and Humberside	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	1	2	8
Northern	1	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	2
Scotland	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Totals	12	8	10	7	2	2	2	3	8	11	10	9	17

Training

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 17 November, *Official Report*, column *155*, on work-related training programmes, if she will give figures for every year since 1985.

Mr. Michal Forsyth: The information is shown in the following table.

Participants on work-related government training programmes as a percentage of the civilian workforce in employment by region

Region	June 1985		June 1986		June 1987		June 1988	
	WRGT S[1]	*Per cent. of CWIE*	*WRGT S*[1]	*Per cent. of CWIE*	*WRGT S*[1]	*Per cent. of CWIE*	*WRGT S*[1]	*Per cent. of CWIE*
South East[2]	31,000	0·4	36,000	0·4	47,000	0·6	50,000	0·6
Greater London	10,000	0·3	12,000	0·3	15,000	0·4	17,000	0·4
East Anglia	6,000	0·7	7,000	0·9	10,000	1·2	10,000	1·1
South West	13,000	0·7	17,000	0·9	24,000	1·2	25,000	1·2
West Midlands	19,000	0·9	30,000	1·4	41,000	1·9	41,000	1·8
East Midlands	16,000	1·0	17,000	1·0	25,000	1·5	26,000	1·5
Yorkshire and Humberside	18,000	0·9	22,000	1·1	34,000	1·7	40,000	1·9
North West	23,000	0·9	31,000	1·2	45,000	1·7	49,000	1·8
North	10,000	0·9	20,000	1·6	26,000	2·1	30,000	2·4
Wales	10,000	1·0	13,000	1·3	18,000	1·7	21,000	1·8
Scotland	21,000	1·0	24,000	1·2	34,000	1·6	44,000	1·9

Region	June 1989		June 1990		June 1991		June 1992	
	WRGT S[1]	*Per cent. of CWIE*	*WRGT S*[1]	*Per cent. of CWIE*	*WRGT S*[1]	*Per cent. of CWIE*	*WRGT S*[1]	*Per cent. of CWIE*
South East[2]	64,000	0·7	67,000	0·8	56,000	0·7	57,000	0·7
Greater London	29,000	0·7	31,000	0·8	25,000	0·7	29,000	0·8
East Anglia	12,000	1·2	9,000	0·9	8,000	0·9	8,000	0·9
South West	31,000	1·5	27,000	1·3	23,000	1·1	22,000	1·1
West Midlands	52,000	2·2	44,000	1·8	37,000	1·6	32,000	1·4
East Midlands	32,000	1·8	31,000	1·7	22,000	1·2	22,000	1·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	57,000	2·6	48,000	2·2	38,000	1·8	34,000	1·6
North West	65,000	2·3	55,000	2·0	46,000	1·7	46,000	1·7
North	50,000	3·9	45,000	3·5	35,000	2·9	32,000	2·6
Wales	31,000	2·6	28,000	2·4	21,000	1·8	20,000	1·7
Scotland	59,000	2·6	56,000	2·5	46,000	2·0	43,000	1·9

[1] Includes all participants on Government training and employment programmes who are receiving some work experience on their placement but do not have a contract of employment.

[2] Including Greater London.

Gas Regulations

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she expects to start the process of consulting publicly about the new edition of the Gas Installation and Use Regulations; how long she expects the process to take; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is expected that the Health and Safety Commission will publish a consultative document about the revision of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1984 in spring 1993 and that the consultative document will allow for a three-month consultation period.

SCOTLAND

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when copies of the discussion document on the reorganisation of Scottish local government were sent to *(a)* the Scottish press and *(b)* Scottish hon. Members, giving the exact time and date of dispatch in each case.

Mr. Stewart: Copies of the consultation paper on the structure of local government in Scotland were sent out by first class post to all right hon. and hon. Members representing Scottish constituencies on Monday 12 October, the date on which the paper was published. Copies were made available on arrival to members of the press who attended the public launch of the paper at 3 pm that day.

Disused Quarries

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the dangers at open disused quarries, particularly those which are filled with water; what further representations he has received regarding the incident at Bellrock quarry, resulting in the deaths of two schoolchildren; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Apart from the hon. Member's own representations in September, only one other letter has been received about the Bellrock quarry incident. There have been no representations about the dangers generally of open, disused quarries. As my letter of 21 October to the hon. Member confirmed, local authorities in Scotland already have sufficient powers under the Public Health (Scotland) Act 1897. Indeed, I understand that Kyle and Carrick district council has now erected fencing around the quarry.

Police (Ethnic Minorities)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the police are from ethnic minorities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As at 31 December 1991, the latest date for which figures are available, 0·2 per cent. of police officers in Scotland were from ethnic minorities.

Green Issues

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who in his Department has been appointed to oversee and develop green issues; how many civil servants have been allocated new or additional responsibilities to deal with the management and development of green issues; and what additional allocation of resources has been made to support programmes related to green issues in his Department.

Sir Hector Monro: As the green Minister at the Scottish Office I have overall responsibility for the environmental aspects of policies and programmes and for progressing initiatives which relate to the Environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance" (Cm. 1200). I am assisted by a Division within The Scottish Office Environment Department which has a general co-ordinating role on environmental issues. However, because of the diverse nature of the work of The Scottish Office, all its officials contribute either directly or indirectly to the environmental aspects of its responsibilities. Full details of the financial provision for environmental programmes are contained in the departmental report published each year.

Appointments

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he collates centrally on the political affiliations of appointees to public bodies and quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: None.

Renfrew (Development)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to promote the strategic economic development of Renfrew district; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The Government's principal agents for the promotion of local economic development are the local enterprise companies. Their business plans, completed each year and covering a three-year rolling period, set out their strategic and operational aims and objectives for their area.

The local enterprise company responsible for Renfrew district, Renfrewshire Enterprise, is involved in a range of initiatives and activities—often with other public and private sector bodies—to promote the development of skills, employment and economic prosperity in the area. The Glasgow airport initiative, which has very substantial potential employment and economic benefits for the area, is one example of the enterprise company working with others in a co-ordinated, complementary and strategic way to the benefit of the local community. I am sure the local enterprise company would be happy to discuss with the hon. Member the other aims and activities for the area set out in its business plan.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to give enterprise zone status to any part of Renfrew district; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no such plans. The district does, however, have the advantage of development area status; and, of course, the full range of powers and functions available to the local enterprise company, Renfrewshire Enterprise, are deployed to the benefit of the district.

School Meals

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the results of the annual census of school meals in Scotland held in January 1992; and what changes these show compared with the corresponding 1991 results.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table. The number of pupils taking school meals has continued to increase, despite a fall in the number of pupils present on census day. Almost half the pupils present on census day took school meals with a further estimated 19 per cent. bringing their own food to school. Free meals formed 32 per cent. of the total meals provided. Cafeteria style meals remain more popular than two-course fixed meals.

Education authority schools (including nursery and special schools)

	1992		*1991*	
	Number	*As percentage of pupils present Per cent.*	*Number*	*As percentage of pupils present Per cent.*
Pupils present on census day	695,201	—	698,554	—
Pupils taking school meals:				
On payment	227,740	32·8	230,378	33·0
Free	107,186	15·4	101,915	14·6
Total	334,926	48·2	332,293	47·6
Pupils bringing their own food to school[1]	115,681	18·5	106,110	16·9

[1] Excluding Grampian region, for which results for 1991 are not available.

NB:

A number of pupils took neither school meals nor brought food to school. These pupils would generally either have gone home for lunch or have eaten out locally.

A detailed statement of the returns from education authorities from which these national figures are derived is being placed in the Library.

The following table shows, as a percentage of pupils attending their respective sectors, those primary and secondary pupils taking meals or bringing their own food.

	Primary[1]		Secondary[2]	
	1992 per cent.	1991 per cent.	1992 per cent.	1991 per cent.
Pupils taking school meals	52·9	52·9	46·1	44·2
Pupils bringing own food[3]	27·6	25·0	6·8	6·5

[1] Includes 14 special departments in 1992 and nine special departments in 1991 where data have been included in primary school figures.

[2] Includes 17 special departments in 1992 and 10 special departments in 1991 where special data have been included in secondary school figures.

[3] Excluding Grampian for which 1991 comparisons were not available.

Almost 70 per cent. of meals served are cafeteria style:

	1992				1991			
	Paid	Free	Total	Per cent. of pupils present	Paid	Free	Total	Per cent. of pupils present
Pupils taking fixed meals	71,824	35,260	107,084	15·4	76,252	33,849	110,101	15·8
Pupils taking cafeteria meals	155,916	71,926	227,842	32·7	154,126	68,066	222,192	31·8

Water and Sewerage

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what is his policy on contacts between officials of his Department and private sector firms and other bodies about water and sewerage services in Scotland before a decision on the future of these services is announced.

Mr. Lang: The day-to-day work of my Department necessarily involves contact with a wide range of private sector firms and other bodies about aspects of water and sewerage provision. These contacts will continue. The future structure of the services is discussed in the consultation paper I issued on 17 November. The preparation of this document has required contact with a number of bodies and, now that it has been issued, consideration of the options it sets out will involve discussions and exchanges of views with a variety of interested parties, whether at the initiative of the Department or of those parties themselves. These contacts are likely to take a variety of forms. A list of those responding to the consultation paper will be available in due course in the usual way.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make his policy to publish the waiting times at Aberdeen Royal Hospitals NHS trust for *(a)* removal of gall bladder, *(b)* removal of bunions, *(c)* trigger finger, *(d)* varicose veins, *(e)* hip joint replacement, *(f)* knee joint replacement, *(g)* trapped nerve in hand or foot, *(h)* haemorrhoidectomy, *(i)* peptic, gastric or duodenal ulcers, *(j)* cataract removal and *(k)* hernias;

(2) if he will make it his policy to publish the waiting times at Woodend hospital, Aberdeen for *(a)* removal of gall bladder, *(b)* removal of bunions, *(c)* trigger finger, *(d)* varicose veins, *(e)* hip joint replacement, *(f)* knee joint replacement, *(g)* trapped nerve in hand or foot, *(h)* haemorrhoidectomy, *(i)* peptic, gastric or duodenal ulcers, *(j)* cataract removal and *(k)* hernias.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* It is our intention to publish waiting times for these, and other hospitals in Scotland, for *(e)* hip joint replacement, *(f)* knee joint replacement and *(j)* cataract removal. These, and geriatric assessment, are the procedures for which all health boards in Scotland have set maximum waiting time guarantees for their residents in pursuance of the commitment given in the patients charter.

Postgraduate Awards

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many postgraduate students received an award from the Scottish Education Department for the academic year 1992-93.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* In session 1992-93 to date, the Scottish Office Education Department has offered awards to 3,385 postgraduate students under the postgraduate students' allowances scheme and to 158 students under the Scottish studentship scheme, which caters for postgraduate higher degree study.

Offshore Hydrocarbons Unit

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had about the future ownership of the offshore hydrocarbons unit and the British geological survey core store and the implications for employment in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 12 November 1992]:* My right hon. Friend has had no such discussions.

Expenditure

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland from what previous figure the formula for setting Scottish expenditure relative to provision in England has been raised to 10·66 per cent.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* The figure, previous to 10·66 per cent. by which changes to the Scottish block were determined in relation to English provision was 11·76 per cent.

Patients (Mileage Rates)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding the current mileage rate paid to patients travelling by car by each health board in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* The existing guidance explains that, in general, travel expenses should be restricted to the cost of travelling by the cheapest form of public transport available. In certain circumstances, health boards may reimburse patients travelling by private car on the basis of the lesser of the estimated cost of petrol actually used or the equivalent public transport cost. Information is not collected on mileage rates but a survey undertaken in 1991 showed that some Boards had not been adhering to the guidance given but had been using a standard mileage rate varying from 5p to 8p per mile. Boards were reminded again in June 1992 of the guidance on the calculation of costs.

Tendering

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the criteria laid down for the acceptance of bids from organisations tendering as part of compulsory competitive tendering and in particular the grounds on which a local authority can select a bid other than the lowest.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* It is for local authorities in the first instance to decide on the award of a contract. In doing so, they must have regard to the compulsory competitive tendering provisions of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and the Local Government Act 1988, and particularly to the requirement not to act in a manner having the effect or intended or likely to have the effect of restricting, distorting or preventing competition. The Scottish Office Environment Department issued guidance to local authorities in March 1991 (Scottish Office Environment Department Circular 6/1991) on what does or does not constitute anti-competitive practice, and guidance regarding the non-acceptance of the lowest bid. That guidance will be superseded by new guidance and regulations, the terms of which have recently been the subject of consultation.

Nursing

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the quality and the objectivity of the civil service nursing advice provided in respect of *(a)* the national nursing audit development project and *(b)* the recently funded £120,000 nursing diagnosis/nomenclature project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* These projects seek to improve the information available about nursing treatments and to improve patient care by helping nurses to develop ways of critically reviewing their work. The relevant funding decisions were taken with the benefit of a range of advice from both within and outside the civil service.

EC Aid

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions he has sought aid for *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow and *(b)* Strathclyde in each of the past nine years under the terms of article 92(3) (a) of the treaty of Rome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* Article 92(3)(a) of the treaty of Rome sets out one of the grounds on which state aid may be considered to be compatible with the Common Market. It does not provide a means of seeking EC assistance, and the question of seeking aid under its terms does not therefore arise.

GP Vacancies

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average number of applicants for vacancies for general practitioner posts in Scotland every year since 1989.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* This information is not available centrally.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Lens Cleaning Solutions

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will refer manufacturers of contact lens cleaning solutions to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Director General of Fair Trading referred the supply of contact lens cleaning solutions to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on [illegible]0 April 1992. The Commission was asked to report by the end of February 1993.

Computer Games

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will refer computer games manufacturers to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Investigation of anti-competitive practices or monopolistic behaviour is the responsibility of the Director General of Fair Trading. The director general makes references to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission where he considers it appropriate.

Directors' Emoluments

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to examine a sample of company accounts for compliance with the Companies Acts requirements for disclosures on directors' emoluments.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: None.

Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 6 November, *Official Report*, column *439*, what action he has taken against Ernst and Young for the audit failures identified by the inspectors.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Copies of the reports have been forwarded to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will seek to amend the Register of Auditors and Information about Audit Firms Regulation 1991 to require the recognised supervisory bodies to record criticisms by the DTI inspectors against the relevant firm's name.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

Companies Acts Inspectors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 4 November, *Official Report*, column *310*, if he will indicate the amount paid to each of the Guinness inspectors.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The amounts paid are as follows:

	Total £	*Fees* £	*Disbursements* £
D. Donaldson, QC	328,000	285,000	43,000
I. G. Watt, FCA, CBE	1,435,000	1,185,000	250,000
Transcripts of trials (paid direct)	30,000	—	—
Total cost of inspection to end October 1992	1,793,000	1,470,000	293,000

All figures include VAT. The fees paid to Mr. Watt include charges for support services provided by KPMG Peat Marwick.

Company Accounts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 3 November, *Official Report*, column *139*, if he will provide the names of the three companies whose accounts he has referred to the financial reporting review panel; and what has been the outcome of such referral.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No. In the interest of fairness the panel does not disclose the names of the companies it inquires into while the inquiries are in train and it normally announces its findings only when it has reached an adverse conclusion. I understand that in one of the three cases the panel concluded that no action was called for and the other two are under consideration. A copy of the procedures of the panel was placed in the Library of the House in June 1991.

Auditing Standards

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to appoint an inquiry into the setting of auditing standards in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no such plans.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has for legislation under which company auditors would owe a duty of care to creditors.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no such proposals.

Post Office

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the present methods of financing capital expenditure employed by the Post Office and its subsidiaries; and what changes are proposed following the autumn statement.

Mr. Leigh: The Post Office and its subsidiaries finance capital expenditure from internally generated funds. No changes are proposed following the autumn statement.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the capital expenditure of the Post Office and each of its subsidiaries for each of the last five years; and what are the projections for the current year.

Mr. Leigh: Capital expenditure of the Post Office group and its principal constituent businesses for each of the last five years, as stated in the annual accounts, was as follows:

£ million

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Group	131·3	173·5	257·5	335	269
Letters/Parcels	101·3	131·4	197·8	257	—
Royal Mail	—	—	—	—	189
Parcelforce	—	—	—	—	30
Post Office Counters	13·3	21·6	21·3	40	44
Girobank	13·6	12·6	10·2	—	—

Notes:

1. Separate accounts for Royal Mail and Parcelforce first published in 1991-92.
2. Girobank sold in July 1990.

Projected capital expenditure of the Post Office Group for 1992-93 is £344 million in total the breakdown between the principal constituent businesses remains commercially confidential.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he was first informed of the costs of the liquidation of BCCI.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My officials have been made aware at various times since the winding-up order on 14 January 1992 of some of the detailed aspects of the cost of the liquidation of BCCI. Detailed figures given to the House by my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury on 6 November 1992, *Official Report*, column 593, were supplied to my officials by the Touche Ross liquidators on 5 November 1992.

Defence Industries

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what initiatives have been taken by the Government since 1990 to encourage the arms and defence industries in the north west region to diversify into other areas.

Mr. Sainsbury: Diversification is essentially a matter for the commercial judgment of the companies concerned. My Department helps them with its wide range of programmes, including those in the enterprise initiative and "Managing into the 90s". A special seminar was held in Blackburn on 12 May 1992. The north west is benefiting from four projects under the European Community's PERIFRA scheme.

Coal Industry

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement concerning his discussions with British Coal and the power generators on the provision of British Coal mined coal for the generating market prior to the announced closure of 31 coal mines.

Mr. Eggar: As my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade made clear to the House on 19 October, *Official Report*, columns 205-7, he was advised by British Coal before the closures were announced of the need to end production at the pits concerned in order to bring supply in line with demand.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement concerning the recent planning application by British Coal to demolish certain buildings at Easington colliery while this colliery is in the review procedure.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that British Coal made an application on 15 October to demolish certain buildings at Easington colliery; and that following my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade's announcement on 19 October of a moratorium in respect of 21 pits, which include Easington, British Coal has suspended further action in respect of this application.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the mining consultants Boyd's was requested to assess the viability of the 10 collieries currently in the review process and due to close in January 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Last year John T. Boyd Company was asked to assess the viability of 28 collieries, chosen by British Coal on a representative basis. Of the collieries studied, five are among the 10 collieries which have subsequently become subject to statutory consultation. The five pits are Betws, Parkside, Trentham, Grimethorpe and Houghton Main.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total amount of opencast coal produced in each year since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: The total amount of opencast coal produced since 1979 was as follows:

Opencast production

Year	*Thousand tonnes*
1979	12,862
1980	15,779
1981	14,828
1982	15,266
1983	14,706
1984	14,306
1985	15,569
1986	14,275
1987	15,786
1988	17,899
1989	18,657
1990	18,134
1991	18,620

Source: Table A6 of the Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics 1992.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the amount of coal from opencast operations for each of the last five years.

Mr. Eggar: The amount of opencast coal produced during the last five years was as follows:

Year	*Opencast production (thousand tonnes)*
1987	15,786
1988	17,899
1989	18,657
1990	18,134
1991	18,620

Source: Table 12 of the Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics 1992.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the amount of coal from deep mine operations in each of the last five years.

Mr. Eggar: The amount of deep-mined coal produced during the last five years was as follows:

Year	*Deep-mined production (thousand tonnes)*
1987	85,957
1988	83,762
1989	79,628
1990	72,899
1991	73,357

Source: Table 12 of the Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics 1992.

Development Area Status

Mr. Jack Thompson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will consider the request for the restoration of development area status from Wansbeck district council before the conclusion of the current coal industry inquiry.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am considering all the representations that have been submitted in the current review of the assisted areas map, including the request by Wansbeck district council. Our decision about the Morpeth and

Ashington travel-to-work area, about which the council is concerned, will be announced when the new assisted areas map as a whole is designated.

Assisted Areas

53. **Mr. Charles Kennedy:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his timetable for his review of the assisted area status map; what parliamentary proceedings will be involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 30 October 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the consultation document on the review of the assisted area map issued on 9 June 1992.

Section 1(7) of the Industrial Development Act 1982 specified the necessary Parliamentary proceedings. Subject to this minimum requirement the Government will decide on the most appropriate parliamentary proceedings in due course.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

122. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what representations he has received regarding the outcome of the London-Cardiff review of the Export Credits Guarantee Department carried out by the ECGD board of management; when he expects to make a decision on the board's recommendations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consideration is being given to the board of management of the Export Credits Guarantee Department's review concerning the London-Cardiff review of ECGD operations.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* I have endorsed the recommendation of the ECGD management board that three should be no major change to the distribution of functions between London and Cardiff for at least three years.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade for how many years his Department keeps records of export credit guarantees before shredding or other means of disposal.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* The Export Credits Guarantee Department keeps records of each of its guarantees for as long as it has a potential liability under that guarantee, and for a period thereafter which varies according to the nature and details of the case.

Tobacco

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the volume of tobacco imports in pound million and kilos for each year from 1979-80.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* The information is given in the table.

United Kingdom Imports of Tobacco

	Unmanufactured Tobacco[1]		Manufactured Tobacco[2]	
	£ million	kilos	£ million	kilos
1979	305·5	187,119,000	45·4	13,776,700
1980	179·0	124,236,000	56·0	13,266,500
1981	219·7	139,914,500	49·7	13,236,600
1982	250·3	127,787,300	68·9	13,145,700
1983	279·9	130,304,700	64·7	14,864,700
1984	320·0	131,073,000	87·1	21,674,200
1985	273·3	120,406,800	113·8	26,338,900
1986	219·1	101,123,700	119·7	26,363,900
1987	213·0	109,257,900	107·1	23,737,200
1988	216·3	120,059,000	109·0	26,359,300
1989	238·4	114,082,100	107·1	23,829,700
1990	251·0	128,176,800	126·5	26,824,700
1991	323·0	138,946,300	148·3	29,966,000

[1] Unmanufactured Tobacco includes Tobacco Refuse and is defined as item 121 of the Standard International Trade Classification.

[2] Manufactured Tobacco (whether or not containing Tobacco Substitutes) is defined as item 122 of the Standard International Trade Classification.

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are his best projections of the impact of the single European market on tobacco imports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the written answer given on 9 November 1992 by my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General, to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn), *Official Report*, column 544.

Policy Initiatives

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the initiatives which he has taken on EC regional policy during the British Presidency of the EC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* The immediate and overriding issue concerning EC regional policy is the size of the budget for the cohesion and structural funds for the period from January 1994. The United Kingdom Presidency hopes that agreement on this and the other aspects of the future financing of the Community from 1993 will be agreed at the Edinburgh European Council on 11-12 December.

Steel

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total production of liquid steel in Great Britain in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* Steel production is usually measured in terms of "crude steel production". This measure the crude output that can go forward for further processing, and is typically 1-2 per cent. less than the initial output of liquid steel. Information about crude steel production is regularly published by the Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau in "Iron and Steel Industry Annual Statistics", which is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total quantity of steel imports for *(a)* the part-year from 1 January 1992 to the most recent record available, *(b)* the equivalent part-year period for 1991, 1990 and 1985 and *(c)* the percentage change year on year.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* The information is as follows:

Year	*Imports*	*Average annual percentage change over previous period*
1985	2,700,692	n.a.
1990	3,820,593	7·2
1991	4,011,752	5·0
1992	3,979,761	−0·8

Covers imports of all United Kingdom steel industry products.
n.a. = not applicable.
Source: Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau.

Engineering

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures he intends to introduce to strengthen the United Kingdom's engineering industry.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* I refer the hon. member to the reply that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of trade gave the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), on 16 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns 71-72, which described Government action to help manufacturing. Engineering represents a very large proportion of our manufacturing GDP and I hope it will benefit in full measure from the policies my right hon. Friend set out in that reply.

Oil and Gas Reserves

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the proportion of the United Kingdom oil and gas reserves which have so far been taken from offshore fields.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* Section 2.4 and table 7 of the Brown Book (Development of the Oil and Gas Resources of the United Kingdom) published in April 1992 set out my Department's latest estimate, at 31 December 1991, of total potential recoverable reserves of oil and gas in the United Kingdom. These showed that remaining reserves could be up to 3·9 times as much as cumulative production to the same date in the case of oil and up to 4·2 times as much in the case of gas.

Nuclear Programmes

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what specifically-allocated financial contributions have been made in 1991-92 to 1992-93 by Nuclear Electric, Scottish Nuclear and British Nuclear Fuels plc to the Atomic Energy Authority fusion programme.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* None.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects a commercial prototype fusion reactor to enter service in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on its current development progress.

Mr. Eggar: *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* Nuclear fusion is not expected to provide the basis for a commercially viable source of energy at least until the middle of the next century. There are no current plans for the development of a commercial prototype fusion reactor in the United Kingdom.

Photovoltaics

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current programme of assessment studies into photovoltaics being undertaken by his Department; what is the cost of the programme; and if he will list the location of the studies.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* There are three assessment studies currently ongoing:

1. "A feasibility and design study for a photovoltaic building demonstration" by the university of Cardiff (at Cardiff).
2. "Grid connection of photovoltaic systems" by Halcrow Gilbert Associates (at Swindon).
3. "Photovoltaic modules as a cladding for commercial building" by British Petroleum (at Leatherhead).

The total cost of these studies is £232,000.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to launch a programme of demonstration projects into photovoltaics.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* I have no plans to launch a programme of demonstration projects into photovoltaics, but my officials are giving consideration to a proposal for a particular project which would be located at the university of Northumbria.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Murphy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, if he intends to meet the new owners of the Severn bridge to discuss toll charges.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have been asked to reply.

I have no plans to do so. The charges are governed by the provisions of the Severn Bridges Act 1992.

HEALTH

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those agencies in her Department which are being considered for privatisation or contractorisation.

Mr. Sackville: None of the agencies in this Department is being considered for privatisation or contractorisation at present. As announced by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary Office of Public Service and Science on 17 November at column *104*, privatisation and contractorisation are always considered as alternatives to agency status before any agency is established, and would normally be re-examined as options during the course of each agency's periodic review. Any major change in the status of an agency would be the subject of an announcement.

Salaries

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what remuneration has actually been paid by each health service trust in England to chairmen and non-executive directors in 1991-92;

(2) what was the total cost of remuneration of chairmen and non-executive directors of national health service authorities and trusts in each year since 1988-89;

(3) what remuneration was actually paid to chairmen and non-executive directors in 1991-92 by each regional health authority in England and Wales;

(4) what remuneration was actually paid by each family health service authority in England to chairmen and non-executive directors in 1991-92;

(5) if she will provide by district health authority in England details of remuneration paid to chairmen and non-executive directors in 1991-92 detailing *(a)* fees, *(b)* other emoluments, *(c)* pensions and *(d)* the total.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information from the 1991-92 annual accounts of health authorities, NHS trusts and family health services authorities in England will be available later in the year. Figures which are separately identifiable in the formats of the annual accounts for the earlier years are shown in the table. Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

	£000 (cash)		
	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Health authorities			
Chairmen's remuneration	2,753	2,832	4,875
Family health services authorities			
Chairmen's remuneration	430	450	1,003
Members' remuneration	—	—	2,234

Notes:

1. The figures for health authorities relate to regional and district health authorities and the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals.

2. Arrangements to remunerate—essentially to compensate—members of family health services authorities—formerly family practitioner committees—for their time spent on FHSA business were introduced only during 1990-91.

Expenditure

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide, by individual health authority in England, details of the increases in management and administrative expenditure together with the variations in in-patients, out-patients, day patients and accident and emergency patients treated since 1 April 1989 and the percentage variations thereof.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information from the annual accounts of health authorities and the relevant statistics for 1991-92 will be available later in the year. This will then enable comparisons to be drawn with the expenditure and activity data held centrally for 1989-90.

Henderson Hospital, Sutton

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions her Department has had with Wandsworth council social services on the possible effects on that Department of the threatened closure of the Henderson hospital, Sutton, Surrey; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have had no such discussions.

Skin Cancer

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 19 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *80*, if she will provide the regional breakdown of figures for *(a)* the incidence of and *(b)* mortality as a result of non-melanotic and malignant melanoma; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Blood Products

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is her policy in respect of the supply to hospitals of plasma products produced from plasma unscreened for hepatitis C at the individual donor level after 1 January 1993;

(2) whether plasma products by Bio Products Laboratory conform to the committee on proprietary medicinal products' requirements in terms of source material having been fully screened for hepatitis C at the donor level.

Mr. Sackville: Plasma products supplied in this country will meet the requirements of the UK licensing authority and of the EC in relation to screening for antibodies to the hepatitis C virus.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent the Bio Products Laboratory is bound by commercial criteria in its policy on pricing products; and whether it is required to provide a commercial return on its activities.

Mr. Sackville: Our intention is that the Bio Products Laboratory should compete fairly in terms of the service, quality and price of its blood products within the Government's policy that this country should be self-sufficient in blood products derived from plasma donated by our voluntary unpaid donors. The Central Blood Laboratories Authority, which is responsible for the Bio Products Laboratory, accounts for its performance and publishes an annual report and financial statement.

Research Units

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to her reply of 3 July, *Official Report*, columns *743-44*, what is the status of the report on the review of research units; who is being consulted; what is the closing date for any comments; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am considering this report and shall make an announcement shortly.

Ambulance Responses, Northumbria

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the emergency response times for the Northumbria ambulance authority for each year since 1988 showing the percentage answered within eight minutes and within 25 minutes.

Mr. Sackville: Information is not collected in the form requested. The available information is as follows:

	Total emergency calls[1]	Response within eight[2] minutes		Response within 14 minutes	
	number	number	percent	number	percent
1988-89	61,559	35,655	57·9	59,650	96·9
1989-90[3]	37,355	19,649	52·6	35,637	95·4
1990-91	67,309	35,674	53·0	61,588	91·5
1991-92[4]	66,098	38,998	59·0	64,115	97·0

[1] Figures for 1991-92 are based on emergency patient journeys.

[2] Figures prior to 1991-92 are based on response within seven minutes.

[3] As a result of industrial action in this period, a complete year's return could not be provided. The figure shown represents approximately half the calls received.

[4] Figures for 1991-92 are provisional.

Original Pack Dispensing

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to publish the consultation document on original pack dispensing.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) on 13 July at column *518*.

Pensioners (Spain)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from groups representing British pensioners resident in Spain; what reply she has given; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: We have recently received a copy of the right hon. Member's letter of 22 October to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. We shall be responding as soon as possible to the points raised for which this Department has responsibility.

Hypothermia

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing, for men aged 65 years and over and women aged 60 years and over, the number of deaths from hypothermia in each region for each year since 1987.

Mr. Sackville: The information is in the table.

Number of deaths with mention of hypothermia on the death certificate for men aged 65 and over and women aged 60 and over by Regional Health Authority of usual residence for the years 1987 to 1991

Regional Health Authority	Men aged 65 years and over	Women aged 60 years and over
1987		
Northern	11	22
Yorkshire	15	19
Trent	14	25
East Anglian	4	14
North West Thames	13	18
North East Thames	11	31
South East Thames	8	33
South West Thames	8	12
Wessex	10	11
Oxford	8	25
South Western	9	18
West Midlands	11	23
Mersey	4	12
North Western	5	25
Wales	10	28
1988		
Northern	6	12
Yorkshire	8	24
Trent	8	20
East Anglian	5	14
North West Thames	8	15
North East Thames	17	16
South East Thames	10	18
South West Thames	4	14
Wessex	7	9
Oxford	7	11
South Western	16	20
West Midlands	11	22
Mersey	4	10
North Western	8	16
Wales	10	16
1989		
Northern	4	8
Yorkshire	3	20
Trent	11	16
East Anglian	5	7
North West Thames	4	14
North East Thames	11	25
South East Thames	13	18
South West Thames	6	19
Wessex	5	12
Oxford	9	10
South Western	7	20
West Midlands	11	14
Mersey	2	10
North Western	7	14
Wales	6	13
1990		
Northern	3	12
Yorkshire	14	21
Trent	12	14
East Anglian	4	9
North West Thames	7	18
North East Thames	8	18
South East Thames	10	14
South West Thames	6	9
Wessex	9	11
Oxford	5	6
South Western	5	17
West Midlands	11	25

Regional Health Authority	*Men aged 65 years and over*	*Women aged 60 years and over*
Mersey	1	9
North Western	10	10
Wales	6	15
1991		
Northern	7	20
Yorkshire	7	18
Trent	12	26
East Anglian	13	13
North West Thames	12	21
North East Thames	10	20
South East Thames	13	22
South West Thames	5	24
Wessex	2	21
Oxford	6	16
South Western	19	21
West Midlands	23	37
Mersey	2	10
North Western	7	14
Wales	7	23

Hospitals (Consultants)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those hospitals in England with 100 or more acute beds that do not have a specialist full-time accident and emergency consultant.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available centrally.

Elderly People

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing the numbers of men aged 65 years and over and women aged 60 years and over in each region for each year since 1987.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is shown in the table.

Mid-year population estimates

(thousands)

	Males aged 65+					*Females aged 60+*				
Year	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	[1]*1991*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	[1]*1990*	*1991*
England and Wales	3,132·8	3,167·6	3,203·3	3,228·8	3,271·1	6,116·0	6,119·7	6,129·1	6,127·2	6,164·1
Regional health authorities—										
Northern	186·7	188·9	191·3	192·8	197·9	374·0	374·2	375·0	374·8	381·4
Yorkshire	221·0	223·5	226·0	227·5	232·6	439·9	440·1	441·2	440·6	445·3
Trent	290·0	293·7	297·4	299·8	311·7	546·9	548·8	551·4	552·8	564·1
East Anglian	138·2	140·8	143·2	145·2	147·9	247·8	251·0	253·7	256·0	258·5
North West Thames	199·7	200·4	202·2	203·7	199·2	383·4	380·9	380·1	378·9	374·3
North East Thames	229·2	230·4	231·7	233·3	223·6	446·0	442·9	440·3	438·6	421·3
South East Thames	244·1	245·3	246·7	247·2	245·4	486·1	483·5	481·4	478·5	472·4
South West Thames	193·9	195·0	196·3	197·5	194·3	388·4	386·2	384·9	383·2	379·1
Wessex	198·6	201·7	204·1	205·9	212·0	378·6	381·5	383·5	384·9	390·7
Oxford	133·5	136·4	139·2	141·9	138·1	247·8	250·8	253·6	256·0	253·6
South Western	230·9	233·8	236·9	238·4	246·0	438·9	441·6	444·0	444·9	453·5
West Midlands	306·5	311·6	316·1	319·5	328·3	591·1	593·3	595·7	597·3	613·1
Mersey	139·2	140·7	142·4	143·4	146·6	289·3	289·1	289·1	288·2	294·0
North Western	237·5	238·8	240·0	240·6	248·0	492·5	489·0	486·7	483·6	487·8
Wales	183·8	186·6	189·8	192·0	199·4	365·2	366·8	368·3	368·8	375·3

[1] The estimates for 1991 have been provisionally rebased using early 1991 census results. Those for 1987-90 are based upon 1981 census data, with allowance for subsequent births, deaths, and migration. They are not consistent with the 1991 estimates, and will be revised next year after final rebased 1991 estimates have been prepared using more complete 1991 census information.

NHS Staff

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 9 November, *Official Report*, column *566*, on NHS redundancies, if she will list such figures as are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: The data available relate to those redundancies where a benefit is immediately payable under the National Health Service (Compensation for Premature Retirement) Regulations 1981. The table gives numbers by region and by reason for each of the financial years 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92.

Reason for Redundancy

Region	*1989-90*					
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*Total*
Northern	33	—	41	3	5	82
Yorkshire	38	—	139	1	1	184
Trent	6	—	167	3	3	179
E Anglia	43	—	40	—	2	85
NW Thames	63	—	154	—	7	224
NE Thames	72	—	66	2	10	150
SE Thames	6	—	92	—	8	106
SW Thames	43	—	10	1	5	59
Wessex	20	—	75	1	2	98
Oxford	15	—	39	—	5	59
South Western	6	1	132	1	6	146
West Mids	14	—	75	1	4	94
Mersey	63	—	86	1	6	156

Region	1989-90 1	2	3	4	5	Total
North Western	176	—	75	4	3	258
Wales	30	—	29	6	4	69
Special Hospitals	33	—	17	—	4	54
Trusts	—	—	—	—	—	—

Region	1990-91 1	2	3	4	5	Total
Northern	47	—	58	4	6	115
Yorkshire	18	—	144	3	7	172
Trent	9	—	152	2	3	166
East Anglia	21	—	22	2	—	45
North West Thames	37	—	113	—	4	154
North East Thames	32	—	155	2	4	193
South East Thames	4	—	89	2	4	99
South West Thames	4	—	97	1	2	104
Wessex	21	—	129	2	4	156
Oxford	—	—	23	1	3	27
South Western	2	—	89	1	1	93
West Midlands	15	1	81	—	2	99
Mersey	12	—	81	—	1	94
North Western	137	—	70	4	3	214
Wales	17	—	34	4	—	55
Special Hospitals	—	—	47	—	1	48
Trusts	—	—	—	—	—	—

Region	1991-92 1	2	3	4	5	Total
Northern	28	—	61	11	4	104
Yorkshire	21	—	215	13	—	249
Trent	—	—	106	11	—	117
East Anglia	1	—	56	6	2	65
North West Thames	30	—	169	11	3	213
North East Thames	48	1	162	9	6	226
South East Thames	42	—	197	10	1	250
South West Thames	34	—	87	10	1	132
Wessex	—	—	57	11	3	71
Oxford	23	—	60	16	3	102
South Western	2	—	143	15	2	162
West Midlands	25	2	254	8	—	289
Mersey	10	—	117	5	1	133
North Western	4	4	57	10	2	77
Wales	107	—	151	9	2	269
Special hospitals	1	—	43	1	4	49
Trusts	68	—	233	3	4	308

[1] Competitive tendering.

[2] Patients first. (Voluntary redundancy within the General Whitley Council 1982 arrangements.)

[3] Redundancy. (Due to closure of place of employment.)

[4] Interest of efficiency of service.

[5] Achieving a balance. (Replacement of Senior Consultants posts.)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are her best estimates of the proportion of NHS staff who receive annual service pay increments; what was the cost of such increments in 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what is the projected cost in 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Arts for Health

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *86*, if she will provide details of Government funding for the British Health Care Arts Centre; and if she will now make it her policy to provide funding by her Department for Arts for Health in recognition of its advisory work on a national scale.

Mr. Sackville: We have no knowledge of the funding arrangements for the British Health Care Arts Centre. The Department's policy on the arts is as contained the reply I gave the right hon. Member on 19 October, at column *86*.

NHS Estates, an agency of the Department, commissioned advice, on a fee-paying basis, from the British Health Care Arts Centre and others during the preparation of the guidance referred to in my earlier reply.

Mentally Disordered Offenders

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to publish the Reed report on mentally disordered offenders; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Soon.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Genetic Resources

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to ensure that intellectual property rights should not be extended to genetic resources except in accordance with the international undertaking on plant genetic resources.

Mr. Curry: It is already the Department's policy to oppose the extension of intellectual property rights to plant genetic resources.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action is currently being undertaken by his Department to persuade other countries to join *(a)* the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources and *(b)* the international undertaking on plant genetic resources.

Mr. Curry: The Government continue to argue for increased international collaboration on the conservation of plant genetic resources, in the context of the Food and Agriculture Organisation's commission and international undertaking and in other international forums.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to encourage the adoption of formal national plant genetic resources programmes throughout the world.

Mr. Curry: The Government, through the Overseas Development Administration, are a major funder of the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources and supports the international centres in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. The United Kingdom is also active in the European co-operative programme on crop genetic resources and we shall continue to participate in international efforts to establish networks of ex-situ plant genetic resource collections.

Mink

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to lay the next Mink (Keeping) Order following the expiry of the existing Order.

Mr. Soames: The Mink Keeping Order 1992 has been laid before Parliament today.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the value of reduction and percentage reduction of agricultural output in each EC country and overall based on constant yields and prices resulting from the MacSharry proposals for CAP reform.

Mr. Curry: The package of reform measures, based on the MacSharry proposals and agreed by Ministers in May, is expected to result in a reduction in agricultural output in the EC. Precise estimates of the impact will not be possible until the detailed implementation procedures have been finalised and will in any case depend on how individual farmers react in the light of changes in the economic environment. The Commission is to bring forward a paper dealing with the compatibility between CAP reform and the GATT outline agreement.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Kenya

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about progress toward free and fair elections in Kenya.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We warmly welcome the Kenya Government's commitment to the holding of free and fair elections, as we do their decision to invite both international and domestic observers.

United States (Trade)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many times he and his Ministers have spoken to the United States Government on trade matters in the past six months.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are in regular touch with the United States Government in trade matters. The frequency of these contacts has increased during the British presidency of the EC, particularly in the context of the GATT Uruguay round negotiations, to reinforce the efforts of the European Commission.

Hong Kong

18. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the prospects for the development of democracy in Hong Kong in the light of the Governor's recent proposals.

Mr. Goodlad: The Governor's proposals respond to a widespread wish in Hong Kong to see a broadening of democracy. They have been widely and warmly welcomed. We support them as the best way forward for Hong Kong. It will be for the Legislative Council to form a view on them early next year.

EC (Enlargement)

19. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on progress in the negotiations to enlarge the EC to include members of EFTA.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The UK Presidency intends to report to the Edinburgh European Council on the completion of the Community's preparatory work for the opening of accession negotiations with EFTA applicants. It will be for Heads of Government to decide there how to proceed with enlargement.

South Africa

20. **Mr. Donald Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with Commonwealth and EC colleagues about assisting in meeting the problems of post-apartheid South Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are in touch with our EC partners and other members of the Commonwealth to identify ways in which we can assist South Africa during and following the transition to non-racial democracy. Discussions take place bilaterally and in a variety of fora, for example within European political co-operation, through the offices of the secretary-general and at periodic meetings of Commonwealth officials.

25. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had on constitutional reform in South Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Member will recall that my right hon. and noble Friend the Baroness Chalker of Wallasey visited South Africa in September. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister met President de Klerk on 14 November in London.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

21. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had in the Council of Ministers about the situation of the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina; and if he will make a statement.

24. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had in the EC Council of Ministers about the situation of the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The situation in Bosnia has been discussed at every recent meeting of European Community Foreign Ministers, most recently in Brussels on 9 November and with WEU partners in Rome on 20 November. There are also regular discussions between officials of European Community governments.

President-elect Clinton

22. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to advise President-elect Clinton of terrorist threats in the United Kingdom and the impact of electoral statements on them.

Mr. Hurd: Our ambassador in Washington and his staff are in touch with the president-elect's foreign policy advisers about a range of matters of mutual interest, including security issues.

Maastricht Treaty

26. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been received from other EC countries on the progress of Britain's ratification of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The process of ratification of the Maastricht treaty in all member states was discussed at the Foreign Affairs Council on 9 November. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs explained that the Government are committed to ratifying the treaty, and will make a start on the Committee stage of the Maastricht Bill before the Edinburgh European Council.

36. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he has taken to inform the United Kingdom public about the treaty of Maastricht and the single market in the EC.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Government have published the text of the treaty, two memoranda to Parliament and, on 10 November, a short booklet on the Community and the Maastricht treaty, including a section on the advantages of the single market. This is being distributed free on request. A further memorandum explaining the main elements in the treaty will be available to Parliament before the Committee stage starts.

British Tourists

27. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to improve information services for British tourists planning visits to potentially dangerous foreign destinations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Travel advice, issued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in consultation with overseas posts, is kept under constant review both in the United Kingdom and abroad.

It is disseminated quickly throughout the travel industry (and thus to the general public) by electronic information systems, and a selection of notices is available on BBC (Ceefax). Advice is also offered promptly in response to individual enquiries.

28. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress made towards ratification of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Five member states have already ratified the Maastricht treaty: Luxembourg, France, Italy, Ireland and Greece. Others are in the process of ratification. Denmark will hold a second referendum next year, provided the member states can agree a satisfactory means of addressing Danish concerns. The Government will begin the Committee stage of the Maastricht Bill before the Edinburgh European Council.

European Summit (Edinburgh)

29. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what will be the main subjects under discussion at the European summit in Edinburgh.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The main items under discussion are likely to include the single market, ratification of the Maastricht treaty, subsidiarity, and openness, future financing, the size of the European Parliament, enlargement, the Community's relations with the countries of central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and the GATT negotiations.

EC and ASEAN Countries

30. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the prospects for developing relations between the European Community and the Association of South East Asian Nations countries.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The ASEAN countries are of growing importance to the Community, both in terms of regional stability and trade. We have devoted considerable attention to them during the United Kingdom Presidency; My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has personally attended two ministerial meetings with ASEAN in Manila. The outcome of the EC/ASEAN ministerial meeting last month will boost co-operation in a range of fields, including trade, environmental protection, technical co-operation and human rights.

Council of Europe

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent developments in the Council of Europe.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The House will know that the United Kingdom assumed the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe following the ministerial meeting on November in Strasbourg.

During the six months of our chairmanship, we intend to give priority to the programmes for assistance to the new democracies of eastern Europe, and to the reform of the human rights machinery. We shall also encourage an objective look at the operation of the Council in terms of its internal structures, its relationships with other organisations and its management procedures.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with other foreign ministers regarding GATT; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has had several such discussions, most recently at the Foreign Affairs Council on 9 November, when Ministers urged the Commission to work for agreement with the United States.

Western European Union

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to discuss with other member states of the Western European Union the contributions to the WEU Assembly of the former Minister for Defence Procurement on 5 December 1990.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

Turkey

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet the Prime Minister of Turkey to discuss the relationship between Turkey and the EC.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Turkish Prime Minister paid a bilateral working visit to London on 23 November, accompanied by the Foreign Minister. My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed with him the future development of the relationship between the Community and Turkey, as part of a discussion of a wide range of issues of mutual interest. We have no plans at present for further bilateral meetings with the Turkish Government.

Southern Africa

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit southern Africa to assess the current political situation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. and noble Friend, Baroness Chalker of Wallasey visited southern Africa in September. We have no immediate plans to make further visits to the region.

EC Council of Ministers

37. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what items he has placed on the agenda of the next General Affairs meeting of the EC Council of Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The major item on the agenda of 7 December Foreign Affairs Council will be preparation for the Edinburgh European Council (including enlargement and future financing). I expect that there will also be discussion of the Uruguay round, former Yugoslavia, migration and central and eastern Europe.

Cyprus

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the most recent round of talks on Cyprus.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The set of ideas produced by the UN Secretary General, and endorsed by the Security Council as the basis for a settlement, was worked through in full in direct talks from 28 October to 11 November. There are significant areas of common ground. Important differences remain, and we are disappointed that some Turkish Cypriot positions are incompatible with the ideas. We welcome the agreement to resume talks in early March: and will continue to play a full part in encouraging progress.

Israel

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the progress of the peace process in Israel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The seventh round of bilateral negotations between Israel and Arab delegations resumed in Washington on 9 November after a break for the US elections. The atmosphere remains good. The negotiations are addressing substance. All sides are in our view seriously engaged. The incoming US Administration have declared their commitment to the process.

Mr. Allan Nicklin

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest meeting in Saudi Arabia with the Saudi Arabian authorities to discuss the case of Mr. Allan Nicklin.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Her Majesty's ambassador in Riyadh discussed the Nicklin case with the Saudi Minister for Foreign Affairs on 15 November and again with a senior official of the Saudi Ministry of Foreign affairs on 22 November. The Ambassador expressed the deep concern of Her Majesty's Government at Mr. Nicklin's continuing distraint and asked that he be allowed to leave Saudi Arabia as soon as possible.

Foreign Policy Achievements

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list the foreign policy achievements of the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community; and what further achievements he foresees before the year-end.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The London conference convened in August established a new framework for a negotiated settlement for the former Yugoslavia. We have ensured a substantial EC input to the middle east peace process and on humanitarian aid for Somalia. We have strengthened EC links with the countries of eastern and central Europe, notably through holding a successful EC summit in London last month with the leaders of Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. We have put EC relations with Japan and with the countries of the Association of South East Asian nations on a more constructive footing through the EC/Japan summit in London in July and the EC/ASEAN Ministerial meeting in Manila last month. We have put in place arrangements for an enhanced political dialogue between the EC and Turkey. On GATT, the Presidency's contacts with the negotiating parties served as a catalyst to obtain the recent EC/US deal on agriculture. We are now working for early agreement in Geneva on the Uruguay Round. Before the end of the year, the Presidency will hold EC summits with the United States and Canada which will enhance joint co-operation with both countries. We expect further to strengthen EC relations with central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and to make further progress towards opening accession negotiations with applicant countries from the European Free Trade Association. At the Edinburgh European Council we also aim to bring to fruition other priorities for the United Kingdom Presidency which I outlined to the House on 24 November.

Cambodia

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in Cambodia with the international peace accords and in particular with the cantonment and disarming of the troops of the various factions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: There has been considerable progress towards the implementation of the comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodia conflict. Despite occasional ceasefire violations, peace has returned to most of Cambodia. More than 170,000 refugees formerly in the camps on the Thai-Cambodian border have returned to Cambodia without a single fatality as a result of mines; and preparations are well in hand for the holding of free and fair elections in April-May 1993, with more than 1·5 million Cambodians now registered.

By the end of September some 50,000 soldiers of these factions had been contoned by UNTAC. We regret that so far the Kymer Rouge has not begun to meet its obligations under the Paris agreements to canton 70 per cent. of the forces.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 26 November 1992

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Church Land and Property

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners what steps are taken to secure an independent valuation of church land and property before disposal.

Mr. Michael Alison: The Commissioners normally ask for an independent valuation when their statutory consent is sought to a sale of ecclesiastical property. The property investments which they themselves own are professionally valued every year.

TRANSPORT

Shipping and Seamen

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ensure that new arrangements which may be brought forward for the General Register and Record Office of Shipping and Seamen will include requirements which specifically protect the records of ships' movements and the records of sailors in world war I and world war II.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend is aware that the records presently held are of historical interest. They will continue to be retained under Public Record Office (PRO) rules.

Small Ships Register

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) which organisation submitted the lowest tender in respect of providing a contract service for the Small Ships Register;

(2) if he will give full details of the tender process followed with regard to the contract for the Small Ships Register including a list of the tenderers, a list of those short-listed and the successful tenderer;

(3) what factors were taken into account in deciding the placement of the contract for the Small Ships Register.

Mr. Norris *[holding answers 19 and 20 November 1992]:* The tender process followed the Department's normal rules for competitive tender which comply with guidance notes issued by the Treasury's central unit on purchasing, with EC regulations and with Government accounting.

Seven firms were invited to tender, but offers were received from only three. In addition an inhouse bid was submitted by the Department's client division (The Register of Shipping and Seamen).

Placement was decided on compliance with the Department's specification, value for money and quality. The contract was awarded to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency which submitted the tender which best met these requirements.

It is not departmental policy to release information on firms tendering as this is regarded as commercial-in confidence.

Consultants

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the decision of the Government to cancel Cooper and Lybrand's commission to prepare a report on the post-monopoly charges for use of British Rail's rail track and infrastructure.

Mr. Freeman: Coopers and Lybrand is continuing to advise the Government on liberalising access to British Rail's track and infrastructure and charges for its use. The Government intend to publish proposals soon.

Nuclear Material

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the safety standards required in the transportation of plutonium in respect of the temperature and length of time of ship fires.

Mr. Norris: The safety test standards required for the transport of all radioactive material by all modes are those prescribed in the International Atomic Energy Agency's publication "Safety Series No. 6, 1985 Edition" (as amended 1990). These include a thermal test at a minimum temperature of 800 deg C sustained for a period of 30 minutes, after which the package must be shown to maintain its essential functions of containment, radiation shielding and criticality safety to prescribed limits.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the implications of kinetic energy for safety standards which apply to the transportation in casks of plutonium in British coastal waters where a ship is travelling at 15 knots; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Safety standards for the carriage of radioactive material in such flasks take into account the factors that could affect possible accidental damage to the cask, including energy absorbed. The fraction of the kinetic energy of a ship that would be so absorbed in an accident would be small; most of it would be dissipated in deformation of the ship's structure.

Working Group

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the submissions to be considered by the joint International Atomic Energy Authority-International Maritime Organisation-United Nations Environment Programme.

Mr. Norris: Submissions to the joint IAEA-IMO-UNEP working group have not yet been completed. I shall place in the Library copies of any submissions that the United Kingdom makes.

Okehampton Bypass

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many acres of public open space were lost in the construction of the Okehampton bypass.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* Of the land acquired for the Okehampton bypass:

1·9 acres were open space;

approximately 20 acres were land which had previously been used by the public for recreation, and in respect of which the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport accepted the recommendation of the inquiry inspector that they be treated as "open space".

In addition to these 22 acres, temporary access rights were obtained to a further 1·6 acres during the construction period.

Road Capacity, Heathrow

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he is currently undertaking as to the capacity of roads in the west London and Heathrow areas to accommodate present and projected traffic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The capacity of roads is a matter for the responsible highway authority. The British Airports Authority has consulted widely about its proposals for a fifth terminal at Heathrow airport and my Department is considering with them what improvements to the trunk road network may be necessary as a result of these proposals.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what communication his Department has had with the Clinton-Gore presidential transition team on policies towards the international transport of plutonium.

Mr. Norris: None.

Heathrow Airport (Emergency Services)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the capacity of the emergency services to deal with any crash at or near Heathrow airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport has taken advice from the Civil Aviation Authority and BAA plc on this important matter.

I am advised that the emergency services at Heathrow are able to mount a massive response in the event of any disaster occurring in the vicinity of the airport. The current procedures ensure, initially, that air traffic control (ATC) provides the pilot of an aircraft in distress with whatever assistance he requires to effect a safe landing. This includes immediately alerting the ground emergency services.

BAA manage the emergency services at Heathrow and under the terms of the aerodrome licence issued to it by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), which derives from guidelines laid down by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), it is obliged to provide a specific number of staff, fire-fighting and emergency equipment and medical expertise to deal with any aircraft disasters which occur either at Heathrow airport itself or within a two-mile radius.

The emergency services provided by BAA exceed by almost double the quotas specified in the licence. Nevertheless, close ties are maintained with the police, fire brigades, ambulance services and local hospitals to ensure that back-up services are available to provide additional and immediate assistance should the need arise.

Continuous reviews of the system ensure that the emergency procedures are kept up to date. Annual exercises conducted with volunteers and involving all the emergency services and local hospitals ensure that all concerned are familiar with the procedures. The last such exercise took place on 8 October 1992.

Driving Tests

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce into the driving test requirements for motorway driving and night driving.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have no such plans. Including motorway and night driving in a test would imply a multi-part test without clear evidence that the significant extra costs would be justified. But I shall be considering whether, in the light of the recent consultation exercise by the Driving Standards Agency, these topics should be tackled more thoroughly in the theoretical element of the test.

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what substantive changes have been made to the requirements for the driving test since 1962.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Key changes have been—

the introduction in 1969 of a separate test for the drivers of heavy goods vehicles;

the introduction in 1985 of a separate test for drivers of coaches and buses;

the introduction in 1989 of a motorcycle test with the examiner accompanying the candidate;

the introduction in 1991 of a reverse-parking manoeuvre into the car driving test;

the introduction in 1992 of a double-length driving test for certain disqualified drivers.

Local Safety Schemes

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what applications he has received from local authorities in their transport policies and programmes submissions for schemes which are likely to give rates of return in excess of those typically achieved by local safety schemes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* It is not possible to make such a direct comparison. Local safety schemes are assessed according to their first year rate of return in casualty reduction terms. Major road improvement schemes are subject to a detailed cost benefit analysis over a period of 30 years.

Returns provided by local authorities indicate that the amount earmarked for local safety schemes in the transport supplementary grant settlement for 1991-92 produced an average first year rate of return of 76 per cent. and over the first three years an average rate of return of 213 per cent.

Initial analysis of authorities' transport policies and programme submissions for 1993-94 indicates that the average benefit to cost ratio of major scheme bids for TSG is 4·4:1.

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the 1993-94 specific allocation in transport supplementary grant for local safety schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* The specific allocation to local safety schemes will be announced to Parliament by the Secretary of State as part of the local roads capital settlement, probably next month.

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when guidance will be issued to local authorities to enable them to use signing for red light and speed cameras for deterrence and road safety purposes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* Trials are currently taking place to determine the most effective signing for camera installations. I expect to be able to issue guidance after these trials are completed early next year.

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total bid of local authorities for transport supplementary grant for local safety schemes for 1993-94.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* A total of £117 million.

Driving Standards Agency

235. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 2 November, *Official Report*, columns *81-86*, what has been the cost to the Exchequer of the chief executive of the Driving Standards Agency's visits to *(a)* Brussels on 4 November 1991 and *(b)* Paris on 12 October.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The total cost of each of these visits to the Exchequer was as follows:

Place	*Air fare*	*Total*
Brussels	£257·60	£394·36
Paris	£263·80	£414·85

Vehicle Certification Agency

238. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 2 November, *Official Report*, columns *81-86*, what has been the cost to the Exchequer during the last 12 months of the chief executive of the vehicle inspectorate's visits to *(a)* Munich and *(b)* Madrid.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There is expected to be no real cost to the Exchequer in respect of the Vehicle Certification Agency's chief executive travelling to Munich and Madrid because the agency's costs are covered by fees paid by applicants for type approval.

Driving Licences

240. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what documentation is included with new driving licences sent out from the Driver Vehicle Licensing Centre at Swansea; and at what cost.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency at Swansea sends a basic information booklet and an organ donor card to drivers with their driving licences.

The annual cost of providing the booklet is £152,000. The cost of the organ donor card is met by the Department of Health.

British Rail

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 6 November, *Official Report*, column *424*, if he will list the six companies who tendered for the consultancy on the sale of British Rail's freight operations.

Mr. Freeman: This information is commercially confidential.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 2 November, *Official Report*, columns *81-86*, what has been the cost to the Exchequer during the last 12 months of the chief executive of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre's visits to *(a)* Dublin, *(b)* Germany and *(c)* Veendam, Holland, in October 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The costs are £567[1], £685 and £531 respectively.

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[1] A joint visit (September 1991) to both Dublin and Coleraine.

A1 (Upgrading)

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what asessment his Department has made on the effect of the upgrading of the A1 to motorway standard on trade in the north east.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: None. There is little doubt the upgrading of the route will open up development opportunities given the benefits of better access and communication. But it is too early to make accurate assessments.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Iraq

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister how many defendants in the Matrix Churchill case had assisted *(a)* the Secret Intelligence Service or *(b)* the Security Service in monitoring Iraq's defence capability.

The Prime Minister: It would be contrary to normal practice to comment further on intelligence matters.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Press Intrusion

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he will publish his proposals on press intrusion into the private lives of individuals.

Mr. Brooke: I shall announce what action the Government propose to take over press regulation after I have considered Sir David Calcutt's review of press self-regulation, which I hope to receive early in the new year.

Concessionary Television Licences

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what representations he has received about the amendment of existing regulations to extend access by senior citizens living in sheltered housing accommodation to concessionary television licences; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to relax the regulations affecting sheltered housing complexes to allow greater access for senior citizens to the concessionary television licence scheme;

(3) if he will estimate the cost of the existing licence concession scheme for retired people living in sheltered housing complexes;

(4) if he will agree to meet representatives of local authorities to discuss the future development of the concessionary scheme for retired people living in sheltered housing complexes.

Mr. Brooke: Since 13 April this year, I have received 97 letters from Members of the House and 103 from members of the public, local authorities and other organisations on the subject of the concessionary television licence scheme. The current cost of the concessionary scheme in lost licence revenue is approximately £40 million a year. The Government have repeatedly made it clear that they have no plans to amend or extend the regulations governing the scheme, which were thoroughly overhauled in 1988 after long and careful consideration. I therefore consider that no useful purpose would be served by a meeting with representatives of local authorities to discuss the future of the scheme.

External Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list all of the reports commissioned from external consultants since April 1992; how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Department of National Heritage has commissioned the following reports from external consultants since April 1992:

Price Waterhouse—Investment analysis for DNH headquarters project.

TECTUS—Space planning report for DNH headquarters project.

Charles Douglas—Assessment of telephone installation options for new headquarters project.

Robin Johnson—Design proposals for housestyle plus design guide.

PE International—Scoping study on provision of central services for DNH. This led to a further consultancy for PE International giving expert assistance for implementation of recommendations in their first report.

GAH Group—Report on aspects of the proposed National Lottery. These consultants were subsequently engaged to make a presentation to the Secretary of State and senior officials on the subject.

Ernst & Young—Report on the scope for market testing in the British Library.

Library and Information Statistics Unit, Loughborough University—Provision of selected public and university library statistics to the Library and Information Services Council for their Annual Report.

PA Consultants—Report on aspects of the British Library St. Pancras project.

Price Waterhouse—Report on financial systems and controls in place on British Library St. Pancras site.

Watts and Partners—Report on options for managing the maintenance and refurbishment of various historic state buildings and monuments in London.

Mr. Geoffrey Page—Report on an information technology strategy for the Royal Parks.

Mr. James Berry—Production of landscaping and ecological appraisals for the Royal Parks.

Mr. John Wilkinson—Development of a programme of free public entertainments in the Royal Parks, and research into sponsorship possibilities.

KPMG Management Consultants—Study for the Royal Parks Constabulary on the scope for use of information technology. This led to a design consultancy for KPMG Management Consultants for the management of the Royal Parks crime statistics.

Thesaurus—Statistical report on objects sold at auction in United Kingdom.

Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Newcastle University—To establish a method for calculating numbers of day visitors to destinations within the United Kingdom for inclusion in local authority standard spending assessments.

Mr. Francis Butlin—Report on care and conservation of works of art in the Government Art Collection.

Ms. Isabel Horowitz—Report on care and conservation of works of art on the Government Art Collection.

Mr. David Harding—Report on care and conservation of works in Government Art Collection.

The Historic Royal Palaces Agency has commissioned the following reports from external consultants since April 1992:

Communication by Design—Improved local signage for Kensington Palace.

Travers Morgan—Identification of plants for the Privy Garden at Hampton Court Palace.

Percy Flaxman—Restoration of Hampton Court maze.

Land Use Consultants—Ground maintenance costs of Hampton Court Gardens.

David Watson and Associates—Utilities tariff analysis and efficiency.

Protective Security Systems Limited—Security systems at Kensington Palace.

Grant Leisure Group—Catering facilities at the Tower of London.

TOR Systems—Ticketing at the Tower of London.

H. H. Angus and Associates (UK) Ltd.—Electrical supply requirements at the Tower of London. This led to a design consultancy which has now been placed with RMJM (London) Limited.

Alan Baxter and Associates—Car parking at Hampton Court Palace.

Alan Baxter and Associates—Brown road signs to Hampton Court Palace.

Fielden and Mawson—Real tennis court at Hampton Court Palace.

Royal Ordnance—Security at Tower of London.

Baxter, Williams and Smith—Suitability of different types of building contract.

Caroe and Partners—Stonework at Tower of London.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Correspondence

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to be able to respond to the letter of 18 November from the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye concerning Mackay and Sons Ltd., Ross-shire; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: I will write to the hon. Member shortly in response to his letter of 18 November. I can tell him that Customs are prepared exceptionally to renegotiate payment in this case.

Regulatory Measures

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the main measures increasing regulation in any area for which his Department has responsibility, which his Department has caused to be put into effect since 9 April.

Mr. Dorrell: No such measures have been taken.

Aero Technologies Ltd.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what investigations have been conducted by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise officers into the trading activities of Aero Technologies Ltd. with *(a)* Iran and *(b)* Iraq in military equipment.

Sir John Cope: It would not be appropriate for information relating to any particular investigation to be made public other than in the course of court proceedings.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the main measures of deregulation, or simplification of regulation, which his Departments have carried out, or caused to be carried out, since 9 April.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government have laid draft regulations under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act before Parliament on 17 November in order to implement the second banking co-ordination and consolidated supervision directives. Although these measures are long and complex, and amend a number of Acts, they implement two measures that are central to a single market in banking. This will allow EC credit institutions—broadly speaking, banks and building societies—to offer banking services throughout the Community on the basis of a single authorisation under the prudential supervision of a single supervisor.

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which Minister in his Department is responsible for the oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters which fall within the responsibility of his Department.

Mr. Dorrell: I am responsible to the Chancellor for such matters.

Civil List

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to initiate a revision of the 10-year agreement concerning the civil list so as to include it within the 1·5 per cent. pay ceiling policy.

Mr. Lamont: No. The royal household committed itself on 12 November to apply the pay limitations for 1993.

Widows' Pensions

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his Department's most recent estimate of the loss to the Exchequer if widows' pensions were to be treated as non-taxable income.

Mr. Dorrell: At 1992-93 levels, the revenue cost of exempting from tax widows' pensions, including widowed mothers' allowances, would be about £100 million.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the value of imports and exports and the trade balance in manufactured goods in current and real terms for each financial year since 1979-80.

Mr. Portillo: Information on imports, exports and the balance for manufactured goods is published regularly in the Central Statistical Office's "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" and is available on a quarterly basis on the Central Statistical Office databank which may be accessed through the Library of the House.

British Telecom

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he proposes to sell the Government's residual shareholding in British Telecommunications plc.

Mr. Dorrell: As my right hon. Friend announced in the debate on the autumn statement on 18 November, at column 303, the Government intend to sell all or part of their residual shareholding in BT next year. No decisions have been taken about the precise timing and the number of shares to be sold. We will shortly begin to appoint advisers to certain of the key roles and to incur preliminary sale costs.

Parliamentary approval to this new service will be sought in a spring supplementary estimate for Her Majesty's Treasury's sale of shares in British Telecommunications plc and sale or redemption of privatised companies' debt vote—class XVIII, vote 19. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure, not expected to exceed £2 million, will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund. Preliminary and main sale expenses incurred in 1993-94 in connection with the sale of shares will be met from receipts from the sale.

Iraq

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Treasury became aware that Bank of Credit and Commerce International accounts were being used to facilitate arms trade with Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 17 November 1992]:* So far as can be ascertained, the Treasury has not had information that BCCI accounts have been used to facilitate arms trade with Iraq, although it has seen the material in Senator Kerry's report on this point.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now authorise publication of appendix 8 to the Bingham report on BCCI.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has already made clear to the House, the balance of public interest weighs against publishing any of the appendices to the Bingham report.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Charterline

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 13 November, *Official Report*, column 982, how many companies, other than Price Waterhouse, applied for the tender to pilot the charterline service.

Mr. Waldegrave: Six.

Public Appointments

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will place the list of names on the central database within the public appointments unit within the Office of Public Service and Science in the Library.

Mr. Robert Jackson: No. Information about the 5,500 names on the public appointments unit's database is provided in confidence and, under the Data Protection Act 1984, publication of the names would be precluded. But the unit is always ready to receive details of those whom hon. Members consider suitable for consideration for public appointments, and individuals are free to nominate themselves on application forms available from the unit. At the present time there is a particular need for nominations of more women suitable for national level appointments and for names of members of the ethnic minorities.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish a full list of public appointments, with the time period of appointment, stating whether part or full-time, and whether expenses, including child care, are payable in each case.

Mr. Robert Jackson: "Public Bodies", published annually by the Cabinet Office, gives details of the bodies to which Ministers make appointments, and whether the appointments are part time or full time. A copy of the 1991 edition is in the Library of the House; the 1992 edition is expected to be published at the end of the year. Responsibility for the period of an appointment rests with each appointing Minister. No information is kept centrally about such terms which vary in length but in most instances do not exceed five years. The Women's National Commission's "Handbook for Women's Organisations", also in the Library, includes some information about the normal terms of appointments to some bodies.

The authorisation of travelling and subsistence expenses is the responsibility of individual Departments, but such expenses are normally met. Child care expenses may also be reimbursed where this help secures the appointment of someone who might otherwise have to decline, or to avoid the risk of non attendance.

Market Testing

Mr. Devа: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish figures showing the year on year increase in the amount of central Government market testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave *[pursuant to his reply, 23 November 1992, column 606-7.]*: The details of the market testing plans of main Departments were published yesterday in the citizens charter White Paper. The breakdown of the market testing plans for other Departments and agencies is as follows.

Market testing plans for completion by 30 September 1993

Department	*Approximate value of activities to be tested £ million*	*Approximate number of staff involved in this work*	*Illustrative activities to be market tested*
Charity Commission	1·2	50	Printing and reprographics; Facilities management
Crown Prosecution Service	5·8	461	Facilities management; Typing services; Document and package transmission; Recruitment
Export Credit Guarantee Department	1·0	52	IT support; Legal Services; Word processing
Forestry Commission	7·8	500	Forest operations and surveys; Research: chemical analysis, IT and statistics;
Intervention Board	4·3	126	Office support services; Debt recovery; Registration of documents; Computer operations
Land Registry	4·2	100	Building management and estates services; Records management; Legal services
Office of Fair Trading	0·4	13	Distribution of publicity material; Reprographics; Travel
OPCS	2·1	85	Day security (London); Reprographics
Ordnance Survey	14·5	360	Management of site services, maintenance and engineering advice; Catering; Internal audit
Treasury Solicitors	2·1	42	Messenger services; Record storage/management; Security and custody guard services
Central Office of Information	6·3	84	Despatch services; accommodation management; Messenger and postal services; Catering
Central Statistical Office	1·0	2	Retail Price Index (RPI) local price collection; Company Accounts—provision of key data items

Department	*Approximate value of activities to be tested £ million*	*Approximate number of staff involved in this work*	*Illustrative activities to be market tested*
Department of National Savings	11·7	477	Typing, messenger and reprographics services; Agency accounting; Internal audit; Training
HMSO	17·6	542	Reprographic Units; Manchester Forms Centre; Bristol Distribution Centre
Paymaster General	1·1	69	Data preparation; Internal audit; Mainframe operations; Despatch
Others	1·5	—	
Total	82·6	2,963	

EDUCATION

East Gate School, Nottinghamshire

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give the address of the East Gate school, Nottinghamshire, listed in his Department's table of school examination results.

Mr. Forth: The address of the school referred to—the William Crane School—is East Gate, Minver crescent, Aspley, Nottingham, NG8 5PN.

Students (Overseas Placements)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students are currently on placements abroad as an integral part of their first degree courses.

Mr. Forman: Information on total numbers of students on placements abroad is not available within the Department. Figures are however available for students studying abroad under the ERASMUS and LINGUA programmes, which by definition require placements abroad to be integrated in the home course. For 1991-92 about 6,500 United Kingdom students undertook periods of study abroad on this basis.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he has taken to ensure that students currently on placements abroad as an integral part of their first degree courses have had their grants adjusted to take account of the devaluation of sterling.

Mr. Forman: There are special rates of grant for students studying at overseas institutions for at least one term as a necessary part of their courses. They are fixed for the current academic year by the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations 1992—SI 1992 No. 1270—which came into force on 1 September 1992. The rates represent only a contribution towards costs faced abroad, and are not normally revised during the year on account of currency or other fluctuations. My right hon. Friend will review the rates in due course when he makes the new regulations to come into force on 1 September 1993.

Interim Funding, London

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to end his Department's post-Inner London education authority interim funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Government are providing £250 million in inner London education grant over the first five years in which the inner London boroughs have responsibility for education. This is transitional support to protect local tax payers while the boroughs bring the education spending they inherited from the Inner London education authority under control, and will end in March 1995. The Department has also provided grant totalling £1·5 million over the three years 1990-91 to 1992-93 in order to enable 29 Londonwide educational voluntary organisations to make new funding arrangements with the London boroughs and charitable trusts. Over the same three year period the Department has provided pump-priming funding to the Foundation for Young Musicians—FYM—totalling £336,000.

There is no commitment to extending the scheme of grants to the Londonwide educational voluntary organisations or FYM grants beyond 31 March 1993 although an application from the FYM is under consideration.

Grant-maintained Schools

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what research his Department has commissioned into the effect of the acquisition of grant-maintained status on school effectiveness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: It is not necessary to commission special research into the effect of the acquisition of grant-maintained status on school effectiveness. The publication of school performance tables under the parents charter, in which each school's type is clearly stated, will help all concerned to judge the relative effectiveness of different types of school. Her Majesty's inspectorate's observation of GM schools has already attested to their effectiveness. The Office for Standards in Education will undertake some full inspections of GM schools over the coming year as part of its programme for training registered inspectors.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those local education authorities in which at least 15 per cent. of primary or secondary schools will be grant-maintained by January 1993, and those local education authorities in which at least 10 per cent. either of primary or secondary pupils will be educated in grant-maintained schools in January 1993.

Mr. Forth: On the basis of proposals approved to date, in the following LEAs at least 15 per cent. of secondary schools will be GM by January 1993:

Berkshire
Bromley
Dorset
Ealing

Essex
Gloucestershire
Hillingdon
Kensington
Kent
Lincolnshire
Northamptonshire
Surrey
Sutton
Wandsworth
Warwickshire

There are no LEAs in which 15 per cent. of primary schools will be GM by January 1993.

On the basis of schools already operating as GM or approved for incorporation up to and including April 1993, and using latest available pupil numbers, we estimate that in the following LEAs at least 10 per cent. of secondary pupils will be educated in GM schools by April 1993. In the time available it is not possible to calculate figures for January 1993.

Barnet
Berkshire
Birmingham
Brent
Bromley
Buckinghamshire
Calderdale
Croydon
Cumbria
Dorset
Ealing
Essex
Gloucestershire
Hammersmith
Hillingdon
Kensington
Kent
Kingston-on-Thames
Lincolnshire
Norfolk
Northamptonshire
Surrey
Sutton
Walsall
Wandsworth
Warwickshire
Wolverhampton

There are no LEAs at present where we estimate that 10 per cent. of primary pupils will be educated in GM schools by April 1993. Pupil numbers are based on January 1991 form 7 returns in respect of LEAs and numbers given in proposals for GM status submitted by schools in the case of schools operating or approved for GM status.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Visa Appeals

Mr. Madden: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what are his estimates of the savings resulting from the provisions contained in the Asylum and Immigration Bill to abolish a right of appeal for those refused a visa to visit the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The appeals to which the hon. Member refers are normally dealt with on the papers only and so make fewer demands on resources than cases where hearings take place. It is difficult, therefore, to estimate precisely what savings may result. However, these provisions will enable us to use resources to tackle priorities more effectively.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many appeals against refusal to grant visas to visit the United Kingdom have been lodged, to date, in each of the last three years, on the basis of nationality; how many such appeals were *(a)* upheld, *(b)* refused, *(c)* withdrawn and *(d)* awaiting determination at the latest available date.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The immigration appellate authorities keep statistics by the country from which the appeal originates, not by nationality. Visit visa statistics are not kept separately from other appeals against refusal of short-term visas and the figures given are achieved by applying a typical proportion of visit visa appeals to the total in each period. On that basis, the number of appeals against refusal to grant visas to visit the United Kingdom that have been lodged in each of the last three years, by country, is set out in the table.

The information requested concerning the number of visit visa appeals currently awaiting determination is not available.

		1989 October-December		
Country	*Received*	*Upheld*	*Refused*	*Withdrawn*
India	209	52	173	37
Bangladesh	67	8	40	15
Pakistan	385	77	172	73
Ghana	57	6	21	10
Nigeria	106	3	20	5
Jamaica	32	11	12	5
EEC	—	—	—	—
Other	330	45	95	42
Total	1,186	202	533	187

		1990		
Country	*Received*	*Upheld*	*Refused*	*Withdrawn*
India	2,064	191	583	187
Bangladesh	880	61	290	96
Pakistan	1,614	327	869	186
Ghana	230	35	103	26
Nigeria	679	27	200	28
Jamaica	101	19	73	22
EEC	3	—	4	1
Other	2,543	169	567	212
Total	8,114	829	2,689	758

Country	*Received*	*1991* *Upheld*	*Refused*	*Withdrawn*
India	1,911	347	976	338
Bangladesh	454	75	446	91
Pakistan	2,108	268	920	209
Ghana	288	39	146	31
Nigeria	1,460	70	580	63
Jamaica	177	44	177	51
EEC	—	—	10	1
Other	3,275	331	1,503	357
Total	9,673	1,174	4,758	1,141

Country	*Received*	*1992* *January-September* *Upheld*	*Refused*	*Withdrawn*
India	1,135	377	1,275	231
Bangladesh	430	76	382	65
Pakistan	1,513	326	1,282	225
Ghana	425	42	137	39
Nigeria	1,260	125	882	65
Jamaica	104	59	258	30
EEC	0	0	1	0
Other	2,461	369	2,001	264
Total	7,328	1,374	4,217	919

Mr. Madden: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many appeals, in all categories of entry clearance to the United Kingdom, are, to date, outstanding; what is the average delay, between appeal applications being lodged and appeals being heard at each appellate centre in the United Kingdom; how many adjudicators are in place currently; and what proportion of each adjudicators' work load at present is taken up considering appeals against refusal to grant visit visas.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As of 30 October 1992 there were 23,047 appeals outstanding. The average time between an appeal being lodged and it being heard is 16 months. This includes an average period of nine months for the parties to prepare their case and indicate readiness for the appeal to be heard. Cases where parties have so indicated are now being listed for full hearing on the following dates at the appellate centres:

Thanet house	17 May 1993
Harmondsworth	1 May 1993
Birmingham	14 January 1993
Manchester	1 April 1993
Leeds	1 February 1993
Glasgow	1 March 1993

Hearings can sometimes be brought forward if the appellant so requests and an earlier date becomes available. Steps are being taken to shorten the time taken, wherever possible, for a case to come before an adjudicator for example, by increasing hearing room availability and increased administrative efficiency.

Cases where no hearing is required are currently being determined on the papers within six to eight weeks of the parties indicating they are ready for the case to be dealt with by the adjudicator.

There are 19 full-time adjudicators and 78 part-time adjudicators in post. It is not possible to calculate what proportion of the adjudicators' time is taken considering appeals against refusal to grant visit visas.

Legal Aid

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what studies he made, before deciding to remove or reduce the rights of people in particular income groups to receive legal aid, into the ability of people within those income groups to pay the contributions which are now to be required of them.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In the light of the Government's priorities for public expenditure and the rapid growth in the cost of legal aid, the Lord Chancellor and I have considered carefully what can be afforded and have taken measures which will ensure that the resources available are directed to those whose need is greatest.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many people will have their rights to legal aid removed or reduced as a result of the measures he announced on 12 November.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Although such estimates are necessarily subject to many assumptions, we estimate that around 2 per cent. of households will no longer be eligible for legal aid as a result of measures taken to align legal aid allowances with income support levels. Around 14 per cent. of households who now receive legal aid free of contribution will be required to contribute. In addition, about 8 per cent. of households who fall out of eligibility in the current year because their income has risen above the upper income limit will not be restored to eligibility as a result of the decision not to uprate the upper limit in April of next year.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what analysis he has made of the reasons for the increase in spending on legal aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The reasons for the increase in legal aid expenditure are complex. There are two basic components involved. First, the number of people assisted under the various parts of the legal aid scheme is increasing—around 3 million acts of assistance were paid for in 1991-92 as compared with around 2 million in 1985-86. Secondly, the unit cost of each act of assistance is increasing at a higher rate than inflation.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether he will make a statement on the error which the Benefits Agency committed in assessing applications for civil legal aid between 1 October 1991 and 30 March 1992; and what compensation he proposes to pay legal aid practitioners for their costs incurred in checking whether their clients meet the criteria for reassessment set out in the Benefits Agency letter of 2 November.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on Tuesday 17 November, *Official Report*, columns *103-4*.

Justiciary (Ethnic Origin)

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many members of the Lord Chancellor's advisory committee on the appointment of magistrates for each of the commission areas in England and Wales are of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of members of the Lord Chancellor's advisory committees who are of Afro-Caribbean or Asian racial origin are as follows:

Commission area	*Asian*	*Afro Caribbean*
Cleveland	1	—
East Sussex	1	—
Inner London	1	1
Isle of Wight	—	1
Leicestershire	—	2
Middlesex	1	1
Nottinghamshire	—	1
Oxfordshire	—	1
Staffordshire	1	—
Tyne and Wear	—	1
West Midlands	4	—
West Yorkshire	4	—

No other advisory committees presently have members of Afro-Caribbean or Asian racial origin.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many justices of the peace, for each of the commission areas in England and Wales are of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not recorded centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost, but of 2,017 appointments made in 1991, a total of 97 were from the ethnic minorities. That is a total higher than the proportion of ethnic minorities in the age group from which magistrates are normally appointed.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Timber

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the International Tropical Timber Organisation concerning *(a)* the implementation of its Target 2000 campaign for a sustainable timber trade and *(b)* the level of imports and exports of tropical timber.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We fully support the objectives of Target 2000. We are proposing to fellow members of the International Tropical Timber Organisation in the context of the current renegotiation of the international tropical timber agreement, that its resources and methods of operation be improved to enable it to promote the objectives of Target 2000 as effectively as possible. The ITTO's priority objective should be the promotion of sustainable forest management at national level and hence sustainable trade.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has of United Kingdom or multilateral overseas aid money being improperly appropriated by Government or other officials in Kenya, Somalia, Zaire or Namibia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have no evidence of improper appropriation of aid funds provided by the United Kingdom or multilateral organisations. We have rigorous safeguards in order to minimise the risk that our aid resources are misused. These include competitive tendering wherever possible, and direct payment to contractors. Purchasing agents have to be British and approved by us; payment is made direct to the supplier. There is an extensive system of financial control, reporting and audit, backed up by physical monitoring on the ground to help ensure that aid is achieving the intended purpose.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate has been made of the percentage of overseas aid provided by Her Majesty's Government which reaches its intended recipients and of the percentage which is sold on the black market.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Overseas Development Administration has systems and controls, second to none, for seeking to ensure that British aid is used for the purpose intended. We have a well-established system of financial reporting, physical monitoring and audit, including visits to projects by British officials, to ensure that our aid is achieving the intended benefits on the ground. If there were any evidence of corruption related to a British aid-funded contract, we would investigate vigorously and, if proven, withdraw from it.

World Bank

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications of the World bank report "Effective Implementation: Key to Development Input" for the Government's financial support for the World bank and for the role played by the United Kingdom executive director of the World bank.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The report on effective implementation of projects financed by the World bank recommends a number of changes in policy, priorities and procedures. The president of the bank has welcomed the report and has proposed an immediate start on the measures necessary to strengthen its performance. The report is now being considered by executive directors.

The report itself makes no recommendations on funding, nor on the role of executive directors. Our support for the 10th replenishment of the International Development Association, will help provide the basis for implementing the report's findings. Our executive director will continue to play an important and active role.

Rain Forests

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the influence that the destruction of tropical rain forests in developing countries has had on the Government's policy towards the third world debt crisis.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The links between international debt and deforestation are complex. The pressures which cause deforestation exist independently of the size of a country's debt. Nevertheless, for wider economic and developmental reasons, Britain has led the way in promoting debt relief measures, particularly for the poorest.

Twelve low-income, highly indebted countries have benefited from substantial reductions in their official debt as a result of the Prime Minister's Trinidad terms initiative. The terms currently reduce eligible payments due to Governments by as much as 50 per cent. We continue, however, to press for even more generous debt relief to be made available to those countries that need it.

For middle income countries, which owe their debt largely to banks, we are providing support for commercial debt reduction through the Brady plan. This international agreement allows International Monetary Fund and World bank to devote some of their lending resources to facilitate voluntary debt reduction agreements between banks and debtors. Brazil, for instance, has been able to agree in principle a deal which will effectively reduce its £29 billion debt to banks by around a third.

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Treasury minute on the first to 11th reports from the Committee of Public Accounts 1992-93, paragraph 161, what proposals he has to change the auditing arrangements of the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have no plans to change the auditing arrangements for the Commonwealth Development Corporation. Under the provisions of the CDC Act 1978, as amended in 1982 and 1986, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is responsible for appointing external auditors and for laying the CDC's annual report and accounts before Parliament. In addition, the CDC is subject to scrutiny by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Aid and Trade Projects

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each aid and trade provision project since 1989, with the companies and the sums of money involved.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 16 November 1992]:* Aid agreements involving aid and trade provision funds have been concluded with Governments of developing countries since 1989 for projects for which the following companies are lead United Kingdom contractors.

ATP agreements concluded during 1989

Country	*Project*	*Lead United Kingdom company*	*Amount (£ million)*
Egypt	Maghara Coal Mine	Babcocks	0·080
India	URI Hydro Electric Power Station	Boving and Co.	17·146
Indonesia	Cigarding Port Extension	Tarmac International Special Projects	13·266
Indonesia	Radio Studios	David Whittle Associates	0·378
Indonesia	Satellite Remote Sensing	Technology Applied Systems	0·028
Indonesia	Scattered Diesels	GEC Diesels	5·891
Kenya	Mombasa South Coast Link Road	Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners	0·350
Kenya	Digital Micro Wave System	Telectron Systems	4·214
Morocco	Nador Steel Works Study	W. S. Atkins	0·133
Pakistan	Karachi Water II	Portals Water Treatment	6·629
Philipines	Gas Turbines Power Station	JBE	13·125
Red Sea	Regional Hydrocarbon Study	Robertson Research International	0·187
Swaziland	Fire Equipment	Carmichael Fire and Bulk	0·123
Thailand	Diesel Multiple Units	BREL	4·487
Thailand	Railway Signalling	Transmark	0·773
Tunisia	Railway Equipment	Balfour Beatty	0·500
Tunisia	Yarn and Fibre Plant	Extrusion Systems Ltd.	0·337

ATP agreements concluded during 1990

Country	*Project*	*Lead United Kingdom company*	*Amount (£ million)*
Botswana	Flight Information Region	Siemens Plessey Radar	2·938
China	Beijing Subway	Balfour Beatty (Metrotec)	9·987
China	Danyang Aluminium Plant	Davy McKee (Poole) Ltd.	3·532
Colombia	San Andres Power Station	Hawker Siddeley Power Engineering	3·430
Cyprus	Limassol Water Treatment Plant	Water Engineering	1·470
Indonesia	Citayam/Cibinong Railway	Foster Wheeler World Services	20·105
Indonesia	Cigading/Serpong Railway Rehabilitation	Davy/British Railway International	24·690
Indonesia	Radio Communication System for the Ministry of Forestry	Philips Radio Communication Systems	34·111

Country	*Project*	*Lead United Kingdom company*	*Amount (£ million)*
Indonesia	Radio Studio Rehabilitation	Audix Ltd.	5·040
Indonesia	Shortwave Radio Transmitters	Marconi	26·911
Indonesia	Aircraft Simulator Consultancy	CAA	0·050
Kenya	Moi University Consultancy	Cambridge Education Consultants	0·034
Kenya	Distribution Transformers	N. I. Transformers	0·688
Kenya	Rural Telecommunications Equipment	Telectron Systems	4·363
Morocco	Gas Turbines	JBE	7·276
Morocco	Diesel Electric Locos	British Electrical	6·107
Malaysia	Connaught Bridge	NEI Parsons	23·485
Malaysia	Medamit 2 Hydro Electric	Sir William Halcrow and Partners	0·244
Malaysia	Nucleus Hospitals	John Laing International	13·159
Philippines	Small Island Electrification – Phase I	Dale Electric	2·065
Tunisia	Dump Trucks	Terex Equipment	0·949
Zimbabwe	Fire Fighting Vehicles	Carmichael Fire	3·264
Zimbabwe	Harare Airport Radar	Siemens Plessey Radar	1·462

ATP agreements concluded during 1991

Country	*Project*	*Lead United Kingdom company*	*Amount (£ million)*
China	Shanghai Telephone Equipment 520	GPT International	1·595
China	Duck Processing Units	APV Baker	1·942
China	Cotton Textile Machinery	Platt Saco Lowell (UK)	1·065
China	Flour and Feed Mills	Robinson Milling Systems	2·333
China	Yue Yang Power Station Training	GEC Alsthom Turbine Generators	0·450
China	Xinjiang Ethylene Plant	Snamprogetti	47·179
Ghana	Fifth Power Project	Hawker Siddeley Power Engineering	7·280
Ghana	Kotoka International Airport	Plessey Airports	10·180
Indonesia	Western Universities Equipment	Philip Harris International/Gallenkamp	13·671
Indonesia	Airport Security System	International Aeradio	10·455
Indonesia	Jambi Power Station	Mirrlees Blackstone (STPT)	5·345
Indonesia	Flight Simulator	Aeronautical Systems Designers	4·659
Indonesia	Steel Bridging II	Mabey & Johnson	3·669
Indonesia	Cikampek/Padalarang Toll Road	Cementation	1·700
Indonesia	Automotive Sector study	de Montfort Management	0·489
Malaysia	Double Tracking	Transmark	0·798
Malaysia	Pergau Hydroelectric Project	Balfour Beatty Cementation	234·000
Malaysia	Nucleus Hospitals II	John Laing International	5·442
Philippines	Small Islands Electricity – Phases 2 & 3	Dale Electric International	4·902
Turkey	Equipment for State Universities	TQ International	23·363
Zimbabwe	Airfield Crash Tenders	Carmichael Fire	2·479
Zimbabwe	Harare International Airport	Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick Partners	0·325
Zimbabwe	Supply of AWD Bedford Trucks	AWD (Export)	16·116
Zimbabwe	Supply of ERF Trucks	ERF	8·575

ATP agreements concluded during 1992 to date

Country	*Project*	*Lead United Kingdom company*	*Amount (£ million)*
China	Urumqi PTA	Foster Wheeler Energy	39·000
China	Dalian Steam and Power	Gibson Wells Engineering	2·336
China	Twist Steel Wire	Marshall Richards Barcro	1·085
China	Fushun Heat and Power	Gibson Wells Engineering	13·172
China	Urumqi PX	Babcock Contractors	13·045
Ghana	Oil and Gas Storage Depots	Motherwell Bridge Projects	1·793
Indonesia	Western Universities Training Centre	Sunderland Engineering Education Services	2·214
Malaysia	Sibu Airport	John Laing International	1·933
Republic of Yemen	Tractor Implements and Spares	Massey Ferguson UK	4·650
Republic of Yemen	Mechanisation Study	Not yet appointed	0·497
Tunisia	Sewage Treatment Water Training	Lagoon Technology International	0·053
Zimbabwe	AWD Trucks Delivery	AWD Export	0·840

Somalia

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide a table showing how much of the assistance which was given by the United Kingdom to Somalia in each of the last 10 years went to the northern region known as the Republic of Somaliland, giving the figure and percentage of the total given *(a)* in humanitarian aid, whether by cash grant or in kind, *(b)* in development aid, whether by cash grant or in kind, *(c)* loans and *(d)* in any other form in each year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to my answer to his question of

Monday 23 November, at column *453*, which gave a financial summary of our assistance to Somalia for each of the past 10 years. Aid is given to the country as a whole and statistics showing expenditure by region are not readily available.

Albania

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response his Department made to the International Committee of the Red Cross appeal in July for food aid for targeted groups in need in Albania; whether that response was made bilaterally or through the EC; what total response was made by the EC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* We are aware of the appeal that was made in September and are in touch with the British Red Cross about it. It is sending a delegation to Albania next week to assess how the United Kingdom can best respond to the appeal and we expect it to submit a proposal on its return. We have already provided £1·5 million of bilateral humanitarian assistance to Albania. The bulk of our contribution is through the EC which has already this year provided 80 mecu of food aid direct to the Albanian Government, and agreed a further tranche of 40 mecu in October.

Aid Budget

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the aid budget is spent in dollars and ecus; and what effect there has been on the purchasing power of the overseas aid budget since the recent devaluation of sterling.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* In 1992-93 it is estimated that £73 million, 4 per cent., of the provision for overseas aid for developing countries will be paid in US dollars and that £375 million, 20 per cent., will be paid in ecu. Given that exchange rates move up as well as down during the course of a year, it is not yet possible to predict what impact recent changes in the value of sterling will have on the purchasing power of the aid programme for developing countries.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the overseas aid budget in both percentage and cash terms is spent through multilateral organisations; how much, in both percentage and cash terms, is provided in non-sterling currencies; which currencies are used; and what is the impact on the aid budget in terms of additional sterling resources required to finance these commitments since the devaluation of sterling since the United Kingdom left the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 19 November 1992]:* In 1992-93 it is estimated that £829 million, 44 per cent. of the provision for overseas aid for developing countries, will be spent through multilateral organisations. Approximately £462 million, 25 per cent. of the aid programme for developing countries, is paid in the following non-sterling currencies: the ecu and, in smaller amounts, the currencies of Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Botswana, eastern Caribbean, Fiji, France, Germany, Japan, Jordan, Netherlands, Solomon Islands, South Africa, United States and Vanuatu. Given that exchange rates move up as well as down during the course of a year, it is not yet possible to say what impact recent changes in the value of sterling will have.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Albania

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what diplomatic contacts there have been in recent weeks with Albania; and if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's current relations with Albania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The British chargé d'affaires in Tirana is in daily contact with the Albanian authorities. Her Majesty's ambassador at Rome, who is concurrently accredited to Tirana, also visited Albania recently and met President Berisha on 23 November. They discussed among other issues the United Kingdom's and Albania's close interest in political developments in the former Yugoslavia. Our relations with Albania are developing rapidly and are now very good.

Visa Appeals

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the total cost to his Department, over each of the past three years, of work associated with appeals by those appealing against refusal to grant visas to visit the United Kingdom; how many explanatory statements have been prepared over this period by British posts overseas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Information on costs is not available in the form requested.

The number of explanatory statements prepared by British posts overseas in the last three years is as follows:

	Settlement	*Non-settlement*	*Total*
1989	4,330	7,303	11,633
1990	4,970	12,445	17,415
1991	4,162	12,349	16,511
TOTALS	13,462	32,097	45,559

Special Operations Executive

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to release the records of the wartime Special Operations Executive.

Mr. Hurd: As part of the initiative which I announced on 14 May to review records withheld for more than 30 years, work has started on reviewing the SOE archives.

A large proportion of the original records of SOE were destroyed, both by SOE itself at the end of the war, and in a fire at the Baker street headquarters in late 1945. The remaining archives are substantial and complex and the complete review will take some time. However, a first batch should be released in the second half of 1993.

President de Klerk

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions were held with President de Klerk during his visit to the United Kingdom on 14 and 15 November.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 20 November 1992]*: The Prime Minister had a full discussion with President de Klerk. Their talks covered both the reform process in South Africa, and regional matters.

Malawi

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he will now take to secure the release of Mrs. Vera Chirwa currently held in prison in Malawi; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since the death of Orton Chirwa on 20 October, we have again urged the Malawian Government to release Vera Chirwa on humanitarian grounds. We shall continue to take every opportunity to press for her release.

South African Arms Sales

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he received the letter from Mr. Abdul S. Minty, director of the World Campaign Against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa, concerning Mr. Mark Thatcher and the sale of South African arms to Saudi Arabia; and if he will publish his reply.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A letter from Mr. Minty dated 3 June 1992 was received in the office of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on that day. The reply, from an official, dated 25 June, stated:

> "The United Kingdom adheres to UN Security Council resolutions 558 and 591 concerning, inter alia, the import of South African-produced arms. We take seriously allegations of British involvement in any contravention of these resolutions."

In the case the hon. Member raises, we have no knowledge as to whether South African-produced arms were purchased by customers in third countries. But we shall investigate any alleged British involvement if it is established that such arms were imported in breach of the above resolutions.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what position was adopted by Britain's representative on the United Nations 421 Arms Embargo Committee of the Security Council's consideration of the report concerning Mr. Mark Thatcher and the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There has been no substantive discussion within the committee to date, although the chairman has undertaken to seek information on the report from the relevant parties. But if the committee were to establish that arms have been imported in breach of United Nations Security Council resolution 558, we would of course be prepared to investigate any allegations of British involvement.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Government of the United States of America concerning the activities of Mr. Mark Thatcher on arms deals involving South Africa; and what action he took in response.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are not aware of any such representations.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Yugoslavia

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the criteria for granting entry visas to those from former Yugoslavia; and what criteria he has agreed with the International Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for selecting those suitable for entry.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Visas will be granted to those nationals of the former Yugoslavia requiring visas where they meet the requirement of the immigration rules. Visas will also be granted where the applicant meets the definition of a refugee under the terms of the 1951 convention or has been displaced from his home by the civil war in the former Yugoslavia and, because of close links with the United Kingdom, including close family ties, the United Kingdom is the most appropriate country of refuge for that person. In addition, visas will be granted to those people and their dependants whom the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross judge to be in need of evacuation, and whom the United Kingdom has agreed to receive. We understand that initially the international organisations would wish to evacuate detainees from the existing detention camps in Bosnia.

Operation Container

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects Operation Container to end in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Every effort is being made to bring down the number of prisoners in police cells. Provided that the prison population remains at or below its current level, I would expect the bulk of the police cells problem in Greater Manchester to end early next year. However, until Manchester prison becomes fully operational in June 1944, a rise in the prison population could lead to further calls on police cells.

Prison Education Service

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of qualified teachers employed at each of the London prisons on 18 November.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Full and part-time salaried teachers employed in prisons have relevant qualifications. The numbers employed on 18 November in the following prisons were:

	Number
Her Majesty's Prison Belmarsh	6
Her Majesty's Prison Brixton	5
Her Majesty's Prison Holloway	9
Her Majesty's Prison Pentonville	6

	Number
Her Majesty's Prison Wandsworth	6
Her Majesty's Prison Wormwood Scrubs	3

In addition to salaried staff, sessionally paid teachers are employed whose numbers vary according to the number and range of classes provided at each establishment.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the funding for each of the last five years for education services in prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Total expenditure on education services in prisons in England and Wales in the past five years was as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	16·9
1988-89	19·5
1989-90	22·9
1990-91	25·5
1991-92	29·5

Indictable Offences

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown of the number of indictable offences by age for the period 1987 to date.

Mr. Jack: The data available relates to the number of "known" offenders, that is, persons found guilty or cautioned. Information on indictable offences by age for the period 1987 to 1991 is included in table 6 of the Home Office statistical bulletin 30/92—"Cautions, court proceedings and sentencing, England and Wales, 1991", issued on 28 October 1992. A copy of the bulletin is in the Library. The 1991 data are provisional.

Firearms

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes involving the use of replica firearms have been committed in each police authority area in Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jack: Figures for offences involving imitation firearms are set out in the table. These figures include replica firearms and all other types of imitation firearms including toys.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in which imitation firearms were reported to have been used

Year	*Dyfed Powys*	*Gwent*	*North Wales*	*South Wales*
1987	1	2	—	1
1988	1	—	2	3
1989	1	3	6	3
1990	1	11	3	7
[1]1991	2	1	11	9

[1] Provisional.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will propose a review of police procedures with a view to reducing the number of shotguns; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: New controls on shotguns were imposed by the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988. Since then, the number of shotgun certificates on issue has fallen by 18 per cent., from 882,000 in 1988 to 724,600 in 1991.

Shotgun certificates are issued by chief officers of police. Before granting each certificate, the chief officer must be satisfied that the applicant can be permitted to possess a shotgun without danger to public safety.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce legislation to tighten gun control; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 tightened the already strict controls on the possession of firearms and shot guns. The firearms consultative committee keeps the Firearms Acts under close review. It is open to the committee to recommend changes in the controls if it thinks fit.

Human Rights

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will establish a timetable for the adoption of the European convention on human rights into domestic law.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We do not plan to incorporate the European convention on human rights into domestic law. We believe that it is for Parliament rather than the judiciary to determine how the principles of human rights in the convention are best secured.

Police (Housing)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of the 10 November, *Official Report*, column 690, if he will list by location how much revenue his Department expects to raise from each of the five police houses in south Yorkshire that have been identified as being put on the housing market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office will not receive any revenue from the sale of the five houses. The proceeds will accrue to the South Yorkshire police authority. No information about the location and potential value of the properties is held centrally.

Prisoner Escapes

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are now at large after escaping either from custody whilst travelling under escort or from places of detention.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Of those prisoners who have escaped from prison custody since 20 June 1988, either from prison establishments or whilst travelling under escort, 117 remain unlawfully at large, as at 24 November 1992.

Police Inspections

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each regional crime squad in England and Wales the dates on which it is projected that each shall next be inspected by Her Majesty's inspector of police.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The programme of inspections of regional crime squads is as follows:

Date of inspection	*Number of regional crime squad*
1992 1 to 3 December	No. 5
1993 15 to 17 February	No. 3
1993 8 to 10 March	No. 4
1993 11 to 13 May	No. 7
1993 10 to 12 August	No. 1

The programme of inspections after August 1993 has not yet been agreed.

Underground Facilities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much he estimates will be raised for the public Exchequer as a result of selling off underground facilities for use in wartime or emergency.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is too soon to provide an estimate of the potential value of the four sites which are to be sold.

Parole Documents

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether persons sentenced to imprisonment before October shall have access, in accordance with the Criminal Justice Act 1992, to parole documentation which was written and submitted after October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no statutory requirement in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 for prisoners to have access to parole documentation. Prisoners sentenced before 1 October 1992 will continue to have their cases reviewed under the current arrangements by local review committees and the parole board until 30 September 1994. After that date, they will be reviewed in accordance with the new procedures applying to those sentenced on or after 1 October 1992 which, inter alia, provide for disclosure of dossiers considered by the parole board.

Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department will inform the British high commission in Islamabad of the outcome of their inquiries into an application by Mr. Shabir Ahmed, ref.: GV100/16328/TAH, who wishes to come to the United Kingdom as a priest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A letter from the British deputy high commissioner in Karachi referring Mr. Ahmed's application to the Home Office was received on 6 November. The immigration department wrote to the Nusrat-ul-Islam Mosque on 12 November seeking further information about Mr. Ahmed's proposed employment and are awaiting a reply. A decision will be taken as soon as the necessary enquiries have been completed.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those countries whose nationals are required to obtain a visa overseas prior to entering the United Kingdom; in what year the visa requirement was introduced in each of those countries; and for which countries a visa requirement has been withdrawn.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Visa requirements for the United Kingdom are set out in the appendix to the immigration rules—HC 251 as amended. The available information on the changes made to visa requirements is set out in the table.

Changes to United Kingdom visa requirements since 1 January 1973

Year	*Country*
Visas imposed	
1973	Cuba, German Democratic Republic, Pakistan[1]
1976	Surinam
1980	Iran
1982	Argentina
1985	Sri Lanka
1986	Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Ghana
1987	Nigeria
1989	Turkey, Haiti
1990	Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia
1991	Uganda
1992	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan. The territories formerly comprising the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (excluding Croatia and Slovenia).
Visas abolished	
1973	Iran
1974	Niger
1978	United Arab Emirates, Surinam
1990	German Democratic Republic, Argentina, Hungary, Czechoslovakia
1992	US Pacific Trust Territories, Poland

[1] Limited to dependants of those settled or admitted with an avenue to settlement.

Bosnian Nationals

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when is he going to take a decision on the applications by Bosnian nationals, sponsored by the Leeds-based Alert organisation, who applied to enter the United Kingdom for medical treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It has been agreed to grant exceptionally and on compassionate grounds visas for two individuals to come to the United Kingdom to claim asylum and receive medical treatment. Six members of the families of these two will be allowed to accompany them. Sponsors have agreed to meet the cost of medical treatment.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what right of appeal is available to those Bosnian nationals, sponsored by the Leeds-based Alert organisation, whose applications to enter the United Kingdom, exceptionally, outside the immigration rules, have been refused; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: They may appeal to an adjudicator under section 13(2) of the Immigration Act 1971.

Welsh Police Authorities

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for amending the boundaries of the Welsh police authorities, pursuant to proposals for local government reorganisation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We are currently considering a range of issues concerning the future of the police service in England and Wales, including the boundaries of police force areas. We have yet to reach any firm conclusions.

Miscarriages of Justice

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to reply to the letter of 13 September from the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth requesting details of his Department's approach and guidance on procedures for dealing with alleged miscarriages of justice.

Mr. Jack: I have written to the hon. Member today.

Probation

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of people who were released on parole and supervised by the probation service for the most convenient date in each of the years *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the numbers of prisoners granted parole is published annually in the report of the parole board—table 3 of the 1991 edition. For information for January to September 1992, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) on 11 November, *Official Report*, columns *780-81*. Information on the numbers commencing parole supervision by the probation service and the numbers receiving such supervision on 31 December is published annually in a Home Office statistical bulletin—tables 1 and 2 of issue 26/92. Information for 1992 is not yet available. Copies of these publications are in the Library.

Fire Authorities, Wales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to amend the boundaries of fire authorities in Wales in the light of the proposed local government unitary authority boundaries.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will be considering the arrangements for the most effective provision of fire cover in Wales in the future in the light of proposals which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be bringing forward to change the structure of local government in Wales, and of advice from the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council.

Speeding Offences

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the law relating to speeding offences so that the number of penalty points reflects the seriousness of the offence.

Mr. Jack: No. Courts can award between three and six penalty points for exceeding the speed limit and are already required by the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to pass a sentence which reflects the seriousness of the offence committed.

Emergency Services

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the total sum made available by central Government (i) in the current year and (ii) for the 1993-94 financial year for *(a)* fire services, *(b)* civil defence and *(c)* other emergency services in each county and metropolitan area in England and Wales;

(2) what is the total figure provided by central Government in each of the last 10 years for *(a)* fire services, *(b)* civil defence and *(c)* other emergency services in each county and metropolitan area in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 25 November 1992]*: The Government do not pay specific grant for fire services. Central Government support is currently provided through the revenue support grant system in the form of redistributed business rates and revenue support grant. Prior to 1990 it was by means of rate support grant. These are intended to support each local authority's services collectively, and no part of them is assigned to any particular service. It is therefore not possible to provide details of the amount of Government financial support applied specifically to fire services.

The tables give details of grants paid by the Home Office to local authorities specifically in support of police and civil defence expenditure from 1982-83 to 1992-93. In addition, the proportion of police and civil defence expenditure not covered by Home Office grants will have received support through the rate or revenue support grant systems, although this cannot be quantified. Subject to parliamentary approval, 1993-94 provision for England and Wales is likely to be £3,060·3 million for police grants —current, capital, loan charges and special grants—and £20·2 million for civil defence grants—current and capital.

Police grant paid to police authorities

Police authority	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Avon and Somerset	26,409	27,039	29,119	31,394	35,101	38,476	41,528	44,676	57,273	61,594	62,425
Bedfordshire	9,271	9,574	10,332	11,124	11,572	13,313	14,265	15,627	17,352	21,443	21,338
Cambridgeshire	10,134	10,205	11,191	12,568	14,297	16,132	15,925	18,150	20,969	26,284	26,295
Cheshire	16,251	16,505	18,049	19,510	19,418	24,319	24,478	26,730	32,057	37,587	37,067
Cleveland	12,689	12,908	14,111	15,175	16,107	19,422	21,160	23,029	26,584	31,001	31,726
Cumbria	9,700	9,714	11,446	10,637	14,209	15,331	15,465	18,067	19,646	24,572	25,144
Derbyshire	14,925	16,856	26,847	37,531	25,025	22,913	26,401	27,785	32,844	35,194	36,301
Devon and Cornwall	25,170	26,378	29,067	32,023	34,626	40,787	41,115	46,264	52,323	62,743	66,557
Dorset	11,077	10,955	12,661	14,179	15,531	18,493	18,131	20,984	25,508	30,164	30,617
Durham	11,108	12,175	19,607	15,620	14,274	17,256	18,610	19,812	22,131	27,656	27,276
Essex	22,811	23,275	26,701	28,407	31,360	37,609	39,753	42,712	54,190	62,845	65,065
Gloucestershire	8,488	9,577	10,426	11,606	12,376	14,163	15,287	16,715	20,893	25,081	24,801
Hampshire	27,491	28,010	30,566	32,233	36,697	42,149	45,001	48,998	56,889	65,949	69,252
Hertfordshire	14,504	15,158	15,395	15,737	18,567	21,618	22,471	26,076	29,668	33,964	34,704
Humberside	17,440	18,903	39,237	19,671	23,243	27,469	27,332	31,422	35,548	41,105	42,640
Kent	26,078	26,588	43,747	33,017	34,485	38,583	45,780	48,688	53,327	65,673	70,718
Lancashire	27,763	28,591	31,596	32,370	35,085	41,694	44,753	48,048	54,551	65,833	67,676
Leicestershire	15,903	16,605	29,606	20,029	20,007	23,634	25,559	26,831	35,689	35,821	38,042
Lincolnshire	10,338	11,227	11,563	12,041	13,277	16,010	16,587	18,806	20,609	24,849	26,584
Norfolk	10,748	11,846	12,513	13,353	14,651	17,819	18,364	20,785	23,922	28,882	29,824
Northamptonshire	9,280	9,733	10,592	11,402	12,655	15,235	15,579	18,870	21,030	23,776	25,639
North Yorkshire	12,316	12,987	22,415	19,306	15,742	17,885	19,168	22,386	24,445	28,264	29,067
Nottinghamshire	20,208	24,585	73,689	22,110	24,603	29,570	29,340	31,628	39,420	46,123	47,666
Staffordshire	17,193	18,556	20,747	22,313	23,007	27,863	29,168	32,789	37,317	45,509	46,269
Suffolk	10,425	10,784	11,599	12,719	14,288	16,112	16,563	19,548	22,647	26,254	26,726
Surrey	13,585	14,221	15,449	16,656	18,542	20,850	22,157	25,339	29,558	35,236	35,290
Sussex	24,351	25,424	26,326	29,271	29,742	36,351	37,321	41,912	46,274	58,294	58,447
Thames Valley	27,788	30,452	33,163	36,740	39,393	51,375	50,677	57,924	71,712	83,360	83,923
Warwickshire	8,457	8,920	24,259	8,328	11,918	13,017	13,864	15,257	19,457	21,936	22,505
West Mercia	16,480	18,134	20,554	20,613	24,101	25,344	29,495	29,959	36,195	41,736	44,930
Wiltshire	8,907	9,072	10,208	11,553	12,146	14,947	15,151	17,449	19,908	25,137	25,365
Greater Manchester	59,792	62,997	66,621	67,784	78,444	88,826	92,046	103,337	117,946	137,122	138,996
Merseyside	40,389	43,756	49,779	50,029	57,945	60,228	64,182	72,117	80,252	94,753	98,505
Northumbria	29,673	31,121	37,162	37,985	40,870	47,746	47,618	53,342	64,228	76,526	74,822
South Yorkshire	25,525	26,442	50,769	35,230	33,486	35,790	38,598	46,423	50,135	56,536	58,200
West Midlands	54,422	57,925	62,449	65,758	75,188	81,568	91,740	100,385	114,533	142,264	140,619

Police authority	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
West Yorkshire	42,817	45,380	55,235	51,887	60,292	61,224	71,756	83,812	94,046	109,725	114,370
City of London	6,133	6,708	7,330	7,665	8,658	9,780	10,194	11,343	19,454	21,338	22,681
Metropolitan Police	303,249	335,275	363,895	385,874	434,212	464,551	500,687	554,057	646,400	728,916	788,120
Dyfed-Powys	7,454	7,540	8,273	10,039	10,216	11,891	13,033	13,747	16,227	18,576	19,917
Gwent	8,069	8,393	9,960	10,347	10,841	12,191	12,972	15,032	17,635	21,134	21,651
North Wales	11,178	11,538	13,923	13,551	14,395	16,914	17,764	20,141	23,869	25,672	27,879
South Wales	25,954	27,660	33,737	33,327	36,156	40,042	41,868	46,439	54,170	64,090	65,450

Civil Defence Grant paid to local authorities in support of approved revenue and capital expenditure, mainly at the rate of 100 per cent. (some revenue expenditure supported at the rate of 75 per cent.)

(000s)

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*[3]1992-93*
ENGLAND											
(i) County Councils[1]											
Avon	75	89	52	86	258	279	239	313	288	332	322
Bedfordshire	94	86	108	90	118	159	164	175	208	238	226
Berkshire	138	190	198	237	284	444	388	391	407	494	447
Buckinghamshire	64	78	124	245	235	321	301	318	359	421	395
Cambridgeshire	111	206	305	371	274	353	397	334	385	415	582
Cheshire	163	182	196	234	346	614	630	578	247	905	345
Cleveland	67	76	74	70	123	166	181	192	219	240	247
Cornwall	74	89	110	147	149	305	330	267	179	404	367
Cumbria	101	171	142	176	200	285	562	523	387	436	384
Derbyshire	96	104	98	n/a	140	192	187	164	226	259	241
Devon	147	210	345	365	517	673	544	661	731	743	659
Dorset	87	134	184	221	279	289	317	301	333	356	379
Durham	88	119	134	137	125	190	251	262	242	243	235
East Sussex	167	125	184	182	175	249	258	309	321	375	364
Essex	219	236	315	353	377	466	551	710	489	791	515
Gloucestershire	104	121	154	226	278	351	326	355	445	313	304
Hampshire	156	162	141	179	203	265	303	373	382	427	417
Hereford and Worcester	78	122	115	115	136	197	213	352	345	318	351
Hertfordshire	123	120	181	177	253	520	444	433	442	498	491
Humberside	155	164	366	277	235	405	415	394	459	396	309
Isle of Wight	32	43	76	82	106	213	232	264	280	303	291
Kent	195	383	379	450	592	679	762	524	707	741	558
Lancashire	172	190	267	269	334	457	454	453	359	324	310
Leicestershire	151	129	180	184	146	207	280	265	279	297	223
Lincolnshire	100	116	115	326	279	379	395	355	615	641	794
Norfolk	119	148	180	335	457	427	409	448	621	588	490
Northants	68	81	109	195	148	197	262	375	424	378	305
Northumberland	100	140	191	144	219	229	384	359	433	305	333
North Yorkshire	156	185	228	304	261	392	404	339	336	364	353
Nottinghamshire	176	188	215	251	269	368	477	391	350	349	330
Oxfordshire	54	103	74	126	377	449	379	441	413	437	441
Shropshire	54	82	178	105	87	129	179	283	222	274	259
Somerset	112	160	155	198	408	312	305	302	319	353	335
Staffordshire	115	125	130	219	254	360	356	351	488	347	349
Suffolk	70	102	125	223	241	279	356	367	339	335	334
Surrey	244	328	506	355	404	436	444	n/a	420	393	614
Warwickshire	60	119	159	151	252	230	250	259	296	320	308
West Sussex	70	84	124	121	194	303	584	359	329	340	335
Wiltshire	186	205	184	248	348	362	324	322	336	337	330
(ii) Metropolitan Areas[2]											
London	347	275	458	412	772	1,277	1,558	1,745	1,743	1,818	1,755
Greater Manchester	242	206	299	304	159	399	409	406	522	574	565
Merseyside	172	166	177	199	266	374	416	517	537	629	573
South Yorkshire	91	97	107	125	212	377	347	379	437	508	464
Tyne and Wear	65	81	73	80	89	299	328	556	445	495	461
West Midlands	250	268	273	288	239	413	453	458	522	687	480
West Yorkshire	200	193	196	236	257	325	391	406	445	451	431
(iii) Police Authorities											
Avon-Somerset	49	52	65	51	49	78	82	2	3	5	8
Devon-Cornwall	50	55	64	65	76	83	87	1	0	0	2
Greater Manchester	0	0	0	0	143	168	187	5	4	3	6
Hampshire	53	70	80	118	106	91	106	0	0	6	7
Merseyside	0	0	0	0	81	82	116	7	7	6	16
Northumbria	63	61	108	93	120	139	147	11	11	14	14
Sussex	19	23	21	16	17	17	45	0	0	0	5
South Yorkshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	0	0	0
Thames Valley	33	53	58	96	74	71	62	13	12	3	14
West Mercia	43	55	55	65	75	93	91	3	0	3	6
West Midlands	0	0	0	0	97	144	152	0	6	3	7

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*[3]1992-93*
West Yorkshire	0	0	0	0	70	72	83	12	0	0	0
(iv) London Boroughs and City of London	179	415	169	470	741	504	544	146	152	90	2
WALES											
(v) County Councils											
Clwyd	52	87	90	114	143	246	287	301	336	393	386
Dyfed	45	70	86	295	254	207	228	218	243	312	277
Gwent	71	118	128	144	151	216	267	252	305	344	339
Gwynedd	42	47	68	68	82	132	165	245	255	282	264
Mid Glamorgan	42	32	31	35	41	115	176	207	263	653	570
Powys	36	37	146	53	56	110	138	156	162	184	166
South Glamorgan	83	66	76	63	80	123	158	174	201	227	193
West Glamorgan	45	50	56	40	59	156	253	245	247	233	264
(vi) Police Authorities											
Dyfed-Powys	8	8	15	25	38	53	27	1	1	1	5
North Wales	54	50	50	46	53	47	71	0	0	0	2
South Wales	44	49	53	56	62	61	102	1	1	0	2

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[1] Includes any grant paid to districts in that county.

[2] Up to 1985-86, grant paid to the Greater London council, metropolitan county councils and metropolitan districts; from 1986-87, grant paid to fire and civil defence authorities.

[3] Preliminary approved estimates of expenditure in grant terms (comparable figures for London boroughs not available).

Interpretation Services

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what statutory obligation the probation services in England and Wales lie to provide interpretation services to clients of the service during interviews for pre-sentence reports or in any other appropriate circumstances.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* There are at present no statutory obligations on probation services in respect of interpretation. But national standards for the supervision of offenders in the community endorse the need to take reasonable steps to communicate effectively with, and understand offenders at all times.

Broncoscopy Facilities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the broncoscopy facilities available *(a)* in south Glamorgan and *(b)* in Wales; and what plans his Department has to curtail or reorganise those services.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have been asked to reply.

Broncoscopy facilities are available at the following hospitals—latest available centrally validated figures, as at 1990.

	Wales
South Glamorgan	University Hospital of Wales Cardiff Royal Infirmary Llandough Hospital Sully Hospital
Clwyd	Abergele Chest Hospital Ysbyty Glan Clwyd Maelor General Hospital Bronglais Hospital
East Dyfed	West Wales General Hospital Prince Phillip Hospital Llanelli General Hospital Bryntirion Hospital
Gwent	Nevill Hall Hospital Royal Gwent Hospital St. Woolos Hospital County Hospital Griffithstown
Gwynedd	Ysbyty Gwynedd Llandudno General Hospital
Mid Glamorgan	Bridgend General Hospital Princess of Wales Hospital East Glamorgan Hospital Prince Charles Hospital
Powys	Machynlleth Chest Hospital
West Glamorgan	Morriston Hospital Singleton Hospital Neath General Hospital

The provision of such services are matters for individual health authorities to determine based on local needs.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional secure places are to be provided for juvenile offenders by 1995; and what is the estimated cost of each place.

Mr. Yeo: I have been asked to reply.

Plans are being prepared to provide an additional 60-65 secure places in order to implement the new juvenile remand provisions in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 by the mid 1990s.

For planning purposes, the cost per place (including professional fees) has been estimated at £200,000. Actual costs will be dependent on a number of factors including size and location of the new accommodation, the competitiveness of the local construction industry, and the level of professional fees incurred. The aim will be to ensure that the design and development of the schemes represents good value for money.

DEFENCE

Schools

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the armed forces bases located outside the United Kingdom which currently have an on-site school for the children of military personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

a. *Bases in Western Germany*
   Ayrshire Barracks, Monchengladbach
   Buller Barracks, Munster
   Catterick Barracks, Bielefeld
   Clifton Barracks, Minden
   Dennis Barracks, Munster Oertze
   Fallingbostel Camp, Fallingbostel
   Hobart Barracks, Detmold
   Hohne Camp, Hohne
   Mansergh Barracks, Gutersloh
   Muna Barracks, Wulfen
   Napier Barracks, Dortmund
   Nelson Barracks, Munster
   Normandy Barracks, Sennelager
   Oxford Barracks, Munster
   Prestatyn Barracks, Osnabruck
   Rheindahlen Military Complex
   RAF Bruggen
   RAF Gatow
   RAF Laarbruch
   RAF Wildenrath
   Roy Barracks, Ratingen
   Suffolk Barracks, Dortmund
   Torfek Barracks, Hildesheim
   Wavell Barracks, Berlin
   Wentworth Barracks, Herford

b. *Bases in Cyprus*
   Ayios Nikolaos Camp
   Dhekelia Garrison
   Episkopi Garrison
   Pergamos Camp
   RAF Akrotiri
   United Nations Force in Cyprus (British Contingent) Base, Nicosia

c. *Bases in Hong Kong/Brunei*
   Gun Club Hill Barracks, Kowloon
   Stanley Fort, Hong Kong Island
   Brunei Garrison

d. *Other Overseas Bases*
   Gibraltar Garrison
   Belize Garrison
   RAF Mount Pleasant, Falkland Islands

Hydrographic Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, columns *105-6*, what has been the cost to the Exchequer of the chief executive of the Hydrographic Office's visits to *(a)* Romania in June, *(b)* Russia in October 1992 and *(c)* Monaco in May.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Responsibility for the matter has been delegated to the Hydrographic Office under its chief executive Rear Admiral Myres. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Rear Admiral J. A. L. Myres to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 24 November 1992:

You recently asked the Secretary of State for Defence for the cost to the public purse of the Chief Executive of the Hydrographic Office's visits to *(a)* Romania in June, *(b)* Russia in October 1992, and *(c)* Monaco in May.

The following were the costs of travel and subsistence for these visits:

	£
(a) Romania (June 1992)	1,373
(b) Russia (October 1992)	814
(c) Monaco (May 1992)	970

Mr. Mark Thatcher

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all communications between his Department and Mr. Mark Thatcher concerning the defence and security exhibition in Bahrain on 11 May.

Mr. Aitken: It is not the practice for Government Departments to list communications with members of the public.

Harrier Aircraft

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which companies bid for the contract to service Harrier aircraft at HMS Heron at Yeovilton.

Mr. Aitken: The following companies put forward bids for the contract to service Harrier aircraft at HMS Heron at Yeovilton: Airwork, British International Helicopters Ltd., Clarke Chapman Engineering Services, Field Aircraft Ltd., FR Aviation Ltd., Line Up Aviation Personnel, and Lovak Ltd.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which company has been awarded the contract for the servicing of Harrier aircraft at HMS Heron, Yeovilton.

Mr. Aitken: The contract for the servicing of Harrier aircraft at HMS Heron, Yeovilton, has been awarded to Field Aircraft Ltd.

Exports (Albania)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about his policy towards the export of military equipment and technology to Albania.

Mr. Aitken: All exports of military equipment and technology are considered on a case-by-case basis. All relevant factors are taken into account. In the case of Albania, a major factor is that it remains a proscribed destination of the co-ordinating committee on multilateral strategic export controls (COCOM).

SCOTLAND

Health Budget

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the projected budget allocation *(a)* for each health board in Scotland and *(b)* in total for Scotland for the next three years.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend will soon be announcing the allocations he proposes to make to his various spending programmes, including the health programme.

The budget allocation for each health board is set annually. They have not yet been agreed for 1993-94, but once they are they will be announced in the usual way.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the current numbers of staffed beds for *(a)* orthopaedic surgery, *(b)* general surgery and *(c)* general medicine at (i) Stracathro hospital, (ii) Arbroath infirmary and (iii) Tayside health board.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is shown in the table.

National Health Service

Average available staffed beds by selected specialty, quarter ending 30 June 1992

	(a) *Orthopaedic surgery*	*(b)* *General surgery*	*(c)* *General medicine*
(i) Stracathro hospital	47	34	71
(ii) Arbroath infirmary	—	—	26
(iii) Tayside health board	258	272	379

Health Board Funding

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement on the progress in implementing the move to parity of funding for Scottish health boards;

(2) what assessment his Department has made of the funding implications for Scottish health boards of moving to parity of funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: There has been steady progress towards the fairer distribution of available resources to health boards in line with the population-based methodology set out in the Scottish health authorities revenue equalisation —SHARE—working party report. Latterly, allocations have been made to health boards as purchasers of services, based solely on weighted capitation of their resident populations using SHARE methodology as proposed in the White Paper "Working for Patients", Cm. 555.

In the present financial year, allocations ranged from 3·99 per cent. above the parity target to 4·69 per cent. below, compared with 16 per cent. above and 34 per cent. below in 1977-78 when SHARE-based allocations were first introduced.

Further movement to parity is proposed, but is constrained by the effect that significant changes would have on the financial situation of individual health boards.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Health and Social Services Trusts

9. **Mr. Purchase:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the way and the period of time that the consultation procedure was carried out over the proposals for health and social services trusts in Northern Ireland; and what representations he has received expressing concerns over the timing of the consultations.

Mr. Hanley: In both rounds to date the applications prepared by the units which aspired to trust status were issued widely for a period of public consultation which lasted for three months.

Of 61 respondents to the first round, one expressed concern as to the timing.

In the second round the corresponding figure was three out of a total of 271 respondents.

Security

11. **Rev. Ian Paisley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the security situation in Northern Ireland.

14. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Since I answered a similar question on 29 October 1992 there have been 11 deaths as a result of the security situation in Northern Ireland, including nine civilians, one RUC officer and one soldier.

The Government continue to lend their full support to the security forces in their relentless efforts to bring those responsible for these heinous crimes to justice. To early November this year, 365 people have been charged with serious terrorist-type offences, including 94 with murder or attempted murder.

Select Committees (Evidence)

12. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions he, his Ministers and officials from the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments have given oral or written evidence to Select Committees since April 1989.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have not yet given evidence myself, but since April 1989 NIO Ministers have given oral evidence on three occasions and officials on 14 occasions. Written evidence has been submitted on 14 occasions.

Urban Development Grant

13. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he intends to extend urban development grant to urban areas outside Belfast and Londonderry.

Mr. Atkins: No. Urban development grant is targeted towards areas of greatest need and there are no plans to extend it to areas outside Belfast and Londonderry. The International Fund for Ireland operates a similar scheme called the urban development programme which promotes the rehabilitation, revitalisation and development of the commercial centre of towns and villages outside Belfast and Londonderry.

Terrorism (Security Services Involvement)

15. **Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to investigate the involvement of members of the security services in terrorism following the conviction of Mr. Brian Nelson.

Mr. Mates: The investigation of any allegations of criminal conduct is a matter for the RUC.

Electricity Supply

16. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the effect of completion of the Scottish interconnector to Northern Ireland on competition in electrical supply.

Mr. Atkins: Responsibility for developing competition in the supply of electricity rests with the Director of Electricity Supply for Northern Ireland. In drawing up his proposals he will take account of the interconnector to Scotland which will offer access to a wide range of generation sources and to alternatively priced electricity.

25. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to announce the arrangements for the allocation of a further tranche of electricity generation.

Mr. Atkins: Responsibility for ordering new generating capacity rests with NIE plc. NIE is currently having discussions with the Director General of Electricity Supply for Northern Ireland and hopes to announce the start of the competition for new plant next year.

Examiner of Statutory Rules

17. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the present Examiner of Statutory Rules was appointed.

Mr. Mates: 1 July 1992.

Water Quality and Sewage Disposal

19. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his latest estimate of costs needed and time required to improve water quality and sewage disposal for Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Drinking water quality and standards of sewage treatment are already high in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, there is a need for continuing improvement. An enhanced programme of capital works is in hand to ensure that older water and sewage treatment works are modernised or replaced to ensure compliance with the latest standards. This programme will mean an increase in capital expenditure from the current level of £49 million in 1992-93 to a projected level of £80 million in 1995-96 and expenditure would remain at that level for the rest of the decade.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are his latest proposals to improve water quality and sewage disposal for Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland has a programme of capital works extending over the next 10 years to improve its water and sewerage infrastructure.

President-elect Clinton

20. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to meet representatives of the incoming Clinton administration to discuss matters relating to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mates: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present, but we look forward to establishing contact at an appropriate moment in the new year.

Children Order

21. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will indicate when he hopes to publish the draft Children Order.

Mr. Hanley: Work is nearing completion on the preparation of a draft Children Order which will reform the law in Northern Ireland on the care and upbringing of children along the lines of the Children Act 1981. My noble Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, hopes to publish a proposal for a draft order for consultation early next year.

Electricity Charges

22. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate he has made of the effect of charges for electricity in manufacturing industry on existing jobs and future job creation in high energy-consuming industries.

Mr. Atkins: The restructuring of the Northern Ireland electricity industry will bring increased efficiencies and greater competition leading to downward pressure on prices. This will improve the competitiveness of all Northern Ireland manufacturing industry which is the best means of securing existing employment and creating new jobs.

Water Privatisation

23. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received regarding the privatisation of the water service in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: There have been representations made by some 40 individuals or organisations.

Autumn Statement

24. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with representatives of the trade unions in Northern Ireland about the implications of the autumn statement on Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mates: I have not had any discussions with the trade unions in Northern Ireland about the autumn statement.

Intergovernmental Talks

26. **Mr. Peter Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his recent meeting with the Government of the Irish Republic and indicate what further plans he has to meet them.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I last met the Irish Government on 16 November 1992 at a meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference when we discussed the matters described in the joint statement issued after the meeting. I hope to have a further meeting with the Irish Government as soon as practicable after the Irish general election.

Trust Ports

27. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to complete the privatisation of the trust ports in the Province.

Mr. Atkins: It is expected that the draft Order in Council which will provide the necessary powers to enable any of Northern Ireland's trust ports to be privatised, will be laid before both Houses in the summer of 1993. It will become law two months from the date made.

The draft order will allow any Northern Ireland trust port authority to submit a privatisation scheme for approval and provide the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland with powers to initiate a scheme to privatise a trust port with a turnover of more than £5 million in at least two of the proceeding three years, if that port authority has not itself submitted such a scheme within two years of the enactment of the order.

Colin Wallace

28. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a response to the most recent representations he has received about the case of Colin Wallace.

Mr. Mates: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has received no representations.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which Minister in his Department is responsible for the oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters which fall within the responsibility of his Department.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: My hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Robert Atkins), Minister responsible for the economy and the environment.

Health and Social Services Boards

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what organisations are invited to nominate people to serve on the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland; how such nominees are chosen to serve; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Organisations were not asked to nominate individuals for membership of the health and social services boards which came into existence on 1 April 1991. The non-executive members on each board were appointed on the strength of their experience and for their particular abilities in various fields including management, personnel, finance and the voluntary sector and not as representatives of particular organisations.

Some of the members served on the boards prior to 31 March 1991 and their services were retained to provide the new boards with stability and continuity during the change over period.

Care Homes

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many residential care homes for fewer than four people are registered in Northern Ireland, in each of the health and social services boards areas.

Mr. Hanley: None.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what additional money will be included in the Northern Ireland budget provisions to provide for the additional key workers to be employed to ensure that the terms of the new Registered Homes (Northern Ireland) Order are fulfilled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: From 1 April 1993 the health and social services boards will, like, local authorities in England and Wales, employ "key workers" as part of their care management responsibilities. These arrangements will apply whether the client is living independently at home or in a residential care or nursing home setting, with the costs being met by the boards out of their community care budgets, which are being considerably enhanced from the 1993-94 financial year.

Neither the draft Registered Homes (Northern Ireland) Order nor the draft regulations to be made under that order contain provisions which require the employment of additional key workers by voluntary and private sector homes.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to whom the people to be employed at the proposed arm's-length unit for the inspection of registered homes in Northern Ireland will be responsible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Registration and inspection units were established in 1991 under the community care reforms. Responsibility for their organisation and management and for ensuring their independence from operational management lies with the area general manager of each health and social services board who is, in turn, directly accountable to his board for the functions and performance of the unit.

Each board has also established an advisory committee to provide a link between its registration and inspection unit and the public interest which it serves. Membership of the advisory committees is intended to reflect the scope of the units' activities and is drawn from the groups of service providers—such as private sector residential care or nursing home proprietors—with whom the units work.

General Practitioners

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average number of applications for vacancies for general practitioner's posts in Northern Ireland every year since 1989.

Mr. Hanley: The information is available only in respect of single handed-practice vacancies. Partnerships select their own candidates and information on these is not held centrally.

Year	*Average number of applications*
1989	34
1990	35
1991	36
1992	40

Housing Executive

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to increase the budget to the Housing Executive to meet housing needs in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The resources available to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for 1992-93 have recently been increased by £3 million to enable it to purchase dwellings for people in urgent need of housing. A further £1·3 million has been added mainly to cover the cost of bomb damage repairs to executive property. This means that the resources available to the executive for 1992-93 have been increased to approximately £490 million.

Lanark Way

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when it is proposed to reopen Lanark way for the convenience of the general public in their private and business interests in the pursuance of their lawful activities in commuting across the community divide.

Mr. Mates: The opening and closing of the Lanark way gates is an operational matter for the RUC, which must take into account the level of terrorist threat and the need to protect the community. I understand that although there are no current plans to reopen the gates, the RUC is keeping the situation under constant review.

Laganside Corporation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Treasury Minute on the first to eleventh reports from the Committee of Public Accounts 1992-93, paragraph 161, what proposals he has to change the auditing arrangements of the Laganside corporation.

Mr. Atkins: The audit arrangements for Langanside corporation are laid down in the Laganside Development (Northern Ireland) Order 1989. The legislation requires that the corporation's accounts be audited by an auditor to be appointed annually by the Department of the Environment. This arrangement has the approval of the Northern Ireland Audit Office which has the right under articles 8 and 9 of the Audit (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 to inspect the records of the corporation to ensure that the corporation is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively.

In view of the Treasury minute on the first to eleventh reports from the Committee of Public Accounts 1992-93, paragraph 161, the Department will now take steps to provide the Audit Office with wider access to the books and records of Laganside corporation. This will be done through the financial memorandum which regulates the financial arrangements between the corporation and the Department.

Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was (i) the total cost, adjusted to 1992 prices of the wildlife incident investigation scheme for Northern Ireland and (ii) the proportion of the total cost contributed by the agrochemical industry levy, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hanley: An overall costing for the Departments involved in the operation of the scheme is not available.

Diagnostic services carried out by the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland in 1991-92 were costed at £14,824. This amount was recouped by means of the agrochemical levy. Prior to 1991-92 diagnostic testing was financed by DANI.

WALES

Conservation Sites

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many road development plans currently mentioned within local authority structural plans in Wales threaten special protection areas and Ramsar sites; and if he will list the proposed developments and the sites involved;

(2) if he will list the local authority development plans which currently pose *(a)* one and *(b)* two or more threats to Ramsar sites and special protection areas in Wales; and if he will list the sites affected.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The only proposal in a county structure plan in Wales which crosses part of a designated special protection area, which is also a Ramsar site, is the Shotton to Connah's Quay bypass, a non-trunk road scheme on the A548, identified in the approved Clwyd structure plan. This will involve a new crossing of the Dee estuary. There are no proposals in approved local plans in Wales for development on areas within a designated special protection area or Ramsar site.

Young Farmers

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to introduce measures to encourage young farmers to *(a)* convert redundant farm buildings to housing and *(b)* to build new homes near to their holdings.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Our rural housing reserve offers local authorities the opportunity to address a range of priority social housing needs.

Housing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to issue new guidelines to local authorities in Wales on *(a)* housing needs assessment research and *(b)* the development of housing needs strategies.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have no immediate plans to do so.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to establish an agency to co-ordinate housing needs research and the development of localised housing needs assessment plans in Wales, with the responsibility for providing guidelines and funding for such localised initiatives.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No.

Nature Conservation

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* nature conservation review sites and *(b)* national nature reserves there are in Wales; and if he will list the nature conservation review sites which have been created as national nature reserves in Wales in each of the last five years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The numbers of nature conservation review sites and national nature reserves in Wales are 111 and 49 respectively. The nature conservation review sites which have been declared as national nature reserves within the last five years are as follows:

Year	*Declared as national nature reserve*
1988	Coed y Cerrig
1989	None
1990	Kenfig
1991	Coedmor Corsydd Llangloffan Crymlyn Bog (Extension)
1992	Coed Rheidol (Extension) Cors Caron (Extension) Dyfi (Extension) Rhos Llawr-Cwrt (Extension)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to increase available funding to nature conservation review sites for the maintenance of the sites of special scientific interest network and their effective monitoring.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Countryside Council for Wales, which has statutory responsibility for these activities, determines the amount of resources to be allocated to each of its programmes within its overall budget. Decisions on the future funding of the council will be announced shortly.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to set a target of transferring at least 10 nature conservation review sites into national nature reserves per annum.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No. The responsibility for declaring national nature reserves in Wales rests with the Countryside Council for Wales. The rate of progress depends on the funds available and the willingness of site owners to enter into the required commitments.

Smoke Control Orders

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many smoke control orders were in force in Wales, what area was covered in thousands of hectares and how many premises were affected in (i) 1980, (ii) 1985 and (iii) 1990.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the number of smoke control orders in force in Wales is not held centrally. However, Welsh Office records indicate that 37 such orders were introduced in Wales in the period 1960-1988, covering over 1,500 hectares and more than 24,000 premises. No new orders have been made since 1988.

Dentistry

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of whether discharges of mercury from dental surgeries pose an environmental risk.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: All persons charged with the maintenance and operation of dental surgeries are covered by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988, as amended. On the basis of an international standard specification, dental practices are required to install units to extract solid amalgam for recycling.

The Health and Safety Executive has inspectorial rights generally, and family health service authorities have the right of access to premises where general dental services are provided, to confirm appropriate standards of provision.

There is no evidence to suggest that free metallic mercury from dental practices is presenting a significant hazard to the environment. The use of capsulated materials prevents the release of mercury vapour or liquid into the environment.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by family health service authority area the general dental practitioners who are now de-registering national health services patients.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not held centrally. I am aware that some de-registration is taking place in all authority areas, for a variety of reasons. Nevertheless, the overall number of NHS registrations in Wales continues to rise, and stood at 58·5 per cent. of the population as at 30 September 1992. This is a higher proportion than health departments or the profession anticipated at this stage of the contract.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many new patients have been registered with dentists in Wales in each of the last three years; and how many were *(a)* children receiving NHS treatment, *(b)* children receiving non-NHS treatment, *(c)* adults receiving non-NHS treatment, *(d)* adults receiving NHS treatment but not entitled to exemption payments and *(e)* adults receiving NHS dental treatment and receiving exemption payment;

(2) how many dentists have been operational in Wales in each of the last three years; and what are *(a)* the total numbers of (i) NHS and (ii) non-NHS children treated in each year and *(b)* the total numbers of (1) NHS and (2) non-NHS adult patients treated.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of dental practitioners who were in contract with family health services authorities in Wales in each of the past three years is as follows:

As at 1 October 1990 : 837
As at 1 October 1991 : 832
As at 30 June 1992 : 844

Information is not held centrally on non-NHS treatment.

Information on the number of patients receiving NHS treatment is not available, however the number of patients registered with a GDP in Wales is as follows:

	Children	*Adults*
As at 30 September 1991	388,495	891,380
As at 30 September 1992	416,308	1,270,178

Since the introduction of the new contract in October 1990, information is not available centrally on the number of NHS courses of treatment undergone by children as treatment for children is now paid for on a capitation basis. The number of NHS courses of treatment undergone by adults in Wales in 1991-92 was 1,342,273. Of these 74·8 per cent. had a patient charge and 25·2 per cent. had remission or exemption of charges. As charges and remission/exemption are for a particular course of treatment, it is not possible to say how many people these figures relate to.

Public Appointments

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will reconsider his policy of appointing the same person to more than one public body in Wales, especially when the posts are paid.

Mr. David Hunt: No, all public appointments will continue to be made on the basis of aptitude and merit.

South Glamorgan Health Authority

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what procedures he will follow in filling the vacancy on the board of the South Glamorgan health authority.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 24 November, at column *633*.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce the names of chairmen-elect of the second-wave NHS trusts.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: An announcement was made on 23 November.

National Nature Reserves

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total amount of funding granted to national nature reserves by his Department in each of the last five years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Prior to 1 April 1991, this was the responsibility of the Nature Conservancy Council and the information could be obtained only at disproportionate costs. Funding made available by the Countryside Council for Wales for National Nature Reserves in 1991-92 was as follows:

	1991-92 £
Acquisition costs	820,393
Management costs	1,032,097
Totals	1,852,490

These figures include expenditure on marine nature reserves.

Treatment Centres

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales by how much West Glamorgan health authority will increase its use of the treatment centre at Bridgend, and the treatment centre in Bangor, in accordance with his decision letter on the future provision of night-time casualty services in west Glamorgan of 29 October.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The use of these treatment centres, beyond that level centrally funded by the Welsh Office, is a matter for each health authority to negotiate directly with the centres.

Pollution

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing concentration rates of *(a)* sulphur dioxide, *(b)* black smoke and *(c)* nitrogen oxides at each monitoring site in Wales in each year since 1976; and what was the corresponding EC limit value in each case.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Figures showing the concentration rates of sulphur dioxide and black smoke at urban and rural air monitoring sites in Wales are on pages 98 and 99 of the "Environmental Digest for Wales No. 6 1991", copies of which are held in the Library of the House. Tables giving EC directive limit and guide values for smoke and sulphur dioxide are at page 97.

Nitrogen oxides have been monitored continuously since 1987, but no specific figures are available for Wales. However, the "Survey of Nitrogen Dioxide concentrations in the United Kingdom Using Diffusion Tubes, 1991", a copy of which is also in the Library of the House, indicates that, on the basis of the monitoring undertaken, nitrogen dioxide levels in Wales are below recommended EC directive limits.

Education Bill

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place the results of consultation on the Education Bill in the Library.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No. Such correspondence is a private matter between the individual and the Department. It is nevertheless open to those who responded to make their comments public and indeed, some organisations have already done so.

Deeside Industrial Park

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement concerning planning applications by the Welsh Development Agency and Alyn and Deeside district council to extend Deeside industrial park;

(2) when he expects to rule upon applications to extend Deeside industrial park.

Mr. David Hunt: My hon. Friend the Minister of State called in the planning application for proposed business and industrial development on land north of Shotwick road, Deeside because it raises planning issues of more than local importance. A decision on the application will be issued as soon as possible after the inspector's report has been received following a public local inquiry.

Car Journeys

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of car journeys in Wales were for distances of 5 miles or less for the latest year for which figures are available.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The 1985-86 national travel survey —the latest for which results are available for Wales— found that 65 per cent. of car journeys in Wales covered distances of 5 miles or less.

Bed and Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each local authority in Wales *(a)* the number of young people between the ages of 15 and 17 years who have been placed in bed and breakfast accommodation in the latest year for which figures are available and *(b)* the cost of such placements.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not available centrally.

Smoke Alarms

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide figures for the number of properties in council ownership in Wales, by authority, that have smoke alarms fitted.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not available centrally.

Transport Efficiency

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing the relative efficiency in Wales in terms of megajoules per passenger kilometre of *(a)* cars in urban areas, *(b)* cars in rural areas, *(c)* taxis, *(d)* buses, *(e)* motor cycles and *(f)* British Rail trains.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not collected centrally. Figures on United Kingdom energy consumption by transport mode are given in "Transport Statistics: Great Britain 1992", a copy of which is held in the Library of the House.

Bus Deregulation

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the bus routes which have ceased to operate since the implementation of the bus deregulation proposals in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not held centrally.

Agricultural Tenancy Law

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will propose measures to facilitate the introduction of retirement tenancies as part of reforms of agricultural tenancy law.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government's proposals for reform of agricultural tenancy law would give landlords and tenants the freedom to agree the period of tenancy which was suited to their particular needs. The parties would be able to take account of all factors in deciding the appropriate period including any retirement plans of the tenant.

Seven-year-olds (Testing)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to increase funding for rural schools in Wales in light of his proposal to introduce mandatory testing for seven-year-olds; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Statutory testing of seven-year-olds has been in place since the summer term 1991. Rural schools benefit from the significant levels of support already being made for assessment. Test material and related teacher guidance is issued free of charge to all participating schools. Additionally £2·5 million was approved in 1992-93 under the grants for education support and training arrangements for providing teachers with assessment skills and for local education authority support.

Community Care

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many qualified nurses are currently employed in care in the community in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not held centrally.

Hydroelectric Scheme

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the possible environmental impact of the proposed hydroelectric scheme on the Afon Conwy; if he will establish a public inquiry into the proposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The environmental impact of the proposed hydroelectric scheme on the Afon Conwy will be considered by the local planning authority during the determination of the planning application and by the National Rivers Authority when considering the necessary application for an abstraction licence.

We will consider fully the hon. and learned Gentleman's request that there be a public inquiry into the proposal and I will write to him when a decision is taken.

Canada Geese

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to prevent agricultural damage in Wales caused by Canada geese; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Agricultural Development and Advisory Service in Wales provides guidance to farmers on various methods of controlling Canada geese. Farmers suffering agricultural damage from Canada geese can control these birds during the open season by legal methods which include shooting or deploying scaring techniques. During the close season, which runs from 21 February to 31 August, licences to shoot Canada geese are available from the Welsh Office, provided applicants can demonstrate the need to prevent serious agricultural damage.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many Canada geese were estimated to be inhabiting Wales in 1970, 1980, 1990 and 1992; what is the estimated agricultural damage these geese have caused since 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not collected centrally. There have been reported increases in the numbers of Canada geese in recent years. Various measures to control them are available to the farming industry.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the recent investigation of the accounts of the Welsh Development Agency, in particular severance payments made to departing staff.

Mr. David Hunt: The Department and the agency are studying the findings of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Craig y Nos Castle

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to increase the funding for Craig y Nos castle; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The importance of Craig y Nos castle and its related theatre is recognised. The castle is listed as a building of special architectural or historical importance at grade II and the theatre at grade I.

On the basis of advice from the Historic Buildings Council for Wales, we have made available a grant of £22,500 for works to the theatre. Part of this grant has been claimed but we have not received further requests for assistance. If a further application for assistance with conservation work to the structure is received, we shall consider it as soon as possible.

Historic Buildings

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to increase the funding for the architectural heritage of Powys; what proposals he has to increase funding for the upkeep of buildings of special architectural interest; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Funding for the architectural heritage is allocated according to the needs of individual structures rather than geographically. We are guided in this by the Historic Buildings Council for Wales and substantial grants have been made on its advice to properties such as Powis castle. I will shortly decide on the allocation of resources to individual programmes for future years under the normal arrangements.

However, considerable financial support to the built heritage is provided through maintenance and restoration of the properties in the care of the state. The estate in care is administered by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments. Examples of such support are the development of a new car park, interpretative panels and ongoing conservation works at Montgomery castle in Powys.

Bathing Beaches

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to clean up beaches in Wales that have banned swimming due to pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office has agreed with Dwr Cymru, as a first priority, a programme of improvement works to bathing waters in Wales designated under the terms of the EC bathing waters directive which presently fail or are at risk of failing to meet the bacteriological standards of the directive. I am not aware of bathing having been banned at any of those locations. Once this improvement programme has been completed, it will be for the National Rivers Authority to agree priorities with Dwr Cymru about improvement work remaining to be done.

Chest Medical Services

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the hospitals in South Glamorgan which provide chest medical services and to provide a table showing the number of beds available *(a)* in each of those hospitals in each of the past five years, *(b)* currently and *(c)* projected for 1992-93.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The available information for the latest five years, which relates to the number of beds in the specialty of thoracic medicine, is given as follows:

Average daily available beds

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Llandough	52·6	54·4	55·1	54·5	56·5
Sully	47·8	44·4	49·8	49·2	29·0

Comparable information for 1992-93 is not available centrally. The South Glamorgan health plan, however, states that activity for thoracic medicine will remain constant.

Hamilton Oil plc

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce the result of the public inquiry into the application by Hamilton Oil plc with regard to developments at Talacre, Clwyd.

Sir Wyn Roberts: As soon as possible.

Sully Hospital

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what proposals he has received regarding the future of X-ray facilities at Sully hospital;

(2) if he will make it his policy that any proposals for the closure or reduction of X-ray services at Sully hospital should be subject to formal consultation processes.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None. Any proposals which represent a substantial change in the provision of these services will be subject to the normal consultation procedure.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what procedures of consultation were followed prior to the temporary closure of Powys ward at Sully hospital; and when it is planned to reopen Powys at Sully hospital.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Temporary closures are a matter for local management and do not require formal consultation. The reopening of this ward is a matter for the health authority at this stage.

Further Education

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman-elect of the Welsh Further Education Council concerning the *(a)* funding, *(b)* start date and *(c)* course provision at the proposed new further education college extension at Lockwith, Cardiff.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I met Mr. Malcolm Wallace, chairman of the Further Education Funding Council for Wales, on 23 October to discuss a number of issues, including the funds which will be available to the council in 1993-94. I also met Councillor P. Perkins, chairman of the education committee for South Glamorgan on 26 June to discuss the future of further education courses in the Cardiff area.

Responsibility for planning further education courses in the Cardiff area rests with South Glamorgan county council until 31 March 1993, after which the responsibility transfers to the Further Education Funding Council for Wales. The director of Education for South Glamorgan wrote to the Welsh Office on 12 October with certain proposals regarding the establishment of further education facilities at Leckwith. This has been drawn to the attention of the Further Education Funding Council for Wales. it will be for the council to determine its own expenditure priorities for 1993-94 when it is informed of the funding available to it.

I understand that the funding council is currently considering the pattern of provision for further education in Cardiff in the light of the letter from the director of education.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what proposals he has for the alignment of *(a)* purchaser, *(b)* directly manager provider units and *(c)* trusts with the boundaries of the proposed unitary authorities under local government reorganisation;

(2) what proposals he has to align the boundaries of the three emergency services; if he will institute a study into the costs and benefits of such multi-purpose alignments; and if he will make a statement on the implications of local government re-organisation on the emergency services;

(3) what provisions he has made to compensate local government officers for any reduction in pay following their transfer to unitary local authorities after local government reorganisation.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall be announcing decisions on matters relating to local government reorganisation in due course.

Croft Nursery School

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit the Croft nursery school, Aston, Deeside; and if he will make a statement on the future of the school.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Neither my right hon. Friend nor I has any plans at present to do so. The county council has published a notice proposing to close the school. If there are statutory objections, the decision is one for my right hon. Friend.

Ambulance Services

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if the proposed Gwent-South Glamorgan-Powys Ambulance Trust will provide the ambulance service for the Rhymney Valley or any part of it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The application for national health service trust status made clear the intention to provide ambulance services for the health authority areas of Gwent, Powys and South Glamorgan. Detailed operations from 1 April 1993 when the South and East Wales Ambulance National Health Service Trust commences formal operation will depend on the contracts negotiated with the purchasers of the ambulance service. However, I would not expect the trust or any other ambulance service in Wales to discontinue the existing practice of operating within the margins of neighbouring health authority areas, especially when responding to emergency calls and any local arrangements to meet the needs of patients.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales at what level he proposes to set the total revenue support grant to Welsh local authorities in 1993-94; and if he will announce his decision on council tax transitional relief.

Mr. David Hunt: As I announced in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) on 12 November at columns *890-91*, I propose a level of aggregate external finance—AEF—for 1993-94 in support of local authority spending in Wales of £2,342·6 million. AEF has three components: the distributable amount of non-domestic rates, the total of relevant specific and supplementary grants and revenue support grant.

I intend to specify that the distributable amount from the non-domestic rating account should be £470·2 million on the basis that the Welsh national non-domestic rating multiplier for 1993-94 will be 44. I propose that relevant specific and supplementary grants towards local authority revenue expenditure should total £204·6 million.

I further propose that the total of revenue support grant should be £1,667·8 million of which £1,666·7 million should be paid to Welsh county and district councils and £1·1 million to certain specified bodies.

My officials are today writing to Welsh local authorities setting out my proposals for the component amounts of AEF and inviting their views. I am placing a copy of that consultation letter, which details the relevant specific and supplementary grants and the amounts to be paid to specified bodies, in the Library of the House.

If local authorities spend in line with the plans that I announced on 12 November they should be able to set council tax for a band C property of £232, which is £34 a year less than the average community charge payable by two adults for the current year, after taking into account relief through the community charge reduction scheme. It is also £95 less than the average domestic rates bill per ratepayer in Wales for 1989-90. The level of council tax local authorities set will depend on their budget decisions for 1993-94 and council tax standard spending can only be indicative, but I will use my capping powers, if necessary, to ensure that authorities set reasonable levels of tax. I will be announcing my proposals on capping shortly.

Around two thirds of properties in Wales fall in valuation bands A to C. Almost half of properties fall in bands A and B and their council tax bills should be proportionately less than £232. Single adult households will be entitled to a 25 per cent. discount and people on low incomes can qualify for council tax benefit. Those in receipt of income support will pay no council tax at all.

I have given careful consideration to the need to provide transitional relief for the introduction of the council tax, but I have come to the view that a transitional scheme cannot be justified.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is *(a)* the total current cost and *(b)* the average cost per applicant within each local authority in Wales for administering (i) housing benefit and (ii) community charge benefit; and what are the estimated total costs per local authority for administering such benefits following the introduction of competitive tendering into housing benefit administration.

Mr. Burt: I have been asked to reply.

The table shows the total costs to central Government of subsidising the administration of the housing benefit and community charge benefit schemes for each local authority in Wales and the average administrative cost per benefit applicant. This Department pays 50 per cent. of authorities' total estimated costs by way of a direct grant. The balance of expenditure not subsidised by specific grant is reflected in the revenue support grant arrangements which are the responsibility of the Welsh Office. The exception to this is the Development Board of Rural Wales which receives 100 per cent. direct subsidy from this Department.

We are not aware that any local authority in Wales has contracted out activities connected with the administration of housing benefit.

			Average cost (£/case)	
Authority	*Housing benefit subsidy* £	*Community charge benefit subsidy* £	*Housing benefit cases*	*Community charge benefit cases*
Aberconwy	98,834	76,688	32·22	14·58
Alyn and Deeside	93,632	81,072	25·47	14·27
Arfon	129,108	111,144	28·35	14·70
Blaenau Gwent	204,806	138,548	25·56	14·76
Brecknock	50,518	37,168	27·03	14·16
Cardiff	762,686	479,774	30·77	14·06
Carmarthen	79,320	58,874	28·73	13·87
Ceredigion	103,146	100,784	32·65	20·27
Colwyn	125,806	98,642	33·15	14·24
Cynon Valley	143,546	111,506	27·84	14·18
Delyn	98,290	87,708	24·62	14·20
Dinefwr	61,992	50,486	29·16	14·69
Dwyfor	49,600	40,748	33·47	14·79
Glyndwr	62,306	47,364	27·90	14·54
Islwyn	122,362	94,960	25·83	14·48
Llanelli	165,236	142,534	26·84	14·08
Lliw Valley	100,002	92,072	24·92	15·61
Meirionnydd	49,614	46,762	28·35	14·36
Merthyr Tydfil	170,222	112,572	26·37	13·70
Monmouth	93,912	74,722	27·41	14·06
Montgomeryshire	69,448	51,854	30·63	13·98
Neath	128,476	112,238	26·27	14·49
Newport	340,288	283,998	27·40	14·67
Ogwr	234,384	262,198	26·65	14·48
Port Talbot	111,084	87,342	24·95	13·79
Preseli	128,636	97,296	29·22	14·25
Radnor	36,994	22,558	33·54	13·91
Rhondda	153,892	175,436	27·14	18·33
Rhuddlan	139,754	94,254	36·04	13·35
Rhymney Valley	240,412	212,230	24·96	12·66
Rural Wales	12,606	0	25·78	0
South Pembrokeshire	80,622	59,992	28·72	13·95
Swansea	449,962	408,930	27·63	16·78
Taff-Ely	155,312	143,766	25·49	14·34
Torfaen	203,060	144,926	23·16	13·65
Vale of Glamorgan	200,788	144,940	31·45	13·95
Wrexham Maelor	277,442	231,806	25·34	15·06
Ynys Mon	134,508	119,108	26·12	13·61
Total	5,812,606	4,737,000	27·72	14·59

Note: Expenditure data are the 1992-93 administration subsidy figures for Wales, and include both the direct grant paid to authorities by the Department of Social Security and the amounts reflected in the Revenue Support Grant arrangements. The caseloads used in the calculation of the average amounts, are the averages of the four quarters (May 1991 to February 1992) figures as reported by local authorities. Estimates, based on average movements in national caseloads, have been included where authorities have not provided the necessary information.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has on the percentage of people in Britain who were living on or below the supplementary benefit level in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1987 and *(c)* 1990.

Mr. Burt: The Department no longer produces estimates of this kind, following the recommendations of the technical review of low income statistics in March 1988. A copy of this report can be found in the Library. Information for 1987 and 1990 is therefore not available and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost. Estimates for 1979 were published in "Low Income Families—1979", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the effects of the Child Support Act 1991 on the number of families entitled to *(a)* family credit and *(b)* income support distinguishing between lone-parent families and the families paying maintenance.

Mr. Burt: We estimate that in the long run increased payments of child maintenance under the Child Support Act will result in some 60,000 to 80,000 lone parents moving off income support. It is expected that the majority of these will move on to family credit. Of lone parents already on family credit, we estimate that around 10,000 will move off this benefit. These estimates are based on 1987-88-89 family expenditure survey data.

The entitlement to income support of absent parents with families living with them will not be affected. The family expenditure survey does not contain information on absent parents and therefore it is not possible to say how their entitlement to family credit will be affected by policy changes.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will list the main measures increasing regulation in any areas for which his Department has responsibility, which his Department has caused to be put into effect since 9 April;

(2) if he will list the main measures of deregulation, or simplification of regulation, which his Department has carried out, or caused to be carried out, since 9 April;

(3) which Minister in his Department is responsible for the oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters which fall within the responsibility of his Department.

Miss Widdecombe: My noble Friend, Lord Henley, is responsible for the oversight of deregulation within the Department of Social Security.

The potential impact on business and members of the public is taken into account in assessing any proposals for changes in policy and procedure. Moreover, the scope for deregulation and simplification is kept under constant review in the Department.

From April 1992 two changes have been made to the way normal earnings are assessed and verified in family credit making it easier and less time consuming for employers to provide earnings information. The Contributions Agency has a number of initiatives in hand to improve procedures affecting business and to help them towards a better understanding of the National Insurance scheme. A review has been completed of the definitions of earnings for PAYE and national insurance purposes, and its recommendations for simplifying the rules will be implemented from the start of the new tax year, 6 April 1993. Other items currently under review include the frequency with which some people need to renew their NI "exception" certificates, and certain procedures affecting people working abroad.

Since the last general election the Department has laid or made the regulations set out in the tables. Most of these are amendment or technical regulations which do not increase the total regulatory burden or business or the public.

1198—The Income Support (General) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1992

1312—The Social Security (Australia) Order 1992

1326—The Income-Related Benefits Amendment Regulations 1992

1431 (C.48)—The Child Support Act 1991 (Commencement No. 1) Order 1992

1440—The Social Security (Contributions) Amendment (No. 6) Regulations 1992

1531—The Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 1992

1532 (C.52)—The Social Security Act 1990 (Commencement No. 5) Order 1992

1555—The Occupational Pension Schemes (Deficiency on Winding Up etc.) Regulations 1992

1585—The Income-Related Benefits Schemes (Miscellaneous Amendments) (No. 2) Regulations 1992

1695—The Social Security (Widows Benefit and Retirement Pensions) (Amendment) Regulations 1992

1700—The Social Security Benefit (Persons Abroad) Amendment Regulations 1992

1735—The Social Security (Jersey and Guernsey) Order 1992

1812—The Child Support (Information, Evidence and Disclosure) Regulations 1992

1813—The Child Support (Maintenance Assessment Procedure) Regulations 1992

1814—The Council Tax Benefit (General) Regulations 1992

1815—The Child Support (Maintenance Assessments and Special Cases) Regulations 1992

1816—The Child Support (Arrears, Interest and Adjustment of Maintenance Assessments) Regulations 1992

1909—The Council Tax Benefit (Transitional) Order 1992

1938 (C.67)—The Child Support Act 1991 (Commencement No. 2) Order 1992

1989—The Child Support (Collection and Enforcement) Regulations 1992

2148—The Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefits (Miscellaneous Amendments) (No. 2) Regulations 1992

2149—The Social Fund Maternity and Funeral Expenses (General) Amendment Regulations 1992

2155—The income-related Benefits Schemes (Miscellaneous Amendments) (No. 3) Regulations 1992

2182—Fines (Deductions from Income Support) Regulations 1992

2322—The Social Fund Cold Weather Payments (General) Amendment Regulations 1992

2448—The Social Fund Cold Weather Payments (General) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1992

2595—The Social Security (Miscellaneous Provision Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1992

2640—The Child Support Commissioners (Procedure) Regulations 1992

2641—The Child Support Appeal Tribunals (Procedure) Regulations 1992

2642 (C.82)—The Finance (No. 2) Act 1992, Section 62, (Commencement) Order 1992

2643—The Child Support (Collection and Enforcement of Other Forms of Maintenance) Regulations 1992

2643 (C.83)—The Child Support Act 1991 (Commencement No. 3 and Transitional Provisions) Order 1992

2645—The Child Support (Maintenance Arrangements and Jurisdiction) Regulations 1992

2804—The Income Support (General) Amendment (No. 3) Regulations 1992

Unemployed Blind People

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he intends to amend the actively seeking work rules for unemployed blind people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has today laid regulations before Parliament which will help unemployed blind people who wish to undertake a training course in the use of a guide dog. Such courses significantly improve the employment prospects of blind people. The effect of the regulations will be to remove an anomaly in the actively seeking work rules which might have deterred some blind people from undertaking training. In particular, blind people who have taken a holiday for up to two weeks earlier in the year will, when the regulations come into effect on 17 December, be free to undertake a course without the risk of a benefit sanction.

Disability Working Allowance

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications have been received to date for the new disability working allowance; and how many of these have been approved for payment.

Mr. Scott: By 20 November 1992 the number of claims for disability working allowance received was 22,833 and the number of awards made was 2,938.

War Pensions

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases involving injury as a result of the mustard gas explosion in Bari harbour, Italy, in 1943 have been dealt with by his Department in each year since 1980; how many cases have resulted in war pensions being paid; how these pensions have been calculated; and what representations he has had to backdate payments to the period before 1986.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 4 February 1991 at column *63* and my reply of 14 February 1991, at columns *586-87*. Records of claims for war pension as a result of the Bari harbour incident have not been kept since the special tracing exercise conducted in 1986-87 and the statistical information now requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

War pensions are calculated by reference to the degree of disablement due to service assessed by making a comparison between the condition of the ex-service men or women and the condition of a normal healthy person of the same age and sex.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the application by Mr. Peter Lynch for his renewal of mobility allowance sent in on 17 June is to be dealt with; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of mobility allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Bob Cryer, dated 25 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking when the application by Mr. Peter Lynch for his renewal of Mobility Allowance (MobA) will be dealt with.

I should explain that a decision has now been made on Mr. Lynch's claim and this has been notified to him. I have replied to you separately in greater detail about this.

Clearly this case has not been handled with the efficiency I would expect and I offer my sincere apologies for the distress and inconvenience caused to your constituent. My letter of 19 October to all MPs explained the problems the Agency has faced since the introduction of Disability Living Allowance in April 1992, which replaced MobA and Attendance Allowance for those whose disabilities began before age 65, and set out the measures we have taken to resolve these problems successfully.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total amount of *(a)* employers' and *(b)* employees' national insurance contributions collected for each of the last 10 fiscal years expressed *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* at June 1992 prices and *(c)* as a percentage of total Exchequer income.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is given in the table.

	Contribution income (£ billion)		*June 1992 Price*[3]		*Percentage of Exchequer income*	
	Employers NICs	*Employees*[2] *NICs*	*Employers NICs*	*Employees NICs*	*Employers NICs*	*Employees NICs*
1982-83	12·02	9·20	20·39	15·61	9·77	7·48
1983-84	12·45	10·53	20·19	17·07	9·84	8·32
[1]1984-85	12·20	11·29	18·83	17·42	8·87	8·20
1985-86	12·53	12·11	18·34	17·72	8·38	8·10
1986-87	13·82	12·79	19·59	18·13	8·69	8·04
1987-88	15·33	14·13	20·60	18·99	9·03	8·32
1988-89	17·28	15·65	21·65	19·61	9·22	8·35
1989-90	18·50	14·74	21·77	17·34	9·06	7·22
1990-91	20·55	14·86	22·77	16·47	9·50	6·87
[4]1991-92	21·66	15·33	22·46	15·89	9·88	6·99

[1] Includes national insurance surcharge in the period to 1984-85.

[2] Includes national insurance contributions by self-employed for which separate data are only available from 1986-87.

[3] Treasury estimate of GDP deflator in the second quarter of 1992 used to covert current price to constant June 1992 prices.

[4] Estimate.

HEALTH

Romanian Adoptions

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for health (1) what her Department is doing to renegotiate the age limitation of 35 years with the Romanian adoption committee;

(2) if she will make a statement on the current state of negotiations with the Romanian adoption committee about adoption from Romania.

Mr. Yeo: The agreement between the Romanian Committee for Adoptions and the United Kingdom will be reviewed in the new year. Age limitation will be among the issues to be discussed.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many couples are on her Department's approved list for adoption from Romania; and how many of these couples have become ineligible because of the terms of the agreement with the Romanian adoption committee;

(2) if she will bring forward proposals to refund payments for approved home studies by couples who have become ineligible for adoption because of the terms of agreement with the Romanian adoption committee.

Mr. Yeo: Twenty one couples resident in England have been given approval to adopt children from Romania. Sixty-five couples, resident in the United Kingdom, were advised that they were ineligible following the agreement signed on 19 March 1992. The question of repayment for home study reports carried out for unsuccessful applicants is a matter for individual local authorities.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State Health (1) what action is now being taken to facilitate the adoption of named children from Romania;

(2) how many children were adopted into the United Kingdom from Romania *(a)* in 1990, *(b)* in 1991 and *(c)* since the signing of the agreement with the Romanian adoption committee.

Mr. Yeo: In 1990, a total of 13 children from Romania were granted entry clearance approval with an understanding that adoption proceedings would be undertaken in the United Kingdom. In 1991 there were 215 and in 1992 there were four such approvals. No children have as yet been admitted under the agreement procedures.

We have asked our ambassador in Bucharest to raise with the Romanian Government our concerns about the delays experienced in processing adoption applications of United Kingdom citizens.

NHS Targets

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 16 July, *Official Report*, column *910*, when baseline data for severe mental illness, gonorrhoea, under-16 conceptions and accidents for regional and district health targets will be ready.

Dr. Mawhinney: A supplement to the common data set was published in October. This provided baseline data for all the key areas in the White Paper except for suicide rates for the severely mentally ill and gonorrhoea. The latter are not routinely collected for local populations. The Department is working with the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on the feasibility of collecting the information on severe mental illness. Data about the incidence of gonorrhoea are not available by area of incidence. The Department is however examining the data aggregated by National Health Service regions in which clinics are situated to see whether they lend themselves to use for target setting at this level. A copy of the guide to the data file is in the Library.

Seasonal Affective Disorder

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research she has undertaken on the incidence of seasonal affective disorder; and what proposals she has to reduce its incidence.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department has undertaken no research into this disorder and has no plans to do so.

European Year of Older People

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the Prime Minister's answer of 13 July, *Official Report*, columns *430-31*, on the European year of the elderly, if she will outline her plans to focus on the housing needs of the elderly.

Mr. Yeo: My Department, in co-operation with the Department of Social Security, has overall co-ordinating responsibility for the European Year of Older People in the United Kingdom and we are now well advanced with our plans. The task group concerned with problems of housing, isolation and loneliness, information needs, transport and community care issues—social and environmental integration—has put forward a number of proposals to mark the year in the United Kingdom including: national conferences on social and environmental integration to be held in April and December 1993 together with local events and exhibitions throughout the year focusing on issues of housing, transport, community care and communications; a European tenant exchanges scheme to give older people a wider knowledge of what is, or might be, available to them in sheltered housing; a study by Anchor housing trust entitled "Available Options", a review of the developments in public policy in the areas of housing, care, income and savings for older people.

The Department of the Environment will also be issuing a revised edition of their publication "Your Home in Retirement—Housing Advice for Older People".

Drugs

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what categories of drugs are currently on the limited list; and what proposals she has for adding to the list.

Dr. Mawhinney: The limited list applies to drugs which may be prescribed only in specified circumstances and currently contains five items. These are Acetylcysteine Granules, Carbocisteine, Clobazam, Cynocobalamin and Pregnavite Forte F.

The selected list scheme applies to categories of drugs from which only a selected number of products can be prescribed under the National Health Service. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 12 November, the scheme is to be extended from the current seven categories to include a further 10 categories.

The current categories are:

Analgesics for mild to moderate pain
Indigestion remedies
Laxatives
Cough and cold remedies
Vitamins
Tonics
Benzodiazepine sedatives and tranquillisers.

The new categories are:

Anti-diarrhoeal drugs
Drugs for allergic disorders
Hypnotics and anxiolytics
Appetite suppressants
Drugs for vaginal and vulval conditions
Contraceptives
Drugs used in anaemia
Topical antirheumatics
Drugs acting on the ear and nose
Drugs acting on the skin.

In making the regulations required to bring particular drugs within the scope of the limited list and selected list arrangements, my right hon. Friend will continue to act on the advice of the Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs.

Solvent Abuse

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will place in the Library copies of the evaluation report on her Department's recent public awareness campaign on solvent abuse.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have today placed a copy of the report "Research into Parents' Attitudes to Drugs and Solvents" in the Library.

Personal Social Services

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what annual capital guidelines and supplementary credit approvals she is making available for the personal social services for 1993-94.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Annual capital guidelines of £122·5 million will be available for 1993-94, a real terms increase of 6·5 per cent. Supplementary credit approvals will again be available for mental illness—£10·5 million —information technology for community care—£10·2 million—and AIDS/HIV services—£3 million. In addition, local authorities will be able to use certain receipts from the sale of capital assets including additional receipts available because of the relaxation of the rules on the use of capital receipts announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 12 November.

Independent Living Fund

Mr Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what resources will be provided for local authorities as a consequence of the changes to the independent living fund announced on 24 November.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In addition to the £539 million I announced on 2 October for the community care special transitional grant, we have decided to allocate extra resources to local authorities to enable them to play a full part in meeting the needs of severely disabled people. I am therefore increasing the community care special transitional grant by over £26 million to £565 million in 1993-94. In 1994-95, the grant will be increased by £64 million to £716 million, and in 1995-96 it will rise by £100 million to £618 million. The detailed arrangements and distribution of the resources will be discussed with the local authority associations.

Pharmaceutical Investment

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for health (1) what assessment her Department has made of the likely effect of the proposed extension of the limited list on medical research investment by United Kingdom-based pharmaceutical companies;

(2) what assessment her Department has made of the likely effect of the proposed extension of the limited list on the United Kingdom pharmaceutical industry's international competitiveness;

(3) what assessment her Department has made of the likely effect of the proposed extension of the limited list on attracting new inward investment in the United Kingdom pharmaceutical research and production.

Dr. Mawhinney: The selected list scheme provides that particular drugs may not be prescribed under the national health service where there are effective alternatives available at lower cost. It mirrors measures being taken throughout Europe to limit rapidly rising drugs bills. The relative competitiveness of the United Kingdom pharmaceutical industry and decisions on investment in medical and pharmaceutical research and production depend on many factors in both the United Kingdom and other key pharmaceutical markets. It is not possible to identify specifically the impact of the proposed extension of the selected list arrangement separately from that of other changes in both the United Kingdom and other countries.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made of the likely effect of the proposed extension of the limited list on employment in the research-based sector of the United Kingdom pharmaceutical industry.

Dr. Mawhinney: Following my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's announcement on 12 November, the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs will make recommendations about which products within the additional therapeutic categories may not be prescribed under the NHS. The companies concerned may wish to make representations to the committee before it makes its final recommendations. Until decisions on the individual products have been taken, it is not possible to assess whether there will be any effect on employment in the United Kingdom pharmaceutical industry.

Chemical Entity Medicines

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many product licences for innovative new chemical entity medicines have been granted by the Medicines Control Agency in the seven therapeutic categories currently covered by the original limited list regulations since 1985.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on product licences granted by the United Kingdom licensing authority is as follows:

	Number
Indigestion remedies	1
Laxatives	1
Vitamins	1

Tomlinson Report

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy, in her decisions on the Tomlinson report, to require that no beds will be closed in London before steps are taken to improve community health services.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have made clear that the Government's response to the Tomlinson report will be made early in the new year. Clearly a key element will be to ensure that the shift in the balance of care from acute to primary and community health services is carefully planned and co-ordinated.

Interleukin-6

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) pursuant to her answer of 30 October, *Official Report*, column 942, what requests have now been made to Coopers and Lybrand in connection with the interleukin-6 research project; if she will make it her policy to publish the result of reports from auditors into the interleukin-6 project; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will ensure that any inquiry carried out on behalf of United Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust into the interleukin-6 research project should take evidence from all relevant witnesses; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I understand that the United Leeds Teaching Hospitals National Health Service Trust has no plans to institute a formal inquiry into the interleukin-6 research project which is primarily a matter for the university of Leeds.

At no time have the auditors employed by the United Leeds teaching hospitals national health service trust or the then Leeds Western health authority made a report in connection with the interleukin-6 research project. However the trust has now asked Coopers and Lybrand to look at the feasibility of estimating any possible loss to the NHS of the interleukin-6 research project.

Heartstart 3000 Machine

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what investigations have taken place into the Heartstart 3000 machine used by emergency ambulance crews; how effective this equipment is; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has conducted a three-day comparative trial using a front line ambulance and defibrillators from four manufacturers. The ambulance was driven around a set course, over rough ground, along motorways and past power stations, and the ecg recordings were compared. The Laerdal Heartstart 3000 was entirely satisfactory, as were all the others.

In addition to the trial described, a full technical evaluation has also been carried out. The equipment was found to be satisfactory.

Newcastle General Hospital

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what weight she gave to the amount of provision for *(a)* general medical, *(b)* surgical, *(c)* paediatric and *(d)* geriatric beds at Newcastle general hospital in her decision to turn down its application for trust status; and what assessment was made of the relative cost per bed of alternative local provision.

Dr. Mawhinney: Newcastle general hospital applied for National Health Service trust status in 1990. In assessing that application the then Secretary of State for Health, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) considered the views expressed in public consultation and the advice of independent financial management consultants. The pattern of service provision is primarily a matter for the local district health authority, as the main puchaser of health services for the local population.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations her Department has initiated between the regional health authority, the management and senior clinicians at Newcastle general hospital, the Comunity Health Council and local general practitioners concerning the future of Newcastle general hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East can expect a reply or acknowledgement to his letter dated 26 October, about Newcastle general hospital.

Mr. Sackville: An acknowledgment was sent on 5 November, the day following receipt of the letter. I sent a full reply on 24 November.

Relate

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to increase funding to the Relate marriage guidance organisation.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

I regret that there can be no automatic assurance for Relate or any other marriage guidance organisation which the Home Office funds about the future level of support.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Aircraft Industry

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many people were employed in the aircraft industry in *(a)* 1980 and *(b)* 1991.

Mr. Sainsbury: The annual census of production shows UK aerospace employment in 1980 as 198,300 and the provisional figures for 1991, which may be subject to revision at a later date, as 166,000.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 4 November, *Official Report*, column *310*, how many individuals from the firms listed by him are currently on secondment to his Department.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Department currently has two secondees from one of the firms listed in the answer given on 4 November. A further three secondees are from two firms the predecessors of which are listed in the answer.

Timber

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of the timber imported from the Philippines is categorised as *(a)* rough sawn and raw logs and *(b)* semi-manufactured; what criteria his Department uses to make such categorisations; what differences there are between United Kingdom criteria and Philippine criteria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Rough-sawn and raw logs accounted for 1.3 per cent of total timber imports from the Philippines in 1991. Semi-manufactured timber accounted for 98.7 per cent. of imports over the same period.

The United Kingdom statistics follow the United Nations' standard international trade classification system which is also used by the Philippines.

Companies House

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list which directors of private companies act as advisers to Companies House.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Companies House steering board advises on strategic priorities for Companies House. Its full membership was set out in the 1991-92 annual report and accounts, which has been laid before the House. The private sector members are:

Mr. David Eggleton—Chairman, Cranfield IT Institute

Mr. Iain Ferguson—Chairman, Plant Breeding International

Mr. Tony Glaze—Managing Director, Group Personnel

David Young—Finance Director, John Lewis Partnership

Food Imports

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish details of the current level of food imports into the United Kingdom from other EC member countries by *(a)* country of origin and *(b)* type of foodstuffs.

Mr. Needham: Details of the current level of food imports as requested are given in table II of "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", which is available in the Library of the House.

Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide a list of the published inspectors' reports in which the inspectors have urged him to ban auditors from selling non-auditing services to their audit clients.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I do not recall there being any such urging by inspectors.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to ask the Financial Reporting Review Panel to examine a sample of quoted companies' accounts for compliance with the Companies Acts' requirements.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: None.

Halocarbon-free Technologies

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action is currently being undertaken by his Department to encourage industry to develop halocarbon-free technologies for appliances to be sold to the mass markets; and if he will make it his policy to establish an incentive scheme to assist industry with this process.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is in close touch with representatives of the sectors of industry concerned to ensure that they are fully informed of the intention to phase out the production of halocarbons, and the need to develop alternatives. The DTI, together with the Department of Environment, already operates schemes offering financial support for the research, development and dissemination of sound environmental technologies, and the replacement of halocarbons is a priority area within those schemes.

Balance of Trade

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the most up-to-date details of the United Kingdom balance of trade with each of the other member countries of the European Community.

Mr. Needham: Information on United Kingdom visible trade is regularly published in "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", which is available in the Library of the House.

Maxwell Group

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the business connections of the inspectors appointed to investigate the Maxwell group of companies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The inspectors appointed to investigate the affairs and membership of Mirror Group Newspapers plc under sections 432(2) and 442 of the Companies Act 1985 are Mr. J. L. Thomas QC and Mr. R. T. Turner FCA, a partner to Messrs Neville Russell, chartered accountants.

Post Office

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the net contribution to general Government accounts made by the Post Office group of companies for each of the last five years; and what contribution is projected for the current year and for each of the following three years.

Mr. Leigh: The actual and projected net contributions through the external financing requirement from the Post Office group of companies are as follows:

	£ million
Actual	
1987-88	80·0
1988-89	102·0
1989-90	101·9
1990-91	nil
1991-92	74·0
Projected	
1992-93	66·0
1993-94	181·0
1994-95	176·0
1995-96	158·0

Environmental Protection

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the ratio of imports to exports of environmental protection technologies in *(a)* 1980 and *(b)* the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Eggar: Environmental protection technology is not a stand-alone technology but a term that can be applied to elements of a wide range of technological processes and products. As trade statistics are compiled by product area, it is not currently possible to identify separately the value or quantity of environmental import and export.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the proportion of the worldwide market for environmental protection technologies supplied by each of the Organisation for Economic Protection and Development nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Environmental protection technology is not a stand-alone technology but a term that can be applied to elements of a wide range of technological processes and products. Trade statistics are prepared on a product basis throughout the OECD countries; it is therefore not possible to identify separately the proportion of environmental protection technology supplied by each of the OECD nations. Similarly, it is not possible to identify the size of the world market for such technology with any accuracy.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has held with the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment concerning exports of environmental protection technologies; what assessment he has made of the Advisory Council on Science and Technology report on the worldwide market for environmental protection technologies; what plans he has to promote exports of environmental protection technologies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have recently received the second report from the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment (ACBE) which contained a number of valuable and constructive ideas aimed both at business and Government. One recommendations was that a joint environmental markets unit should be established to catalyse planning and marketing of environmental opportunities, both at home and overseas, to companies. The Advisory Committee on Science and Technology report also intensified the need to help industry to exploit its environmental expertise more effectively. I was therefore happy to accept the ACBE recommendation and the unit, staffed jointly by DTI and DoE officials, has already been set up.

In addition to the new unit, the DTI is hosting a technology partnership initiative conference in March 1993. This conference is designed to enable developing countries to share the benefits of technology in partnership with British Companies.

External Trade Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will bring up to date table F2 of the monthly review of external trade statistics to take account of changes in the exchange rate since the last date on which the country figures were available; and if he will give an up-to-date figure for the weighted average excluding the United Kingdom.

Mr. Needham: The information requested will be published in table F2 of the monthly review of external trade statistics as soon as it becomes available. Data are currently available up to and including the first quarter of 1992. These were published in the November edition of the above publication, which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Machine Tools

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the total sales in 1992 prices of British machine tools for each year since 1979.

Mr. Needham: The information is not available at 1992 prices. Sales at 1985 prices are shown in the table.

	Sales at current prices[1] *£ million*	*Producer Price Index (1985=100)*	*Sales at 1985 prices*[1] *£ million*
	(1)	(2)	(1)/(2)
1979	664	63·0	1,054
1980	705	73·6	958
1981	565	77·3	731
1982	598	82·6	724
1983	562	87·1	645
1984	683	92·4	739
1985	822	100·0	822
1986	840	104·7	802
1987	877	108·1	811
1988	1,118	113·8	982
1989	1,162	120·3	966
1990	1,201	127·8	940
1991	[2]960	132·0	[2]727

Source: Business Monitor PQ3221.

[1] These figures represent the total sales of principal products of the machine tools industry and include parts and accessories.

[2] Provisional.

Export Controls

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of trade if he will make a statement on the improvements instituted in export control procedures for sensitive technologies since November 1990.

Mr. Needham: The improvements instituted in export control procedures for sensitive technologies since November 1990 are as follows:

the establishment of a new section within the Export Control Organisation to process export licence applications for sensitive destination. The identification of sensitive destinations embrace a wide range of policy interests and concerns and is kept under regular review. The sensitive destinations are primarily of concern for chemical and biological weapons, nuclear weapons and missile delivery purposes;

the introduction of revised procedures including:

(i) a requirement in all cases for comprehensive documentation covering the capability of goods to be exported to accompany the export licence application.

(ii) detailed technical assessment of all licence applications for sensitive destinations;

(iii) a requirement in all cases for a full and unambiguous statement of the intended end-use and end-user;

(iv) a requirement for rating requests to be made in writing. Exporters are asked when making enquiries to write to ECO;

(v) revision of the rating request form. Exporters must make clear if the goods are for military chemical, nuclear or missile applications;

(vi) revision to the export licence application form to incorporate an explicit question on whether the goods are for use for military purposes;

the extension of computerisation within the ECO to improve the capability for processing export licence applications;

the publication of more detailed and comprehensive guidance to exporters in guidance notes accompanying application forms and in literature describing in detail the purpose of controls and their operation;

the introduction in December 1990 of an "end-use" control which places a legal responsibility on the exporter to take all reasonable steps to ensure that goods are not being exported for use for CBW purposes, and making it an offence to export goods without a licence whether the exporter knows or suspects they are for use for such purposes. This was extended in 1991 to cover nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems;

developing closer links and improving co-ordination with and among other Government Departments which advise DTI on licence applications.

Piper Alpha

Dr. Godman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade pursuant to his answer of 19 November, *Official Report*, column *343*, in respect of the conditions attached to the Piper Alpha abandonment programme, what is *(a)* the contractor employed in the recovery of the debris from the seabed and *(b)* the type of vessels engaged therein; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Trawling for debris has been carried out by SFF Services Ltd, a commercial enterprise owned by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, using the trawlers Constant Friend and Starlight. Debris too large or too heavy to be lifted in a trawl has been recovered by Rockwater Ltd. using the diving support vessel Rockwater 2.

Recovery of remaining debris in the 500 to 1,500 m annulus is scheduled to be completed during the second quarter of 1993. Invitations to tender for this work will be issued in the new year.

Internal Market Council

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Internal Market Council on 10 November.

Mr. Needham: I chaired the Internal Market Council on 10 November. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage also attended the Council.

The Council reached agreement on three important items. A resolution was agreed emphasising the importance of ensuring that the single market will work in practice; measures covering trade in cultural goods were agreed with amendments which meet essential UK interests; and a future medicines licensing system which will compete the single market in pharmaceuticals now seems certain to be agreed during our presidency.

The Council adopted our presidency resolution identifying steps which the Commission, member states, and the Council need to take to ensure the effective working of the single market. The resolution stresses the importance of even implementation and enforcement of single market legislation across the Community, and encourages co-operation between administrations to achieve this. Member states have through this resolution, underlined the importance of working to fulfil all single market obligations. The Commission will publish annual reports on the working of the single market.

Political agreement was reached on the directive, and the regulation on cultural objects. We won important concessions on three issues of immediate concern to the Government—a definition of "public collections", a legal base on which to license goods coming from outside the Community after 1 January 1993, and a practical solution to the requirement to license archaeological items of limited importance, regardless of monetary value. A satisfactory resolution of each of these was agreed for inclusion in the texts of the proposals. In addition, the burden of proof in Article 10 of the directive is now clearly stated as being

"governed by the legislation of the requested Member State".

Broad political agreement was achieved, subject only to waiting reserves, on future medicines licensing systems. Final agreement on the proposed regulation and three directives is now expected to be reached this year.

Four intellectual property items were taken by the Council. Discussion on the proposed Community trade marks regulation focused particularly on the language regime for the Community Trade Marks Office operations. No final agreement was reached, but we still hope that decisions can be reached on the proposal at the December Council. This Council had a short orientation debate on the Commission's draft directive on harmonisation of the duration of copyright and we hope that decisions can be reached on the draft at the December Council. The Council also noted, and remitted for further work, a Commission paper identifying a series of principles intended to ensure that intellectual property rights are not infringed by the work of international standardisation bodies. Finally, the Commission expressed its intention to bring forward proposals for a blank tape levy.

A brief discussion of the European company statute proposal achieved progress on some technical points, but confirmed that substantial problems still remain. There was no discussion of the linked worker participation directive.

Finally, the Council agreed final adoption of the third life assurance, and vehicle noise type approval directives.

European Space Agency

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the outcome of the ministerial council of the European Space Agency held in Granada on 9 and 10 November.

Mr. Leigh: I am pleased to report that Ministers at the European Space Agency meeting at Granada adopted a new, well-balanced, long-term plan which sets the course of European space activities until the end of this century.

The main achievement for the United Kingdom was an agreement to proceed with the full development of a major new Earth observation mission, known as Envisat-1. This mission will be flown on the British-led polar platform in 1998 and will carry the British-developed advanced synthetic aperture radar and a variety of environmental research instruments. This mission will provide an important contribution to our understanding of global environmental and climate issues and will lead to opportunities for commercial exploitation of the data in the future. Preparations will also be made for an operational meteorological mission, using the polar platform, to be carried out in collaboration with Eumetsat.

The conference also considered ESA's manned space programmes. The Hermes project will not proceed as planned but instead will be replaced by a three-year programme to study alternative options in collaboration with the USA and Russia. Other programmes which were approved were the Columbus manned attached laboratory and the data relay satellite system.

Amongst proposed future programmes is a study of options for future re-usable launchers such as the horizontal take-off and landing launches.

On a proposal from the United Kingdom, Ministers welcomed the work carried out to date by the Committee on Earth Observations Satellites (CEOS), aimed at co-ordinating the Earth Observation activities of the world's space agencies and recognised that CEOS and other international bodies could in time contribute to the emergence of a world space agency.

The result of this conference is a space programme with a much better balance between the applications of space and infrastructure programmes and with a greater emphasis on international collaboration. The United Kingdom welcomes ESA's drive to achieve effective collaboration both within Europe and with its international partners, including the USA and Russia.

New Businesses

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the numbers of new business start-ups for each year since 1980.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* The best available guide to trends in numbers of business starts comes from VAT data. The number of businesses newly registered for VAT for each year since 1980 are given in the table.

Registrations: 1980-1991

Thousand

	Registrations
1980	158
1981	152
1982	166
1983	180
1984	182
1985	183
1986	192
1987	210
1988	240
1989	256
1990	239
1991	206

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which Minister in his Department is responsible for the oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters which fall within the responsibility of his Department.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I am the Minister responsible for deregulation within this Department. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is the Cabinet Minister with overall responsibility for the Government's deregulation initiative.

Mr. Sproat: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken since 9 April to encourage other Government departments to examine the possibility of deregulation or simplification of matters for which they have responsibility; what the results of these steps has been; what requirement he has now laid, or is about to lay, on Departments to discover and publish the cost of any new and old regulations for which they are responsible; what plans he has to increase the deregulatory momentum of the Government; how he proposes to monitor these matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has set in course a number of initiatives to increase and monitor the momentum of the Government's deregulation initiative. In this he has the full support of the Prime Minister.

All Departments have been asked to identify primary and secondary legislation and forms affecting business. Over 6,000 pieces of legislation and over 2,500 forms have been identified so far.

Some studies of individual businesses are currently underway to assess the cumulative burdens on business. The results of these two exercises will be used by Departments to draw up a prioritised programme of review.

On 30 June, I announced nine pilot local authority/business partnerships, a major initiative to improve the way local authorities apply regulations to business.

All Departments are required to conduct a compliance cost assessment on regulatory proposals which would impact on business. When these are published, copies will be placed in the Library of the House.

Wages Councils

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she reached a decision on the timing of the introduction of legislation to implement her proposed abolition of wage councils.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Queen's speech announced our intention to introduce a Bill to continue the reform of industrial relations in this parliamentary Session and we made it clear that we would introduce the Bill at the earliest possible opportunity.

Job Vacancies

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current number of job vacancies in the east midlands.

Mr. McLoughlin: On the seasonally adjusted basis, there were 6,000 unfilled vacancies registered at jobcentres in the east midlands region, in October 1992. Jobcentre vacancies do not represent the total number of vacancies available.

Asbestosis

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment is she will make a statement on the work of the Health and Safety Executive in relation to asbestosis.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive enforces a comprehensive package of legislation designed to protect workers from contracting asbestosis and other asbestos-related diseases. The asbestos regulations and their associated approved codes of practice—ACoPs—have recently been revised to implement three EC directives; they will come into force on 1 January 1993. The changes to the ACoPs introduce technical revisions to improve overall standards for all work with asbestos, especially the treatment and removal of asbestos insulation.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the numbers of employees in employment in manufacturing *(a)* in total, *(b)* by sector and *(c)* by standard region in 1979 and for the latest available date; and what was the percentage change in each case.

Mr. McLouglin: The information is shown in the table.

Employees in employment in manufacturing not seasonally adjusted

Thousands

Region	*June 1979*	*June 1992*	*Per cent. change June 1979 to June 1992*
(a) United Kingdom			
Total	7,253	4,589	−37
(b) Metal manufacturing and chemicals	1,147	635	−45
Metal goods, engineering and vehicles	3,374	2,030	−40
Other manufacturing	2,732	1,924	−30
(c) South East (inc. Greater London)	1,871	1,115	−40
East Anglia	206	165	−20
South West	439	323	−27
West Midlands	985	569	−42
East Midlands	606	445	−27
Yorkshire and Humberside	708	460	−35
North West	971	572	−41
North	410	254	−38
England	6,188	3,903	−37
Wales	315	220	−30
Scotland	604	368	−39
Northern Ireland	146	970	−33

Job Club, Burslem Methodist Mission

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the reasons for the closure of the job club held at Burslem Methodist mission; and if she will review the decision to withdraw funding.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mike Fogden to Ms. Joan Walley, dated 26 November 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the closure of the Jobclub held at Burslem Methodist Mission. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Jobclubs continue to be both popular with the people who join and an effective way of helping them to find work. Since Jobclubs were introduced in 1984, 410,000 people have been helped to find work, and just over 130,000 others have gone on to other positive outcomes such as training. Following the announcement made by Secretary of State earlier this month, a substantial expansion of the programme will take place in 1993/94. We will then be able to help some 295,000 people, more than ever before.

To ensure that the funds available to operate Jobclub are used in the most effective way, decisions about the size and shape of the programme are taken by my area managers. They have the responsibility to target the resources available in a way which will help the greatest number of unemployed jobseekers. Because there was under utilization of capacity, Mrs. Joy Cross, my Area Manager for Staffordshire, decided to consolidate provision in the area and to close the Jobclub at the Burslem Methodist Mission operated by BTG Training and Consultancy. This decision was not taken lightly as we recognise that BTG is an organisation with which we had a good working relationship.

Alternative places will be offered to members in the remaining Jobclub in Burslem or, if preferred, in Hanley or Kidsgrove. Fares to attend Jobclubs are refunded in full to those who attend so no one will incur extra expenditure as a result of the changes.

In addition to taking members from the Jobclub which is closing, the remaining Jobclubs still have enough capacity to meet the expected demand for places from unemployed people for the foreseeable future.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Canada Geese

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to prevent agricultural damage in England caused by Canada geese; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Farmers are free to control geese during the open season using methods not prohibited by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. During the close season, from 1 February to 31 August, the Ministry may grant licences to permit the control of Canada geese in order to prevent serious agricultural damage. Advice to farmers on the most suitable and effective methods of control of Canada geese is available from the Agricultural Development Advisory Service, the Ministry's wildlife advisers. Ministry funded research into more effective control of Canada geese has developed a simple method of making Canada goose eggs unviable without causing undue suffering to the adult birds. Research is also being undertaken on the population dynamics and movements of Canada geese to provide background for future studies on the effects of various control methods on population size and movement.

Hens

Mr. Reston: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will take steps, along with his EC colleagues, to ban the rearing and keeping of hens in battery cages.

Mr. Soames: It is already the Government's policy that the current battery cage design, in which only feeding and drinking facilities are provided, must be phased out on a Community basis. We will press for this when the Commission's proposals for the revision of the battery hens directive and new standards for hens kept in alternative systems are negotiated.

Milk Sampling

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to increase the charges to producer-retailers of his Ministry's milk sampling, in percentage and cash terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 6 November, *Official Report* columns *418-19*. The £16—34 per cent.—increase in the charge for milk sampling and testing takes effect on 27 November 1992.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to end the duplication of milk sampling by his Ministry and environmental health authorities.

Mr. Curry: There is no duplication. The Ministry is responsible for the on farm sampling, and subsequent testing of untreated milk. This work is undertaken by the Agricultural Development Advisory Service. Local authority environmental health officers are responsible for checking the quality of all milk once it has left the farm. This involves some sampling and testing. In rare instances when milk is suspected of causing food poisoning they may also take a sample of milk on dairy farms in the course of their investigations.

Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the role of the wildlife incident investigation scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Under the wildlife incident investigation scheme, inquiries are made into reports of suspected poisoning by pesticides that involve vertebrate wildlife, chiefly birds and mammals, companion animals and honeybees. The results are used in reviews of the conditions of approval of pesticide products. Evidence of misuse or abuse may also contribute to prosecutions or other enforcement action.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was (i) the total cost, adjusted to 1992 prices of the wildlife incident investigation scheme for England and Wales and (ii) the proportion of the total cost contributed by the agrochemical industry levy, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Soames: The costs of the wildlife incident investigation scheme in England and Wales chargeable to the agrochemical levy adjusted to 1992 prices are as follows:

	£
1988[1]	630,000
1989[1]	465,000
1990-91 (15 months)	744,000
1991-92	815,000
1992-93 (F)	770,000

[1] Includes figures for Scotland.

Other costs associated with the wildlife incident investigation scheme are borne by departments, but except for 1992-93, at £374,000, are not readily identifiable.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total cost to date of the compensation paid to farmers and associated costs for the disposal of animal carcases from the outbreak of BSE in 1986.

Mr. Soames: Expenditure recorded from August 1988, when the slaughter with compensation policy was introduced, until the end of October 1992 is £74·4 million.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of diary fars have experienced at least one case of BSE in *(a)* Dyfed, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Great Britain.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is as follows:

Dyfed Per cent.	*Wales Per cent.*	*Great Britain Per cent.*
30·89	28·48	39·40

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of confirmed cases of BSE to date during 1992, and the total number of cattle diagnosed that were *(a)* under two years of age, *(b)* aged two to three years, *(c)* aged three to four years, *(d)* aged five to six years and *(e)* aged seven or more years.

Mr. Soames: The information requested for cases notified in Great Britain in 1992 by age at onset of clinical symptoms is as follows:

	Number notified	*Number confirmed*	*Outstanding results*
Less than 2 years	39	0	3
2 and less than 3 years	247	19	29
3 and less than 4 years	1,782	1,058	197
4 and less than 5 years	13,339	11,586	369
5 and less than 6 years	9,232	7,570	403
6 and less than 7 years	3,719	2,779	164
7 years and over	2,383	1,309	87
Unknown	6,199	1,995	3,252
	36,940	26,316	

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cattle born after the ban on ruminant protein in cattle feed was introduced in July 1988 have since died of BSE; and if he will provide these figures for every month during 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Soames: To 19 November 1992, BSE has been confirmed in 599 cattle born after 18 July 1988. Because of the delay caused by the necessary confirmation procedures, these cases are listed by month of birth rather than month of confirmation. Some of these cases are still under investigation for details of their history.

	Number
1988	
July	36
August	204
September	184
October	95
November	39
December	20
	578
1989	
January	7
February	2
March	1
April	2
June	4
July	1
August	1
September	3
	21

At its meeting in October, the Tyrrell committee considered the appearance of cases in animals born since the ban and concluded that all the evidence pointed towards feed being the origin of such cases, and that there was no evidence of any other source.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total number of confirmed cases of BSE in Britain for each year up to 1991 and for each month during 1992.

Mr. Soames: The number of confirmed cases of BSE in Great Britain since the disease was made notifiable on 21 June 1988, by date of report is as follows:

	Number
1988	2,185
1989	7,136
1990	14,180
1991	25,025

	Number
January 1992	3,511
February 1992	2,971
March 1992	3,277
April 1992	3,040
May 1992	2,264
June 1992	2,495
July 1992	2,555
August 1992	2,676
September 1992	2,366
October 1992	1,161

1992 figures are incomplete due to the time between cases being reported and confirmation by histopathology.

Apples (Dumping)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has made to *(a)* the French authorities and *(b)* the European Commission on dumping of apples from France in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: I know of no illegal aids to justify any representations. If evidence were presented to me I would make the appropriate representations.

Regulation Measures

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the main measures increasing regulation in any area for which his Department has responsibility, which his Department has caused to be put into effect since 9 April.

Mr. Curry: Much of the legislation handled by my Department is governed by the EC. No Bills of a regulatory nature have been enacted by this Department since the last general election.

ENVIRONMENT

Sellafield

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the facilities at Sellafield to treat the spent nuclear fuel containing highly radioactive isotopes currently on site will be started.

Mr. Maclean: Facilities at Sellafield presently reprocess spent Magnox fuel and have done so since the early 1960s. The thermol oxide reprocessing plant facilities will not start the commercial reprocessing of oxide fuel until the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate is satisfied with the safety of the plant and the regulatory authorities have no objections on waste management grounds.

Water

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce new legal standards on phosphates in water.

Mr. Maclean: The Government have no immediate plans to introduce new legal standards on phosphates in water.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what were the planned lead times between the laying of the regulations under part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 concerning water licensing and the implementation of the licensing system *(a)* when the Act received Royal Assent, *(b)* when the consultation papers were issued in August and (c) what is the proposed lead time now;

(2) when he will bring before Parliament regulations under part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 introducing a new waste management licensing system.

Mr. Maclean: The waste management licensing system will be implemented by means of secondary legislation and guidance issued by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. It was not therefore necessary to establish an implementation timetable at the time the Act received Royal Assent. The Government published a legislation timetable on 25 June 1991 which envisaged laying regulations on waste management licensing in December 1992 to come into effect in April 1993. Consultation is proceeding on the complex and detailed measures needed to implement the new system and the resulting regulations will be laid before Parliament as soon as possible; it is still my intention to bring the licensing system into force on 1 April 1993.

Industrial Effluent

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward legislation to establish a statutory register indicating the levels of industrial waste released into sewers through the conclusion of trade effluent consents/agreements between industrial companies and water authorities.

Mr. Maclean: Under the Water Industry Act 1991, details of consents for discharges to sewers issued by sewerage undertakers are available for public inspection. Under the arrangements for integrated pollution control of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, controlled releases will be subject to monitoring, upon which, as a condition of authorisation, data must be supplied to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, and placed on public registers.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he and his Department have had in the last six months with the council of the Association for the Conservation of Energy on energy efficiency matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I met the council of the Association for the Conservation of Energy on 15 October, and my officials also keep in touch with the association to exchange views on a range of energy efficiency matters. I value the contribution that the association makes to the development of policy and the way it represents the views of its members.

Recycling

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish a United Kingdom-wide target for the recycling of 25 per cent. of all household waste by the year 2000.

Mr. Maclean: The Government have already set a target of recycling half of the country's recyclable household waste by the end of the century, in the 1990 White Paper on the environment, "This Common Inheritance" (Cm 1200). In the White Paper, it was estimated that this equates to about 25 per cent. of total household waste.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's latest estimate of the amount of domestic waste being recycled; and if he will list the six best and the six worst local authorities in this respect.

Mr. Maclean: The Government's statistical report "The UK Environment", published in October 1992, estimates that about 5 per cent. of household waste is currently recycled. More detailed information is not currently available but local authorities have been asked to provide it in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's new statistical returns on waste collection and disposal. The results of those returns should be available early in 1993.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to limit the use of hydrochlorofluorocarbons, methyl bromide and methyl chloride to applications in which effective recycling can be guaranteed.

Mr. Maclean: Negotiations are currently under way into the renegotiation of the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer, where controls on HCFCs and methyl bromide will be discussed. I understand that all uses of methyl chloride are as feedstock, where the substance is destroyed.

135. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to encourage the newspaper and textile industries to promote and participate in recyling schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The newspaper and textiles industries already promote and participate in recyling schemes throughout the country. In particular, the Newspaper Publishers Association agreed in 1991, after discussions with the Government, to aim to increase the proportion of waste paper used in newsprint consumed in the United Kingdom to at least 40 per cent. by the end of the decade. I am also aware that the textile reclamation industry has been actively seeking to increase recycling rates in association with local authorities.

The measures being taken by the Government to set the right economic and legislative framework for recycling, set out in "This Common Inheritance: the Second Year Report" (Cm 2068), will encourage further activity by those industries.

Waste Carriers

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of *(a)* registered waste carriers, *(b)* applicants for registration not yet processed and *(c)* applications where the applicant or other relevant person had an unspent conviction for prescribed offences under the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not held by my Department. Each waste regulation authority is required to maintain a register, available for public inspection, which contains, inter alia, details of registered waste carriers and any unspent convictions they may have for prescribed offences.

Emission Levels

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining the progress made to date within the United Kingdom in implementing the UN Commission for Europe convention on long-range transboundary air pollution relating to nitrogen oxides.

Mr. Maclean: Under the 1988 Sofia protocol to the convention, the United Kingdom is committed to bringing emissions of oxides of nitrogen (NOx) back down to their 1987 levels by 1994. Measures being taken which will help to meet this target include the implementation of tough new emissions standards for most road vehicles, of the new controls on industrial emissions under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and of the EC large combustion plants directive. Further details are given in the Environment White Paper 1990, "This Common Inheritance" (Cm 1200), and the first and second year reports of the Paper (Cm 1655 and 2068), copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress made by his Department in fulfilling the obligations on emission levels imposed by the EC large combustion plants directive.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has recently sent emission figures for 1991 to the European Commission, reporting on progress under the EC large combustion plants directive, which requires reductions in sulphur dioxide (SO_2) and oxides of nitrogen (NOx) emissions—the major contributors to acid deposition—from existing large combustion plants. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library of the House. The figures show that the UK is meeting its national plan for reducing emissions of SO_2 and NOx from existing plants. The figures also indicate that the UK is on course to meeting the directive's target of a 20 per cent. cut in SO_2 and a 15 per cent. cut in NOx by 1993.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are currently being undertaken by his Department to improve the accuracy of data relating to emissions of volatile organic compounds in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: One of the principal objectives of my Department's air quality research programme is to improve the accuracy of data on volatile organic compound emissions in the United Kingdom. Warren Spring Laboratory and the National Physical Laboratory have been contracted to work on sources and emissions of volatile organic compounds and options for their abatement. The university of Leeds has been contracted to provide information on the impacts of individual VOCs on ozone production.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authority areas granted derogations on ground level concentrations of sulphur dioxide and smoke in respect of EC directive 80/779; and what are the levels of *(a)* sulphur dioxide and *(b)* smoke concentrations in each such area, expressed in micrograms per cubic metre, in each year since 1980.

Mr. Maclean: The information is as follows:

Average 98th percentile of sulphur dioxide concentrations in each of the local authorities having derogation in respect of the European Community Directive 80/779/EEC

Local authority	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Allerdale	58	49	45	51	58	63	69	43	33	32	45	20
Barnsley	170	302	184	172	154	143	135	134	141	149	142	169
Bassetlaw	156	184	101	137	119	141	177	98	81	92	60	125
Blyth Valley	144	113	116	161	126	111	118	128	91	74	75	*
Bolsover	133	*	*	*	*	134	197	149	148	130	163	168
Bradford	139	187	163	179	120	110	122	125	97	90	115	107
Cannock Chase	157	199	158	160	134	102	91	44	144	116	159	123
Castle Morpeth	92	94	156	158	107	105	75	66	94	*	*	*
Chesterfield	95	94	57	55	57	60	53	49	56	38	42	44
Copeland	110	120	99	74	93	74	68	50	55	50	48	26
Crewe and Nantwich	105	184	98	138	118	103	85	79	117	35	39	74
Doncaster	198	285	176	199	155	199	138	133	115	104	114	128
Kirklees	154	233	144	156	148	139	130	139	104	117	111	121
Mansfield	197	258	168	200	160	177	147	156	135	124	152	162
Newark	138	184	142	155	121	139	138	136	147	105	63	204
Newcastle under Lyme	163	157	167	150	152	136	129	109	55	88	91	93
Nottingham	163	209	139	166	145	130	116	149	108	97	100	94
Rotherham	156	257	179	198	155	151	153	140	123	126	143	183
Staffordshire Moorlands	*	*	117	177	135	109	89	91	84	89	82	96
Sunderland	111	225	124	146	106	119	125	100	94	112	120	87
Wakefield	164	244	172	173	140	146	155	142	127	103	106	151
Wansbeck	157	219	136	124	126	85	94	88	20	49	55	90
Cunninghame	79	121	87	64	54	57	59	67	46	25	23	*
Falkirk	107	110	95	94	91	83	85	76	*	106	68	71
Glasgow	145	175	107	96	102	82	101	68	62	82	74	63
Strathkelvin	103	158	111	110	92	90	85	72	56	67	68	57
Belfast	79	104	93	129	198	169	210	179	154	195	229	179
Derry	148	148	122	81	122	95	88	68	55	114	89	72
Newry and Mourne	78	147	108	113	85	105	62	59	122	120	75	50

(The figures represent the average 98th percentile of all daily mean concentrations, in micrograms per cubic metre, taken throughout the year from all the monitoring stations in each local authority area.)

Average 98th percentile of black smoke concentrations in each of the local authorities having derogation in respect of the European Community Directive 80/779/EEC

Local authority	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Allerdale	71	108	53	47	50	75	94	79	47	67	55	55
Barnsley	164	341	161	181	126	139	130	125	130	111	110	143
Bassetlaw	113	183	101	114	92	118	153	95	134	106	56	119
Blyth Valley	166	249	195	194	99	161	106	115	72	81	117	*
Bolsover	87	*	*	*	*	85	177	152	114	99	91	95
Bradford	66	109	57	73	66	55	57	70	52	30	64	74
Cannock Chase	127	271	162	171	164	209	196	96	168	120	117	96
Castle Morpeth	65	80	266	210	146	203	73	75	64	46	*	*
Chesterfield	88	162	80	78	88	60	58	27	12	9	8	8
Copeland	174	302	134	173	*	82	121	91	104	85	54	28
Crewe and Nantwich	78	176	93	133	116	112	129	106	103	105	122	45
Doncaster	172	280	186	155	100	160	110	147	111	109	90	108
Kirklees	68	146	79	82	76	82	82	112	66	91	73	75
Mansfield	135	237	142	136	108	106	80	96	87	110	102	120
Newark	96	179	136	104	107	113	165	116	133	65	30	130
Newcastle under Lyme	114	145	100	126	97	100	97	82	26	75	72	58
Nottingham	79	124	96	104	71	70	88	73	56	76	35	82
Rotherham	133	221	148	139	116	106	102	118	87	124	114	127
Staffordshire Moorlands	*	*	144	166	103	121	112	115	155	81	89	125
Sunderland	117	203	128	162	100	172	138	186	99	143	112	
Wakefield	128	247	173	148	118	147	121	141	109	86	78	109
Wansbeck	215	254	189	169	148	146	148	124	41	45	74	64
Cunninghame	64	110	65	58	44	53	50	61	36	21	18	*
Falkirk	68	143	92	81	60	87	82	64	*	70	37	51
Glasgow	82	185	94	75	86	70	80	72	65	144	80	66
Strathkelvin	106	271	167	144	83	94	100	152	67	178	71	83
Belfast	133	206	115	93	121	113	113	128	123	160	202	122
Derry	89	118	124	129	178	132	137	85	131	64	89	88
Newry and Mourne	119	404	195	199	310	204	171	*	*	344	211	147

(The figures represent the average 98th percentile of all daily mean concentrations, in micrograms per cubic metre, taken throughout the year from all the monitoring stations in each local authority area.)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining the work undertaken by his Department resulting from the report and maps published by the United Kingdom critical costs advisory group in March.

Mr. Maclean The report and maps published by the United Kingdom Critical Loads Advisory Group are being used by the Department to provide a scientific basis for the evaluation of air pollution emission control scenarios and the evolution of cost-effective emission control policies.

Sand Dredging

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what powers are available to him to control the discharge of salt water that has been extracted from dredged sand.

Mr. Baldry: Discharges of salt water from land based accumulations of dredged sand can be controlled by the National Rivers Authority under the Water Resources Act 1991. Conditions controlling the rate and quality of the water discharged can be imposed, via discharge consents, in order to protect receiving waters.

Nature Reserves

Mr. Dafis To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to set a target of transferring at least 10 nature conservation review sites into national nature reserves per annum.

Mr. Maclean: No. The designation of NNRs in England is a matter for English Nature. The rate of progress depends on the funds available and the willingness of site owners to enter into the required commitments.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of public money was spent by English Nature for the purchase of national nature reserves in 1991-92; and what is the expected spend for 1992-93.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 25 November 1992]* English Nature's expenditure on purchase of national nature reserves was £81,944 in 1991-92 and is expected to be £93,000 in 1992-93.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total tonnage of toxic waste transported from the United Kingdom to developing countries during each of the last three years.

Mr. Maclean There have been no exports of hazardous waste for final disposal to developing countries over the last three years.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to increase available funding to nature conservation review sites for the maintenance of the sites of special scientific interest network and their effective monitoring.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has recently announced an additional £625,000 in the current financial year to allow English Nature to finalise long-standing management agreements inheritated from the former Nature Conservancy Council. Next year's general improvement area settlement, announced earlier this month, will enable English Nature to meet its core site protection and management responsibilities. English Nature aims to undertake appropriate management and monitoring of the SSSI network.

Noise Pollution

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to draw up a code of noise pollution control measures for public houses to replace the existing music licensing system.

Mr. Maclean: We have no plans to replace the current system of licensing music in public houses. In addition to licensing conditions, noise from licensed premises can be controlled by the local authority under the statutory nuisance provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Acid Waters Review Group

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining the work undertaken by his Department resulting from the United Kingdom acid waters review group report published in 1988.

Mr. Mclean: A number of the recommendations on the United Kingdom acid waters review group report have been implemented. These include the setting up and operation of the United Kingdom acid waters monitoring network; the appointment of a critical loads advisory group, acid waters sub-group under the chairmanship of Professor Battarbee, University college, London; the recent completion of a nationwide survey of lake and stream acidity; the development of freshwater chemistry and biological acidification models; and departmental sponsorship of research at a number of universities and research institutes throughout the United Kingdom.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to enforce section 33 of the Environment Protection Act 1990 in relation to releases of ozone-depleting substances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has no executive responsibility for the enforcement of section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Waste regulation authorities, as the authorities that will have the duty of granting waste management licences, will be mainly responsible for enforcement, but there is no restriction on who may instigate prosecutions for offences under section 33.

Section 33(1)(c) of the Act, which came into force on 1 April this year, makes it an offence to treat, keep or dispose of controlled waste in a manner likely to cause pollution of the environment or harm to human health. Section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 imposes a duty of care on those holding controlled waste to take reasonable steps to prevent a breach of section 33. Guidance for waste holders on how to discharge this duty was issued in a code of practice published jointly by the Scottish Office, the Welsh Office and my Department in December 1991. The provisions of sections 33 and 34 of the Act are not specific to particular substances, nor is the advice on those sections.

It is intended that section 33, together with the waste management licensing system in the Act, will be brought fully into force on 1 April 1993, and further advice will be issued before then.

Climate Change Convention

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on Government policy towards the proposal from the United States of America that the climate change convention agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development be ratified by the end of the current year.

Mr. Maclean: The Government welcome the ratification of the UN framework convention on climate change by the United States of America, and by other countries, including China. Along with the other Group of Seven countries and member states of the European Community, the United Kingdom is committed to seek to ratify the convention by the end of 1993.

Acid Rain

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what specific action has been undertaken by his Department resulting from the report of the United Kingdom review group on acid rain published in 1990.

Mr. Maclean: The 1990 report of the United Kingdom review group on acid rain contains a large number of research recommendations. In response to these, work has been commissioned within my Department's air quality research programme aimed at improving information on emissions of acidifying compounds and of their precursors, on the transport and transformation of these compounds in the atmosphere, on the quantities deposited and on their impacts in the environment.

Photochemical Oxidants

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining the work undertaken by his Department resulting from the United Kingdom photochemical oxidants review group report published in 1990.

Mr. Maclean: The 1990 report of the photochemical oxidants review group contains a number of research recommendations. The response of my Department has been to maintain and expand monitoring for nitrogen dioxide and other air pollutants highlighted in the report and to continue work on the atmospheric chemistry of nitrogen oxides and ammonia and on their environmental impacts.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the extent of the loss of the ozone layer over the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on proposals to eliminate ozone-destroying chemicals.

Mr. Maclean: The latest estimate of the average depletion of the ozone layer at British latitudes, based on the 1992 World Meteorological Organisation/United Nations Environment Programme scientific assessment of ozone depletion, is 8 per cent. per decade. International negotiations on the control of ozone-depleting substances are currently taking place in Copenhagen.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which Minister in his Department is responsible for the oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters which fall within the responsibility of his Department.

Mr. Redwood: I have oversight of deregulation of such matters within the Department of the Environment, working closely with my colleagues.

Contaminated Land Registers

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the basis for excluding the Kaolin mounds of Cornwall from the draft regulations under section 143 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990;

(2) what is the basis for excluding the old tin mining areas of Cornwall with arsenic contaminant from the draft regulations under section 143 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990;

(3) what is the basis of excluding the former zinc mining areas with cadmium contaminant from the draft regulations under section 143 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr Maclean: The uses of land listed in the draft regulations for initial coverage by registers are those considered most likely to give rise to contamination. The china clay waste mounts of Cornwall do not give rise to significant potential for contamination. Current research being undertaken for my Department is identifying, in general terms, areas of metalliferous mining and the occurrence of natural contaminants associated with mined ground.

Rights of Way

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which rights of way have been stopped up since 1990 and when the stopping up was undertaken, under *(a)* the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, section 247 and *(b)* previous procedures, since 1962; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Powers under section 247 are exercisable by the Secretary of State for Transport, as well as the Secretary of State for the Environment. Information as requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Council Tax

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to make the single household discount 50 per cent. instead of 25 per cent.

Mr. Robin Squire: No.

Non-domestic Rates

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the distributable amount of non-domestic rates for 1993-94; and if he will explain the basis of his calculations.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 12 November that the non-domestic rate multiplier for 1993-94 will rise by 3·5 per cent. from its 1992-93 level to 0·416. The distributable amount of non-domestic rates based on this poundage will be £11,559 million. This includes an Exchequer payment of £922 million into the non-domestic rates pool to compensate local authorities for the shortfall in 1992-93 and 1993-94 which would otherwise occur as a result of the Non-Domestic Rating Act 1992. The basis of the calculation is set out in the table.

Rural Land loss

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to ensure that present Government guidance on rural land loss is accurate and up to date.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* Current Government guidance on rural land loss is based on the land use change statistics (LUCS) collected for my Department since 1985 by the Ordnance Survey as part of its map revision work. Recent research has confirmed the robustness of the data, particularly for monitoring changes to urban uses. Some time does, however, elapse before changes in land use are recorded in the LUCS series and Ordnance Survey is testing new procedures with the objective of providing consistent information for urban areas within one year of any change occurring. The 1990 countryside survey, which is part-funded by my Department, will provide an independent source of estimates of rural change between 1978, 1984 and 1990, based on sampled data.

Recent research commissioned by my Department has recommended that the need for consistent information across all land uses would be most effectively met by a census approach carried out by Ordnance Survey and continuously updated by a revised system of land use change statistics. The Department is proceeding to develop the methodology and carry out pilot work for this land use stock system.

Conservation Bodies (Land Purchase)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of grant was made by English Nature under section 38 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to voluntary conservation bodies for the purposes of land purchase in 1991-92; and what is the expected spend for 1992-93.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* English Nature made land purchase grants to voluntary conservation bodies totalling £258,632 in 1991-92 and expects to spend a further £252,000 on such grants in 1992-93.

Orimulsion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the best available techniques not entailing excessive cost to prevent or minimise and render harmless the heavy metals and nickel sulphate released into air, water and land by the burning of orimulsion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* The burning of orimulsion or other fuels at a power station requires an authorisation from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP).

In granting authorisations, HMIP will have regard to the advice contained in the chief inspectors guidance note IPR1/1, "Large Boilers and Furnaces 50MW(th) and Over". This provides guidance on the techniques considered by the chief inspector to be appropriate to achieve the requirement set out in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to use the best available techniques not entailing excessive cost to prevent or minimise pollution.

A copy of the guidance note has been placed in the House Library.

Pit Closures

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what external legal advice he has taken over who is responsible for the cost of clearing any future river pollution arising from the closure of collieries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* None. It is for the National Rivers Authority, and in turn, the courts, to apply the provisions of the Water Resources Act 1991 and any other relevant legislation to any particular case.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the National Rivers Authority, water company chairmen and British Coal about the environmental effects of colliery closures; what consultancy work is planned and by whom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* It is for British Coal and the National Rivers Authority, in the first place, to assess the environmental effects of colliery closures. The NRA is currently carrying out a review of water pollution from abandoned mines.

Leasehold Properties

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department holds on the total number of blocks of flats containing either four or six flats in England, and on the proportion of these in which the freehold belongs to *(a)* a local authority or housing association or *(b)* a private landlord.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* The Department does not hold information on the number of blocks of flats in England. The best estimate comes from the 1986 English house condition survey, which suggests that there are some 164,000 purpose-built and converted blocks in England containing either four or six flats. No data were collected on who owns the freehold of these blocks.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EC Structural Funds

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will set out the distribution in the United Kingdom of each of the Community initiatives under the European structural funds, in each assisted region, in terms of *(a)* allocation of grant in ecu and in pound sterling at current exchange rates in total and sub-divided into European regional development fund, European social fund and other structural funds and *(b)* the value of grant so far approved in ecu and pound sterling at current exchange rates; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment his Department has made of allocations to the United Kingdom from the Community initiatives under the European structural funds; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list the European structural funds Community initiatives; what was the allocation to the United Kingdom for the period 1991 to 1993 in ecus and in pound sterling at current exchange rates in total and sub-divided into European regional development fund, European social fund and other structural funds; and what was the United Kingdom allocation under each programme as a percentage of the total allocation for each programme.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* The allocation of funds to Community initiatives is determined by the Commission within an overall budget limit.

The European Commission has launched 13 such initiatives. The most recent (RETEX) has not yet reached the stage of firm allocations. The available figures for the other 12 initiatives are as follows:

1992 prices

	ERDF		*ESF*		*EAGGF Guidance*		*Total SF*	
	£ million	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*
Rechar Community Initiative 1992 to 1993								
Tawsen (North East)								
Total allocation	**11·80**	**14·52**	**2·20**	**2·71**	**—**	**—**	**14·01**	**17·23**
Grant so far approved	**1·69**	**2·08**	**0·00**	**0·00**	**—**	**—**	**1·69**	**2·08**
Durham and Cleveland								
Total allocation	**8·62**	**10·60**	**1·38**	**1·70**	**—**	**—**	**10·00**	**12·30**
Grant so far approved	**0·74**	**0·92**	**0·00**	**0·00**	**—**	**—**	**0·74**	**0·92**
South Yorkshire								
Total allocation	**23·25**	**28·60**	**4·59**	**5·65**	**—**	**—**	**27·85**	**34·25**
Grant so far approved	**2·21**	**2·71**	**0·00**	**0·00**	**—**	**—**	**2·21**	**2·71**
Mid Yorkshire								
Total allocation	**11·07**	**13·61**	**2·32**	**2·85**	**—**	**—**	**13·38**	**16·46**
Grant so far approved	**0·00**	**0·00**	**0·00**	**0·00**	**—**	**—**	**0·00**	**0·00**
Lancashire								
Total allocation	**5·63**	**6·93**	**1·15**	**1·41**	**—**	**—**	**6·78**	**8·34**
Grant so far approved	**0·00**	**0·00**	**0·00**	**0·00**	**—**	**—**	**0·00**	**0·00**

	ERDF		*ESF*		*EAGGF Guidance*		*Total SF*	
	£ million	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*
South Staffs								
Total allocation	3·43	4·22	0·63	0·78	—	—	4·07	5·00
Grant so far approved	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	—	—	0·00	0·00
North Warwickshire								
Total allocation	2·53	3·11	0·63	0·78	—	—	3·16	3·89
Grant so far approved	0·04	0·05	0·00	0·00	—	—	0·04	0·05
Notts and North Derby								
Total allocation	20·75	25·52	4·11	5·06	—	—	24·86	30·58
Grant so far approved	1·52	1·87	0·00	0·00	—	—	1·52	1·87
Western Scotland								
Total allocation	2·72	3·34	0·54	0·67	—	—	3·26	4·01
Grant so far approved	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	—	—	0·00	0·00
Eastern Scotland								
Total allocation	10·85	13·34	2·17	2·67	—	—	13·02	16·01
Grant so far approved	3·18	3·91	0·86	1·06	—	—	4·03	4·96
South Wales								
Total allocation	23·17	28·50	2·23	2·74	—	—	25·40	31·24
Grant so far approved	0·00	0·00	0·41	0·50	—	—	0·41	050
Total United Kingdom								
Total allocation	123·81	152·29	21·97	27·02	—	—	145·78	179·31
Grant so far approved	9·38	11·53	1·27	1·56	—	—	10·64	13·09
Total EC								
Total allocation	254·22	312·69	45·12	55·49	—	—	299·34	368·18
UK per cent. share of total allocation	48·7	48·7	48·7	48·7	—	—	48·7	48·7

1992 prices

	ERDF		*ESF*		*EAGGF Guidance*		*Total SF*	
	£ million	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*
Stride community initiative 1992 to 1993								
Great Britain								
Total allocation	12·75	15·68	0·41	0·51	—	—	13·16	16·19
Grant so far approved	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	—	—	0·00	0·00
Northern Ireland								
Total allocation	12·15	14·94	0·00	0·00	—	—	12·15	14·94
Grant so far approved	0·51	0·63	0·00	0·00	—	—	0·51	0·63
Total United Kingdom								
Total allocation	24·89	30·62	0·41	0·51	—	—	25·31	31·13
Grant so far approved	0·51	0·63	0·00	0·00	—	—	0·51	0·63
Total EC								
Total allocation	348·78	429·00	16·49	20·28	—	—	365·27	449·28
United Kingdom percentage share of total allocation	7·1	7·1	2·5	2·5	—	—	6·9	6·9

1992 prices

	ERDF		*ESF*		*EAGGF Guidance*		*Total SF*	
	£ million	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*
Leader Community Initiative 1992 to 1993								
England								
Total allocation	0·76	0·94	0·16	0·20	0·37	0·46	1·30	1·60
Grant so far approved	0·18	0·22	0·04	0·05	0·09	0·10	0·30	0·37
Scotland								
Total allocation	3·44	4·23	0·76	0·93	1·67	2·05	5·86	7·21
Grant so far approved	0·27	0·33	0·06	0·07	0·13	0·16	0·46	0·57
Wales								
Total allocation	1·71	2·10	0·37	0·46	0·83	1·02	2·91	3·58
Grant so far approved	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
Northern Ireland								
Total allocation	1·88	2·31	0·59	0·72	0·83	1·02	3·30	4·06
Grant so far approved	0·71	0·87	0·00	0·00	0·30	0·37	1·01	1·25
Total United Kingdom								
Total allocation	7·79	9·58	1·88	2·31	3·70	4·55	13·37	16·44
Grant so far approved	1·16	1·43	0·10	0·12	0·52	0·64	1·78	2·18
Total EC								
Total allocation	194·31	239·00	24·31	29·90	144·88	178·20	363·50	447·10
United Kingdom percentage share of total allocation	4·0	4·0	7·7	7·7	2·6	2·6	3·7	3·7

1992 prices

	ERDF		ESF		EAGGF Guidance		Total SF	
	£ million	mecu	£ million	mecu	£ million	mecu	£ million	mecu
Envireg community initiative 1991 to 1993								
Total United Kingdom[1]								
Total allocation	13·82	17·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	13·82	17·00
Grant so far approved	4·31	5·30	0·00	0·00	0·30	0·37	4·61	5·67
Total EC								
Total allocation	427·75	526·13	8·68	10·67	15·62	19·21	452·04	556·01
United Kingdom percentage share of total allocation	3·2	3·2	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	3·1	3·1
Prisma community initiative 1991 to 1993								
Total United Kingdom[1]								
Total allocation	4·07	5·00	—	—	—	—	4·07	5·00
Grant so far approved	0·00	0·00	—	—	—	—	0·00	0·00
Total EC								
Total allocation	93·74	115·30	—	—	—	—	93·74	115·30
United Kingdom percentage share of total allocation	4·3	4·3	—	—	—	—	4·3	4·3
Telematique community initiative 1991 to 1993								
Total United Kingdom[1]								
Total allocation	4·07	5·00	—	—	—	—	4·07	5·00
Grant so far approved	0·56	0·69	—	—	—	—	0·56	0·69
Total EC								
Total allocation	186·50	229·40	—	—	—	—	186·50	229·40
United Kingdom percentage share of total allocation	2·2	2·2	—	—	—	—	2·2	2·2

[1] All Northern Ireland.

1992 prices

	ERDF		ESF		EAGGF Guidance		Total SF	
	£ million	mecu	£ million	mecu	£ million	mecu	£ million	mecu
Euroform community initiative 1991 to 1993								
Total United Kingdom								
Total allocation	—	—	28·33	34·84	—	—	28·33	34·84
Total EC								
Total allocation	6·94	8·54	220·41	271·10	—	—	227·35	279·64
United Kingdom percentage share of total allocation	0·0	0·0	12·9	12·9	—	—	12·5	12·5
Now community initiative 1991 to 1993								
Total United Kingdom								
Total allocation	—	—	7·57	9·31	—	—	7·57	9·31
Total EC								
Total allocation	8·67	10·67	82·42	101·38	—	—	91·10	112·05
United Kingdom percentage share of total allocation	0·0	0·0	9·2	9·2	—	—	8·3	8·3
Horizon community initiative 1991 to 1993								
Total United Kingdom								
Total allocation	—	—	15·58	19·16	—	—	15·58	19·16
Total EC								
Total allocation	17·35	21·34	120·57	148·30	—	—	137·92	169·64
United Kingdom percentage share of total allocation	0·0	0·0	12·9	12·9	—	—	11·3	11·3
Regen community initiative 1991 to 1993								
Total United Kingdom								
Total allocation	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grant so far approved	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total EC								
Total allocation	300·20	369·25	—	—	—	—	300·20	369·25
United Kingdom percentage share of total allocation	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

1992 prices

	ERDF		ESF		EAGGF guidance		Total SF	
	£ million	mecu	£ million	mecu	£ million	mecu	£ million	mecu
Regis community initiative 1991 to 1993								
Total United Kingdom								
Total allocation	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

	ERDF		*ESF*		*EAGGF guidance*		*Total SF*	
	£ million	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*
Grant so far approved	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total EC Total allocation	162·25	199·57	6·94	8·54	46·85	57·63	216·04	265·73
United Kingdom percentage share of total allocation	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Interreg community initiative 1991 to 1993								
Total United Kingdom[1] and Republic of Ireland Total allocation	47·63	58·59	3·63	4·46	14·03	17·26	65·29	80·31
Total EC Total allocation	670·69	824·95	26·90	33·08	48·59	59·76	746·17	917·79

[1] No specific allocation to United Kingdom.

1992 prices

	ERDF		*ESF*		*EAGGF Guidance*		*Total SF*	
	£ million	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*	*£ million*	*mecu*
Total Community Initiatives 1991 to 1993								
Total United Kingdom Total allocation	226·08	278·08	79·36	97·61	17·73	21·81	323·17	397·50
Grant so far approved	15·92	19·58	1·36	1·68	0·82	1·01	18·10	22·27
Total EC Total allocation	2671·41	3285·83	551·83	678·75	255·94	314·80	3479·17	4279·38
UK Percentage Share of total allocation	8·5	8·5	14·4	14·4	6·9	6·9	9·3	9·3

Note: The authentic figures for allocations are those expressed in ecu. Equivalents expressed at the current exchange rate of £1 = 1.23 ecu are for illustrative purposes only. For most initiatives part of the allocation has already been received from the Commission at a previous exchange rate. The final sterling sums available to the programmes will depend on the exchange rates at the time the various payments are received.

The figures for grant so far approved are being constantly updated as frequent programme committee meetings are held.

Though precise calculations are not possible, the United Kingdom's share of expenditure under the initiatives is similar to its share of expenditure from the structural funds as a whole.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 27 November 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Company Debts (Writs)

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps he is taking to monitor the rate of progress through the courts of cases involving writs for non-payment of debts owed by one company to another.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The conduct of cases for non-payment of debts issued in the Queen's Bench division of the High Court is largely a matter for the parties themselves. Where cases are disputed, waiting times for trial are monitored.

High Court

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many deputy High Court judges sat in the High Court during the week commencing 16 November; and of these how many were circuit judges.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There were 313 sittings in the High Court in London during the week commencing 16 November. Of these, 66 sittings were undertaken by deputy High Court judges, and 52 by circuit judges.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many High Court judges were available for sitting, and sat, in the High Court in the week commencing 16 November.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It has not been possible to obtain the information requested in the time available. I will write to the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proposals he has for the appointment of more High Court judges.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In recognition of the importance of ensuring that there are sufficient judges, the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice have asked a group of senior judges, with officials of the Lord Chancellor's Department, to advise them on the work, deployment and numbers of High Court judges. Until that advice has been received, it would be premature to reach a view about the size of the High Court bench in present circumstances.

PRIME MINISTER

Wild Birds

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Prime Minister if he will bring forward proposals for making the power to impose licensing regulation over the shooting of wild birds, including pigeons, crows and sparrows, a matter for individual member states of the EC.

The Prime Minister: We shall continue to seek the support of member states for an amendment to the EC directive on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC), to recognise specifically the need for member states to exercise year-round control of pest.

Member states may, under the provisions of the directive, derogate from the general prohibition on the killing of birds by issuing licences for controlling species which cause damage or threaten public health or safety. We intend to amend the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to enable us to bring in a licensing system. The other member states have already introduced licensing systems.

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what account he took of the minute of August 1990, about the implications of the invasion for trade with Iraq, referred to in his letter of 23 November to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, in making statements in 1992 relating to legal proceedings involving the directors of Matrix Churchill.

The Prime Minister: In all my correspondence and other replies I have taken into account the advice and information which was available to me.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General if he will attend sittings of the Standing Committee on the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill.

The Attorney-General: I have no intention at present to attend sittings of this Committee.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Computers

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to encourage procurement from the private sector in the field of computer software and information systems for the provision of functions currently carried out in-house.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The citizens charter White Paper (Cm 2101), published on 25 November, gives details of Departments' plans for market testing to September 1993. A number of Departments list all or part of their information systems/information technology functions as candidates for market testing to September 1993.

Through the market-testing process, Departments will buy in support services wherever they offer better value for money.

Agencies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what guidelines are issued to next steps agencies on the distinction between policy and administration in relation to the delegation of responsibility to chief executives of executive agencies.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The allocation of responsibilities between a Minister and the chief executive of an agency is set out in the agency's framework document and varies in each case. This does not necessarily provide an absolute distinction between policy and administration. In its reply to the seventh report from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee, session 1990-91 (Cm 1761), the Government noted that managers

"should contribute to the formulation of the policy which they have to execute, just as those offering policy advice to Ministers need to appreciate the practicalities of policy delivery."

My office has issued guidance from time to time on the arrangements for dealing with parliamentary questions and letters from Members of Parliament on matters delegated to agencies, with the suggestion that the allocation of responsibilities in the agency's framework document should normally be used as the basis for deciding whether the chief executive or the Minister should reply.

EDUCATION

Special Needs Education

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the average time taken by each local education authority to assess a child as special needs from the initial application to the issue of a statement of special needs.

Mr. Forth: Information for each authority is not available centrally. However, the Audit Commission/HMI study "Getting in on the Act", published in June 1992, presented data for a sample of 12 local education authorities, and discovered that the median length of time taken to complete an assessment in these authorities is 12 months. The new Education Bill envisages that regulations may provide that, where a local education authority is under a duty to make an assessment, the duty must, subject to prescribed exceptions, be performed within a prescribed period.

Examinations League Table

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he is taking to correct errors in the list of examination results obtained in secondary schools published by his Department; and what discussions he has held with schools whose results have been adversely reported.

Mr. Forth: All allegations of incorrect information in the comparative tables are being investigated individually. Where significant errors have been proved to be the fault of the Department or its contractors, amendment slips have been issued. To date, only six such errors have been found—two errors in school names and four errors in examination results. In each case, an amendment slip has been issued. All schools alleging errors will receive notification in writing of the results of the Department's inquiries into their cases.

Special Schools (Examination Results)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy for future years not to publish the examination results obtained in special schools.

Mr. Forth: The decision to publish the examination results of special schools in the comparative tables was reached after detailed consultations with representatives of special needs organisations. It is entirely right that special schools, as all other schools, should receive credit for the results they achieve.

Swimming

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make the teaching of water safety compulsory in all schools.

Mr. Forth: The statutory order for physical education in the national curriculum requires that, from August 1994, all pupils should, by the age of 11, be able to swim unaided at least 25 m and demonstrate an understanding of water safety.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which schools *(a)* have swimming pools on site and *(b)* employ (i) swimming instructors and (ii) specialist teachers to teach swimming, life-saving and water safety; what hours are worked; and what information he has about the award of swimming proficiency certificates at each school.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the implications of local management of schools and grant-maintained status on the ability of schools to maintain current levels of swimming instruction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Local management of schools and grant-maintained status do not affect the ability of schools to maintain current levels of swimming instruction. It is open to local education authorities in their local management of schools schemes to decide whether to delegate provision for swimming to school level or to retain it centrally. Annual maintenance grant for a grant-maintained school replicates the local management of schools formula of the local education authority in which that school is located, as well as including a share of the funds local education authorities spend centrally on their schools.

Environmental Education

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the provision of training for teachers for the delivery of cross-curricular themes, with particular reference to the theme of environmental education.

Mr. Forth: A number of national curriculum subjects include studies relevant to environmental education. My right hon. Friend seeks to ensure, through his criteria for the approval of courses, that initial training gives thorough preparation for teaching the national curriculum. He also provides specific grant to support national curriculum-related training for serving teachers. It is essentially for schools and local education authorities to determine what priority to give to particular subject areas.

Pupil Exclusions

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the Government's policy towards pupil exclusions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Government are concerned that too many children are being excluded from school, either permanently or temporarily. My right hon. Friend is anxious to remedy this situation and will shortly be publishing a discussions paper on exclusions, inviting comments from interested parties. Copies will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

EMPLOYMENT

Training

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list all current employment training schemes currently available to those out of work; what is the rate of allowance in each case; and how many male and females were taking part in each scheme at 1 November.

Mr. McLoughlin: Employment training is the training programme for unemployed people. At October 1992, the latest date for which information is available, there were about 122,000 people in training in Great Britain. The allowance paid to trainees is equivalent to their benefit entitlement immediately before joining the programme plus £10 a week. During April-July 1992, the latest period available, 68 per cent. of employment training entrants were men and 32 per cent. women.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police (Housing)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *781*, if he will list by location how much revenue his Department expects to raise for each of the five prison officer houses in south Yorkshire that have been identified as being put on the housing market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The five remaining properties, formerly prison officers' houses, are in Brierholme close, Hatfield, south Yorkshire, and are on the market for sale with a local agent. Four of the houses have asking prices of £37,500 and one house has an asking price of £40,000.

Alcohol Sales (Minors)

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures are being taken to halt the sale of alcohol to minors.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply on 30 October to a question from the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) at columns *908-9*.

Victim Support

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish details of the funding provided to victim support in each year since public funds were provided for this purpose together with any information he has concerning the number of persons employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time by this organisation for each year.

Mr. Jack: The table shows Home Office grant to victim support since funding began in 1979. Many local schemes also receive support from their local authority, but details are not recorded centrally. The figures for staff numbers relate to posts, not persons, and it is not now possible to distinguish between full and part-time employees for earlier years.

Year	*Home Office Grant (£)* *HQ*	*Local schemes*[1]	*HQ staff*	*Project staff*	*Scheme co-ordinators*	*Volunteer visitors*
1979[2]	5,000	—	—	—	—	—
1980	10,000	—	—	—	—	—
1981	17,850	—	—	—	—	—
1982	16,075	—	—	—	—	—
1983	37,933	—	—	—	—	—
1984-85[3]	62,124	—	—	—	—	—
1985-86	126,000	—	—	—	—	—
1986-87[4]	150,000	136,000	—	—	—	—
1987-88	163,000	1,600,000	17	6	180	5,900
1988-89	190,000	2,550,000	18	6	227	6,300
1989-90	210,000	3,700,000	21	12	292	6,700
1990-91	235,000	4,500,000	23	12	388	7,200
1991-92	270,000	5,400,000	27	7	427	8,260
1992-93	352,000	6,908,000	—	—	—	—

[1] A small proportion of the local schemes grant is used to support the work of the national office.

[2] 1979 to 1983 are calendar years.

[3] 1984-85 ran from 1 January 1984 to 5 April 1985.

[4] In its first year the local funding grant covered contingencies only.

Underground Emergency Facilities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the uses that would be permitted or encouraged in underground facilities for use in wartime or emergency.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since the sites are to be disposed of we have no plans to permit their use for other purposes.

Bosnian Refugees

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what financial resources are being made to provide support, maintenance and accommodation to the 150 Bosnian refugees and their dependants to arrive in the United Kingdom; from which departmental budgets resources are being provided; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office is providing funding for the reception and initial accommodation in this country for the 150 Bosnian refugees. They and any dependants who join them will then be found accommodation in the community where they will be entitled to the range of statutory benefits and services available to the rest of the population. The Home Office will also provide funds for some continued support.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the 150 Bosnian refugees and their dependants to arrive in the United Kingdom; what arrangements he has made for them to be received into the United Kingdom; what organisation is responsible for their support, maintenance and accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I am awaiting arrival details from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

I have asked the Refugee Council and the British Red Cross to make arrangements for their reception and initial accommodation. More permanent accommodation in the community and further support will be arranged by the Refugee Council.

Visitors (Absconders)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors from *(a)* Jamaica, *(b)* Columbia, *(c)* Australia, *(d)* New Zealand, *(e)* India, *(f)* Pakistan, *(g)* Sri Lanka, *(h)* Nigeria, *(i)* Ghana, *(j)* Guyana, *(k)* Trinidad and Tobago, *(l)* Canada and *(m)* the United States of America have absconded after having been given leave to enter the United Kingdom as visitors in each year since 1986.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Comprehensive reliable information on the total number of persons from these countries given leave to enter the United Kingdom as visitors who have then remained here after their leave has expired is not available.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 24 November relating to the conviction of Mr. Colin Wallace, *Official Report*, column *544*; what consideration was given to the submission made by his solicitor, Mr. Jim Nichol, and delivered by hand to his Department on 14 November.

Mr. Jack: I can now confirm that the Secretary of State has received the submission delivered by hand to this Department on 14 November and it is now being considered in order to see whether it discloses grounds for any action by the Secretary of State in connection with Mr. Wallace's conviction.

Fact Finding Visits (Cost)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, columns *129-30*, what has been the cost to the Exchequer of *(a)* the chief executive of the Fire Service College's visits to (i) the United States and (ii) the Netherlands and *(b)* the deputy commandant of the college's visits to (i) Europe, (ii) the middle east, (iii) the far east and (iv) Africa, during the last 12 months.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This is a matter for which the Fire Service College is responsible and I have asked the chief executive to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mrs. H. Kinsey to Mr. Martin Rednond, dated 26 November 1992.

Cost of Fact Finding Visits

The Secretary of State has asked the Fire Service College to write to you directly in reply to your Parliamentary Question about the cost to the Exchequer of the fact finding visits which the Commandant Chief Executive and the Deputy Commandant have made during the last twelve months. I am replying on the Commandant Chief Executive's behalf because he is currently on holiday.

There has been no cost to the Exchequer arising from these visits since April because the College now operates as a trading fund. We cover our expenditure from the income we earn. However, the cost to the Exchequer of the Commandant's visit to Europe last year was £417 and the cost to the College of the visits to America and Europe since April have been £3,335 and £4,129 respectively.

The costs to the Exchequer of the Deputy Commandant's visits to the Middle East and Europe prior to April were £7,043 and £187 respectively. The cost to the College of his visits to the Far East and Europe since April have been £3,609 and £1,285 respectively.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will be published in the Official Report. I will now place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

WALES

Dolphins

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received about the welfare of dolphins off the Welsh coast.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Thirty-two representations have been received in the last 12 months from a number of sources, including Members of the House, the general public and conservation bodies.

Cardiac Services

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the originally expected date for publication of the Touche Ross report into cardiology and cardiac surgery in Wales; when he now expects the report to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend originally anticipated the appraisal being completed by mid-1992, but this has been extended in the light of the considerable amount of work and extensive consultation necessary to ensure a comprehensive assessment. My right hon. Friend now expects the report to be with him before the end of the year.

General Practitioners

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average number of applicants for vacancies for general practitioner posts in Wales every year since 1989.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The combined figures for England and Wales are shown in the table. Separate figures for Wales are not available. The figures are based on records kept by the Medical Practices Committee only in relation to GP vacancies advertised by the family health services authorities, which are 11 per cent. of the total. These relate only to new practices or to vacancies for single-handed GPs. The selection of candidates to fill other vacancies arising in established practice partnerships is a matter for the partnership concerned. Statistics in relation to these are not collected centrally.

Date	*Average number of applicants for each vacancy*
30 October 1989	32
30 October 1990	33
30 October 1991	25

Tourist Information Centres

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many tourists visited tourist information centres in Wales each year since 1989; and what were the numbers of such tourists who came from outside the United Kingdom.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Between January and the end of September 1992, 2,970,000 tourists visited tourist information centres in Wales. Of these, 401,970 came from outside the United Kingdom. Information was not compiled on a comparable basis prior to 1992.

National Parks

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to implement the recommendations of the national parks review panel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: A statement outlining the Government's proposals for implementing relevant recommendations made in the report of the national parks review panel was issued in January 1992. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Discarded Car Tyres

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what surveys his Department has carried out into the number of tyres discarded from cars in Wales in the latest year for which figures are available; and what estimate he has made of the number that were *(a)* remoulded and *(b)* dumped.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A 1990 report commissioned by the Department of Trade and Industry estimated that around 30 million used tyres are removed annually from vehicles in the United Kingdom; of these, around 10 per cent. are retreaded, and 70 per cent. landfilled, dumped or stockpiled. No separate figures are available for Wales. The Department of the Environment has commissioned a survey of existing dumps of tyres throughout the United Kingdom, and the results will be available in the new year.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he proposes to limit drug abuse in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) on 2 November 1992 at column 8.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what support is available to local authorities in Wales for anti-drug and drug awareness campaigns.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Resources totalling some £3 million are allocated annually to meet the costs of drug prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, of which £450,000 is allocated to local education authorities and £200,000 for the employment of health education/promotion officers (drugs) in each health authority. Other projects also undertake prevention work, but it is not possible to separate costs.

Road Schemes

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list *(a)* the wildlife sites, *(b)* sites of special scientific interest, *(c)* ancient woodlands, *(d)* archaeological sites and *(e)* National Trust areas that are threatened with damage by the targeted road improvement and road building schemes put forward by his Department from now until the year 2000 indicating both the location of the site affected and the road improvement or road building scheme involved.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In order to protect the species concerned, it is not departmental policy to disclose the location of wildlife sites. The remaining information applicable to proposed major road schemes in Wales where a preferred route has been announced is as follows:

Scheme name	*Site affected*	*Location*
Short term		
M4 Second Severn Crossing approach road, Gwent	Site of special scientific interest	Gwent Levels Severn estuary
	Archaeological	Caldicot
A5 Bethesda Bypass	Ancient woodlands	Bryn Meurig
A5 Glyn Bends	Site of special scientific interest	Pont Glyn Diffwys
A465 Glynneath-Aberdulais	Ancient woodlands	Wern-y-Gared
	National Trust	Aberdulais Falls
Medium Term		
A470 Blaenau Ffestiniog—Betws y Coed	Site of special scientific interest	Fairy Glen
	Ancient woodlands	Pont-y-Pant
Long Term		
A5 Anglesey Stage III	Site of special scientific interest	Inland sea east of Holyhead

Every effort will be made to minimise and mitigate the effects of road schemes on such sites.

Time bands and schemes indicated are those which accord with the 1992 supplement to "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s".

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list *(a)* the designated wildlife sites, *(b)* sites of special scientific interest, *(c)* ancient woodlands, *(d)* archaeological sites and *(e)* National Trust areas that have been damaged by road improvement and road building projects in Wales during the last five years, indicating the location of the site and the road scheme involved.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In order to protect the species concerned, it is not departmental policy to disclose the location of wildlife sites. The remaining information for major road schemes carried out in Wales in the last five years is as follows:

Scheme name	*Site affected*	*Location*
A483 Welshpool bypass	Archaeological	Sarn-y-Bryn Caled Castle Mound
A494 Mold bypass	Ancient Woodlands	Trebeirdd Woods Bryn Coch Bach

Every effort is made to minimise and mitigate the effects of road construction on such sites.

Child Psychotherapists

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) pursuant to his answer of 16 November, *Official Report*, column *90*, if he will make it his policy to increase the number of child psychotherapists employed within the NHS in Wales to 20;

(2) what is his target for the number of child psychotherapists in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is for employers to determine the staff required to meet the health care objectives of health authority and family health service authority health plans.

Skillcentres

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many skillcentres have been closed in each of the counties of Wales; and how many skillcentres remain open in each of the counties of Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Skillcentres were privatised in 1990 and became the responsibility of the companies which purchased them. There are skillcentres in Clwyd (Wrexham), Gwent (Newport), south Glamorgan (Cardiff) and west Glamorgan (Port Talbot).

Freight Transport

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the relative efficiencies of freight transport modes in Wales in terms of megajoules per tonne kilometre of *(a)* light goods vehicles using diesel, *(b)* light goods vehicles using petrol, *(c)* medium goods vehicles, *(d)* heavy goods vehicles, *(e)* rail bulk loads and *(f)* rail, general merchandise.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not collected centrally. Figures on United Kingdom energy consumption by transport mode are given in "Transport Statistics: Great Britain 1992", a copy of which is held in the Library of the House.

Tourism

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been made available for projects in Wales in the current financial year under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969; how many projects have benefited; and how many jobs have been (i) created and (ii) preserved.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Wales tourist board has received £3·8 million in the current financial year to assist tourism schemes in Wales. During this year 227 projects have benefited, creating 142 jobs. In addition, 423 existing jobs are now more secure as a result of this year's assistance.

Health Authorities

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue a consultation paper on the possibility of uniting area health authorities and family health service authorites in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so at present. The merger of health authorities and family health services authorities in Wales would require primary legislation. However we encourage health authorities and family health services authorities to work together wherever possible, and there is already significant evidence of such co-operation, particularly in respect of strategic planning.

Speed Cameras

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to order the installation of speed cameras in the Wrexham area; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This is a matter for consultation between the police, courts, the Crown prosecution service and the appropriate highway authority. The Department has no plans at present to install speed cameras on trunk roads in the Wrexham area.

Environmental Education

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the provision of training for teachers for the delivery of cross-curricular themes, with particular reference to the theme of environmental education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A number of national curriculum subjects include studies relevant to environmental education. We seek to ensure, through the criteria for the approval of courses, that initial training gives thorough preparation for teaching the national curriculum. We also provide specific grant to support national curriculum-related training for serving teachers. It is essentially for schools and local education authorities to determine what priority to give to particular subject areas.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the funding provided by Government Departments for the support of information services for environmental education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Office supports information services for environmental education by a variety of means: directly by the Department through non-departmental public bodies with environmental responsibilities; and by supporting voluntary organisations through grant aid. Specific funding for information services is not separately identified.

Recycling

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he intends to take to promote actively the market in recycled products and to help local authorities, and others concerned, with meeting Government recycling targets.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The steps being taken are described in chapter 13 of "This Common Inheritance: The Second Year Report" (Cm 2068) a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to provide specific grants to local authorities to enable them to implement their recycling plans designed to meet the Government's target of recycling 25 per cent. of all household waste by the year 2000.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No. There are long-standing arrangements agreed with the local authority associations in Wales under which they assess the level of provision needed to support a range of services, including recycling of waste, provided by local government. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State takes account of that assessment when deciding how much central Government support should be made available, in total, to local authorities. Most of that support, both revenue and capital, is distributed to authorities on the basis of formulae agreed with the Welsh local authority associations.

Council Tax

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the issue of draft valuation lists for council tax purposes.

Mr. David Hunt: Billing authorities in Wales have today received copies of the council tax draft valuation lists from the Valuation Office Agency. The valuation lists include valuations for some 1,212,230 dwellings. The number and distribution of dwellings between each council tax band is summarised by billing authority in the tables.

Valuations have been made on the basis of the price, subject to certain assumptions, which dwellings could have fetched had they been sold on 1 April 1991. The valuations were carried out between December 1991 and July 1992. The Valuation Office Agency which was responsible for the valuation exercise, was assisted in its task by private sector valuers.

Members of the public will be able to inspect the valuation list for their district at district council offices.

Council Tax Valuations:
Percentage of Hereditaments by Band—Draft List

Authority	*Band A*	*Band B*	*Band C*	*Band D*	*Band E*	*Band F*	*Band G*	*Band H*	*Total*
Alyn and Deeside	9·94	17·75	33·02	18·85	13·60	4·86	1·95	0·03	100·00
Colwyn	12·43	17·60	23·75	23·40	15·16	4·37	3·03	0·26	100·00
Delyn	7·95	25·18	26·03	17·13	14·31	5·98	3·23	0·18	100·00
Glyndwr	13·85	21·83	18·97	17·62	15·43	6·95	4·81	0·55	100·00
Rhuddlan	8·39	22·86	32·44	21·70	9·25	3·42	1·84	0·10	100·00
Wrexham	20·28	30·61	18·01	15·54	9·23	4·07	2·17	0·09	100·00
Carmarthen	13·57	19·58	18·45	19·05	21·28	6·54	1·46	0·09	100·00
Ceredigion	10·44	15·89	19·62	23·77	23·68	4·96	1·50	0·14	100·00
Dinefwr	19·21	21·43	20·01	16·97	14·21	6·90	1·10	0·17	100·00
Llanelli	27·27	35·77	16·65	11·69	5·74	1·65	1·15	0·09	100·00
Preseli Pembrokeshire	14·82	24·09	17·01	18·79	17·91	5·41	1·89	0·07	100·00
South Pembrokeshire	16·17	16·91	22·65	17·13	18·96	5·62	2·34	0·21	100·00
Blaenau Gwent	54·37	26·99	9·25	4·98	3·32	0·75	0·26	0·06	100·00
Islwyn	15·82	54·93	14·69	7·57	5·00	1·58	0·36	0·06	100·00
Monmouth	2·65	9·69	23·10	18·27	18·16	14·55	12·43	1·14	100·00
Newport	14·94	32·79	20·30	16·35	8·50	3·72	2·91	0·48	100·00
Torfaen	21·30	35·26	23·77	9·36	7·15	2·23	0·83	0·09	100·00
Aberconwy	13·74	19·73	22·08	19·94	15·01	5·62	3·48	0·40	100·00
Arfon	25·64	29·27	21·03	12·75	7·18	2·94	1·10	0·09	100·00
Dwyfor	13·90	22·27	18·91	19·99	19·25	3·77	1·88	0·01	100·00
Meirionnydd	29·21	24·35	16·19	12·08	12·01	3·99	2·05	0·12	100·00
Ynys Môn	18·50	22·77	15·00	21·23	16·04	3·49	2·76	0·21	100·00
Cynon Valley	60·46	19·68	7·74	7·09	4·03	0·78	0·23	—	100·00
Merthyr Tydfil	57·04	25·48	6·75	6·00	3·80	0·77	0·16	0·02	100·00
Ogwr	20·56	25·71	19·33	15·33	11·85	4·27	2·66	0·29	100·00
Rhondda	63·75	26·76	5·79	1·86	1·50	0·26	0·05	0·03	100·00
Rhymney Valley	34·21	33·25	16·94	8·52	4·80	1·57	0·63	0·09	100·00
Taff Ely	23·59	29·43	20·35	11·39	8·36	3·99	2·68	0·22	100·00
Brecknock	15·33	14·54	19·65	15·07	19·48	9·16	6·12	0·65	100·00
Montgomeryshire	11·46	22·33	19·05	16·47	21·46	6·23	2·82	0·19	100·00
Radnorshire	12·86	16·55	16·39	18·13	25·89	6·66	3·21	0·30	100·00
Cardiff	7·63	24·28	27·24	16·23	14·85	4·60	4·57	0·60	100·00
Vale of Glamorgan	6·47	21·19	20·75	17·32	15·56	7·04	10·32	1·36	100·00
Lliw Valley	19·[illegible]	26·96	23·48	18·47	8·60	2·32	0·61	0·08	100·00
Neath	20·17	40·33	19·97	10·89	6·64	1·41	0·54	0·05	100·00
Port Talbot	21·57	43·41	19·54	9·50	4·29	1·22	0·43	0·04	100·00
Swansea	22·19	24·47	18·07	13·47	12·23	5·25	4·00	0·32	100·00
Wales	20·42	25·97	19·77	14·67	11·79	4·23	2·84	0·29	100·00

Council Tax Valuations:
Hereditaments—Draft List

Authority	*Band A*	*Band B*	*Band C*	*Band D*	*Band E*	*Band F*	*Band G*	*Band H*	*Total*
Alyn and Deeside	2,960	5,287	9,834	5,613	4,050	1,447	581	10	29,782
Colwyn	3,122	4,420	5,962	5,875	3,805	1,097	761	65	25,107
Delyn	2,191	6,941	7,177	4,723	3,945	1,650	891	51	27,569
Glyndwr	2,535	3,996	3,472	3,225	2,825	1,273	881	100	18,307
Rhuddlan	2,030	5,531	7,848	5,250	2,238	828	444	25	24,194
Wrexham	9,606	14,504	8,532	7,362	4,374	1,927	1,027	44	47,376
Carmarthen	3,279	4,730	4,457	4,602	5,141	1,581	352	21	24,163
Ceredigion	3,129	4,764	5,883	7,125	7,099	1,488	450	43	29,981
Dinefwr	3,252	3,627	3,387	2,872	2,405	1,168	187	28	16,926
Llanelli	8,737	11,460	5,333	3,746	1,838	528	368	29	32,039
Preseli Pembrokeshire	4,629	7,524	5,313	5,869	5,592	1,690	590	21	31,228
South Pembrokeshire	3,196	3,343	4,477	3,386	3,748	1,110	463	42	19,765
Blaenau Gwent	17,569	8,722	2,989	1,609	1,074	243	84	21	32,311
Islwyn	4,237	14,714	3,936	2,027	1,339	442	96	17	26,788
Monmouth	840	3,073	7,324	5,793	5,758	4,614	3,939	360	31,701
Newport	8,237	18,078	11,191	9,013	4,687	2,049	1,604	266	55,125
Torfaen	8,010	13,258	8,936	3,519	2,689	840	312	33	37,597
Aberconwy	3,418	4,910	5,495	4,963	3,735	1,398	866	100	24,885
Arfon	6,163	7,037	5,057	3,065	1,726	708	264	21	24,041
Dwyfor	2,007	3,215	2,730	2,886	2,778	544	272	2	14,434
Meironnydd	5,209	4,342	2,887	2,155	2,141	712	366	22	17,834
Ynys Mon	5,786	7,123	4,694	6,643	5,017	1,092	863	66	31,284
Cynon Valley	16,576	5,397	2,121	1,943	1,104	213	63	1	27,418
Merthyr Tydfil	14,151	6,321	1,674	1,488	942	191	39	5	24,811
Ogwr	11,134	13,918	10,465	8,298	6,416	2,312	1,441	159	54,143
Rhondda	21,036	8,830	1,911	613	495	86	17	10	32,998
Rhymney Valley	14,050	13,655	6,955	3,497	1,973	644	257	35	41,066
Taff Ely	9,076	11,326	7,831	4,382	3,216	1,534	1,031	85	38,481
Brecknock	2,795	2,651	3,581	2,747	3,550	1,670	1,115	118	18,227
Montgomeryshire	2,651	5,167	4,408	3,811	4,965	1,441	653	45	23,141
Radnorshire	1,413	1,818	1,800	1,9992	2,844	732	353	33	10,985
Cardiff	9,102	28,972	32,512	19,371	17,723	5,489	5,456	715	119,340
Vale of Glamorgan	3,019	9,888	9,685	8,082	7,260	3,286	4,818	634	46,672
Lliw Valley	5,154	7,132	6,210	4,885	2,274	614	162	20	26,451
Neath	5,511	11,021	5,457	2,976	1,814	384	148	14	27,325
Port Talbot	4,551	9,158	4,122	2,005	906	258	90	8	21,098
Swansea	17,227	19,000	14,029	10,458	9,492	4,074	3,106	251	77,637
Wales Total	247,588	314,853	239,675	177,869	142,978	51,337	34,410	3,520	1,212,230

Cadw

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secreatary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 28 October, *Official Report* column *70*, what has been the cost to the Exchequer of the chief executive of Cadw's visits to *(a)* the United States in December 1991, and *(b)* Romania in September 1992.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to Cadw—Welsh Historic Monuments—under its chief executive, Mr. John Carr. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. A. J. Carr to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 25 November 1992.

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question which asked what costs there had been to the Exchequer of my visits to the United States and Romania in 1991 and 1992 respectively.

My visit to the United States was associated with a Wales Tourist Board marketing initiative—"Wise Wales". The cost of my participation in this was £457.

My visit to Romania was as the UK representative at a Council of Europe seminar designed to offer advice to the Romanian authorities on measures to conserve and present the remains of that country's built heritage. The cost of this visit was £470·00 which was met by the Council of Europe.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the main measures increasing regulation in any area for which his Department has responsibility, which his Department has caused to be put into effect since 9 April.

Mr. Atkins: The following are the main measures increasing regulation which have been put into effect since the general election:

DED
Road Traffic (Training of Drivers of Vehicles Carrying Dangerous Goods) Regulations (N.I.) 1992 No. 262.
Offshore and Pipelines Safety (N.I.) Order 1992 (S.I. 1992/1728 (N.I. 17))
Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (N.I.) 1992 No. 459.
Export of Dangerous Chemicals Regulations (N.I.) 1992 No. 460.
Companies (Single Member Private Limited companies) Regulations (N.I.) 1992.
Companies (1986 Order) (Bank Accounts) Regulations (N.I.) 1992
Companies (Disclosure of Interests in Shares) Orders (Imposing Restrictions on Shares) Regulations (N.I.) 1992.
Price Indications (Bureaux de Change) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992.

DENI
The Education (Student Loans) (Amendment) Regulations (N.I.) 1992 No. 193.
Curriculum (Programmes of Study and Attainment Targets in Science) Order (N.I.) 1992 No. 205.
Curriculum (Programmes of Study and Attainment Targets in Mathematics) Order (N.I.) 1992 No. 233.
The Education (Student Loans) Regulations (N.I.) 1992 No. 279.
Curriculum (Programmes of Study and Attainment Targets in Art and Design) Order (N.I.) 1992 No. 286.
Curriculum (Educational Themes) Order (N.I.) 1992 No. 287.
Curriculum (Programmes of Study and Attainment Targets in Music) Order (N.I.) 1992 No. 288.
Curriculum (Programmes of Study and Attainment Targets in French, German, Italian, Spanish and Irish Order (N.I.) 1992 No. 289.
Curriculum (Programmes of Study and Attainment Targets in Technology and Design) Order (N.I.) 1992 No. 290.
Secondary Schools (Admissions Criteria) (Amendment) Regulations (N.I.) 1992 No. 332.
Student Awards Regulations (NI) 1992 No. 363.
Education (School Information and Prospectuses) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 1992 No. 450.
Curriculum (Complaints Tribunals) Regulations (NI) 1992 No. 457.

DANI
The Oilseeds Producers (Support System) Regulations (NI) 1992 No. 190.
The Fertilisers (Sampling and Analysis) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 235.
The Feedingstuffs Regulations (NI) 1992 No. 270.
The Fertilisers Regulations (NI) 1992 No. 187.
Zootechnical Standards Regulations (NI) 1992 No. 438.

DHSS[1]
The Income-Related Benefits and Social Security (Recoupment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 201.
The Social Security Revaluation of Earnings Factors Order (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 203.
The Income Support (General) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 236.
The Social Security (Australia) Order (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 269.
The Social Security (Claims and Payments) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 271.
The Child Support (1991 Order) (Commencement No. 1) Order (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 278 (C. 13).
The Social Security (Contributions) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 280.
The Income-Related Benefits (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 284.
The Social Security (1990 Order) (Commencement No. 5) Order (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 285 (C. 14).
The Occupational Pension Schemes (Deficiency on Winding Up etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 300.
The Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 304.
The Social Security (Widows Benefit and Retirement Pensions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 318.
The Income-Related Benefits (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 327.
The Social Security (Jersey and Guernsey) Order (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 328.
The Social Security Benefit (Persons Abroad) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 330.
The Child Support (Information, Evidence and Disclosure) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 339.
The Child Support (Maintenance Assessment Procedure) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 340.
The Child Support (Maintenance Assessments and Special Cases) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 341.
The Child Support (Arrears, Interest and Adjustment of Maintenance Assessments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 342.
The Child Support (1991 Order) (Commencement No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 347 (C. 16).
The Child Support (Collection and Enforcement) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 390.
The Social Fund (Maternity and Funeral Expenses) (General) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 394.
The Income-Related Benefits (Amendment No. 4) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 403.
The Housing Benefit (General) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 404.
The Income-Related Benefit (Amendment No. 5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 435.
The Housing Benefit (General) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 444.
The Social Security (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 453.
The Child Support (Collection and Enforcement of Other Forms of Maintenance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 465.
The Child Support (Maintenance Arrangements and Jurisdiction) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 466.
The Child Support (1991 Order) (Commencement No. 3 and Transitional Provisions) Order (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 467 (C. 20).
The Social Fund (Cold Weather Payments) (General) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 470.
The Income Support (General) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 No. 471.

[1] Most of the regulations made by DHSS since the last General Election are amendment or technical regulations which do not increase the total regulatory burden on business.

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the main measures of deregulation, or simplification of regulation, which his Department has carried out, or caused to be carried out, since 9 April.

Mr. Atkins: The impact on business and members of the public is taken into account in assessing any proposals for changes in policy and procedures. Moreover, the scope for deregulation and simplication is kept under constant review in Northern Ireland Departments. The following are the main measures of deregulation or simplication of regulation which have been carried out in Northern Ireland since the last general election:

DED.
Quarries (Metrication) Regulations (NI) 1992 No. 216
Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Factories Metrication etc.) Regulations (NI) 1992 No. 461.
DANI.
The Food Safety (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (Consequential Modifications) Order (NI) 1992.

Wages Councils

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was *(a)* the number of establishments covered by wages councils and *(b)* the number of employees covered by each wages council, giving the information for the latest available date.

Mr. Atkins: The numbers of establishments and employees covered by each wages council in Northern Ireland at 31 December 1991 are as follows:

Wages council	*Number of establishments*	*Number of employees*
Baking	283	863
Boot and shoe repairing	90	43
Catering	4,944	15,240
Clothing manufacturing	149	9,334
Laundry	16	306

Wages council	*Number of establishments*	*Number of employees*
Linen and cotton handkerchief and household goods and linen piece goods	45	1,127
Paper box	15	725
Road haulage	1,812	6,506
Sugar confectionery and food preserving	20	166
Totals	7,374	34,310

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for 1991, how many establishments were checked in which underpayments were found in wages council trades; how many checks were carried out and underpayments found by the Northern Ireland wages inspectorate; how many workers were covered by wages councils and what were the results of the checks; how many workers' pay was checked by the Northern Ireland wages inspectorate; and how many establishments were found to be failing to post wages council notices and failing to keep adequate records of wages paid and of hours worked.

Mr. Atkins: The requested information is as follows:

	Number
Establishments checked where underpayments were found	18
Workers found underpaid	545
Checks carried out by Wages Inspectorate	1,476
Workers covered by Wages Councils	34,310
Workers whose pay was checked	10,458
Establishments failing to post Wages Council notices	94
Establishments failing to keep adequate records of	
(*a*) wages paid	Nil
(*b*) hours worked	58

Recycling

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to encourage the newspaper and textile industries to promote and participate in recycling schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The newspaper industry in Northern Ireland already uses recycled material in its production and places newspaper material into the recycling stream. In 1991, following discussions with the Government, the Newspaper Publishers Association agreed to aim to increase the proportion of waste paper used in newsprint consumed in the United Kingdom to at least 40 per cent. by the year 2000.

Plans are in hand to promote recycling and the use of recycled materials amongst business and industry in Northern Ireland and I intend to announce new legislative proposals next year.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to raise, as president of European political co-operation, the status of European Community member states' sensitive technology exports to Iraq at the next EPC meeting.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The member states of the European Community in political co-operation regularly discuss issues concerning the control of exports of sensitive technologies. They do not make such exports to Iraq which is under comprehensive, mandatory sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council.

Western Sahara

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the continued occupation by Morocco of western Sahara.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The UN Secretary-General's special representative is continuing his talks on the implementation of the UN settlement plan for the western Sahara. We are giving our full support to those efforts.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of the United Nations proposals for a referendum in western Sahara.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Although some progress has been made, there are still differences over eligibility to vote in the referendum. The UN Secretary-General's special representative has arranged a meeting with tribal chiefs of the western Sahara in Geneva on 30 November to 1 December to see if some of these problems can be overcome.

UNESCO

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the United Kingdom has to make an application to rejoin UNESCO.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We continue to monitor carefully progress at UNESCO. There are no plans at present to apply to rejoin the organisation, but we shall keep the situation under review.

Saharaic Arab Democratic Republic

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to meet Mohammed Abdelaziz, president of the Saharaic Arab Democratic Republic during his visit to London.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. Mr. Mohammed Abdelaziz will meet a senior official at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Tunisia

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 9 November, *Official Report*, column 546, what was the substance of the discussions between his Department and representatives of the Tunisian Government on the question of human rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The most recent occasion on which we have discussed human rights with the Tunisian Government was in October when our ambassador in Tunis led an EC troika delegation at a meeting with the Tunisian deputy Foreign Minister. This was an opportunity for a wide-ranging discussion on human rights and democracy. The troika drew attention to the declaration issued at the Lisbon European Council on relations with the Maghreb. This declaration underlines the importance the EC attaches to respect for human rights.

Hong Kong

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the exchange of letters between the British Government and the Chinese Government prior to the adoption by the Chinese National People's Congress of the Basic Law for Hong Kong.

Mr. Goodlad: The relevant exchange of letters was published by the British and Chinese Governments on 28 October. A copy of the exchange has been deposited in the Library of the House.

Bosnia

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column *452*, if he will list the posts closest to Bosnia and Slovenia where visa applications can be made for entry to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our embassy at Belgrade provides a limited visa-issuing service—for example, to those seeking entry to the United Kingdom on urgent medical or compassionate grounds, and spouses and close family of British citizens.

We plan to provide a visa service at our embassy in Zagreb in Croatia as soon as practical problems including accommodation have been sorted out. As our enbassy in Ljubljana in Slovenia is currently operating out of an hotel, we have no plans, at present, to provide a visa service there.

Our posts in Budapest, Vienna, Sofia, Rome, Florence and Milan all provide visa services. Applications can be made by mail.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received concerning the 18-month-old constituent of the hon. Member for Woolwich who is HIV positive with AIDS-related symptoms, for whom an attendance allowance claim was made on 20 January.

Mr. Scott: The administration of attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter to Mr. John Austin-Walker from Mr. Michael Bichard, dated 26 November 1992.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the representations received concerning your 18 month old constituent for whom an Attendance Allowance (AA) claim was made on 20 January.

I can confirm that an adjudication officer on the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) Unit has now considered your constituent's claim and the decision was notified to the child's mother on 24 October. I replied on 24 November to your letter of 1 October to the Minister of State for Social Security and Disabled People and this explains the position in greater detail.

I offer my sincere apologies and regret for the delay your constituent has experienced and clearly on this occasion the family have not received the standard of service which they have every right to expect from the Benefits Agency.

As you are aware, from 6 April DLA replaced and extended both AA and Mobility Allowance for people disabled before the age of 65. I wrote to all MPs on 19 October explaining in detail the significant problems encountered with the launch of DLA and the measures introduced to deal with the backlog which resulted.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Welsh Language

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to ensure that a member of staff within the main disability living allowance unit in Blackpool is able to deal with inquiries from Welsh speakers in the Welsh language.

Mr. Scott: The provision of customer service at the disability living allowance unit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter to Mr. Elfyn Llwyd from Mr. Michael Bichard, dated 26 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking whether it will become policy to ensure that a member of staff within the main Disability Living Allowance (DLA) Unit in Blackpool is able to deal with enquiries from Welsh Speakers in the Welsh language.

There are no arrangements for a specific member of staff in the DLA unit in Blackpool to deal with such enquiries. However, there are alternatives which ensure that Welsh speaking customers are given a service which ensures that they can use the Welsh language if they choose.

The Cardiff Disability Benefits Centre (DBC) deals with initial DLA claims from Welsh customers and has a Welsh speaker in its Customer Service Section. There is a telephone freeline available in Welsh which can provide free advice and help on all benefit matters including DLA. Within Wales all Districts operate a bilingual policy and the Agency has a Welsh Language and Media Unit.

If a customer contacts the DLA Unit in Blackpool we are able to offer a Welsh translation service for written communications. Telephone inquiries cannot be handled in Welsh but the customer can be referred to the Welsh Free Line, as can enquirers of the free Benefit Enquiry Line. Welsh Language versions of the DLA claim pack and a leaflet covering DLA are available and both are updated regularly.

Should there be a particular case which is causing you concern, please let me know and I will be happy to look into it further.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Social Fund, Newcastle

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the definitions of the high, medium and low-priority groups in use in the Newcastle area for grants and loans within the social fund in April and at the latest available date.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter to Mr. Jim Cousins from Mr. Michael Bichard, dated 26 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about Social Fund priorities in Newcastle.

Social Fund Officers (SFOs) decide the overall priority of individual applications by looking at all the circumstances of the case. They are obliged to take account of guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Social Security, and by the District Manager acting as Area Social Fund Officer (ASFO).

Guidance on priorities issued by the Secretary of State is in the Social Fund Guide which is in the Library.

The ASFO is required to provide guidance as to what priority should generally be afforded to certain categories of items, or in the case of grants, circumstances. The guidance is drafted so as not to interfere with the SFO's duty to consider the priority of individual items in light of the particular circumstances of the applicant. As the ASFO only suggests levels of priority in his guidance, it follows that there can be no definition of priorities as such.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to promote new EC legislation on the transferability of occupational pensions during the Government's presidency of the European Commission.

Miss Widdecombe: During the United Kingdom presidency of the Council of Ministers we have tabled a resolution which, if adopted by the Council, seeks the implementation of measures which recognise that workers should be able to move between member states without undue loss of occupational pension rights. The resolution gives as examples of methods by which rights may be protected, both preservation and revaluation in the member's existing scheme, and transfers to a scheme in the other member state.

The resolution calls on member states to investigate whether other obstacles to the mobility of workers existing in the occupational pensions field and, if so, how they can be removed. It calls on the Commission to report on measures taken by member states and to consider whether further action is required.

Personal Pensions

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made for the take-up and cost to the Exchequer of the proposed 1 per cent. additional rebate for personal pension holders in 1993-94 and for subsequent years; and if he will publish figures separately for *(a)* people who already have an appropriate personal pension, *(b)* people newly contracting out into a personal pension scheme, *(c)* men and *(d)* women.

Miss Widdecombe: This measure, which will cost the national insurance fund an estimated £165 million in 1994-95 will benefit in the region of 2 million appropriate personal pension holders aged 30 and over. There is nil cost in 1993-94 because payments are made after the end of the relevant tax year. The 2 million holders are estimated to comprise 1·5 million men at a cost of £135 million and 0·5 million women at a cost of £30 million. The cost and split between men and women are estimated to be broadly similar in subsequent years until a new rebate structure is implemented. This is expected to be in 1996-97.

The measure is designed to ensure that appropriate personal pensions remain attractive across the age range for the majority of current holders. We anticipate that in the relevant years there will continue to be about 5 million appropriate personal pension holders.

National Insurance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of social security expenditure was met by national insurance contributions for each year since 1979; what are the planned figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94; and if he will make a statement about future trends.

Miss Widdecombe: The available information is in the table.

Year	*Per cent.*
1978-79	67·5
1979-80	65·7
1980-81	66·2
1981-82	63·0
1982-83	59·8
1983-84	58·6
1984-85	54·6
1985-86	53·9
1986-87	53·6
1987-88	53·2
1988-89	53·9
1989-90	54·4
1990-91	55·0
1991-92	54·5
1992-93	52·9
1993-94	52·3
1994-95	51·7

Notes:

1. The percentages refer to expenditure met from the National Insurance Fund.
2. Figures for 1978-79 to 1990-91 are outturn; 1991-92 is estimated; 1992-93 onwards are plans contained in the Departmental Report 1992 (Cm 1914).
3. Income to the National Insurance Fund comes from several sources, predominantly employers' and employees' National Insurance Contributions, investment income and in certain years a Treasury Supplement.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the surplus or deficit in the national insurance fund for each financial year since 1979; and what is his estimate for the current year and for 1993-94.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is given in the table.

Year	Surplus £'000	Deficit £'000
1979-80	535,302	—
1980-81	411,698	—
1981-82	—	991,008
1982-83	—	23,004
1983-84	580,379	—
1984-85	373,674	—
1985-86	315,514	—
1986-87	413,942	—
1987-88	1,580,654	—
1988-89	3,081,188	—
1989-90	—	61,669
1990-91	1,484,717	—
1991-92	—	3,455,556
1992-93	—	4,659,000
1993-94	—	4,827,000

Notes:

1. All figures represent the difference between income and outgo within the year.
2. Figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94 are estimated.

Source: Government Actuary's Department.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which benefits have been transferred since 1979 to the consolidated fund from the national insurance fund.

Miss Widdecombe: Expenditure on industrial injuries benefits was transferred to the consolidated fund from 1 April 1990. Additionally, from that date new arrangements were introduced whereby the costs of statutory sick pay and statutory maternity pay were reimbursed to the national insurance fund from the consolidated fund.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what saving for the national insurance fund has been achieved by transferring out expenditure on each benefit transferred to the consolidated fund, in each year since 1979 in cash terms and as a percentage of the national insurance fund; and what are the corresponding estimates for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is in the table:

1. Year	2. Industrial injuries benefits	3. Percentage of the national insurance fund	4. Statutory sick pay and statutory maternity pay	5. Percentage of the national insurance fund
1990-91	584,622	1·70	1,268,000	3·68
1991-92	675,300	1·95	1,055,000	3·04
1992-93	677,000	2	1,071,000	3
1993-94	700,000	2	1,093,000	3

Notes:

1. The figures in columns (2) and (4) are expressed as percentages of total receipts to the National Insurance Fund.
2. Figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94 are estimated.

Sources: Government Actuary's Report on the Social Security Bill 1992 (Cm 2097) and the Government's Expenditure Plans 1992-93—1993-94 (Cm 1914).

3. The figures shown in column (5) in respect of Statutory Sick pay and Statutory Maternity Pay are equivalent to the amounts of reimbursement from the Consolidated Fund to the National Insurance Fund.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what sums have ben paid for each of the years since 1979 from general taxation into the national insurance fund, expressed in cash terms and as a percentage of the national insurance fund, and for what reasons in each case.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is in the table.

Year	Sum paid into NI fund in £000	As a percentage of the NI fund	Reason
1979-80	2,343,000	17·62	[1]—
1980-81	2,848,000	17·79	[1]—
1981-82	2,433,000	14·27	[1]—
1982-83	2,591,000	13·36	[1]—
1983-84	2,807,000	13·31	[1]—
1984-85	2,597,000	11·74	[1]—
1985-86	2,163,000	9·21	[1]—
1986-87	2,412,000	9·52	[1]—
1987-88	2,135,000	7·81	[1]—
1988-89	1,653,000	5·54	[1]—
1989-90	—	—	—
1990-91	1,268,000	3·68	[2]—
1991-92	1,055,000	3·04	[2]—
1992-93	1,071,000	3·00	[2]—
1993-94	1,093,000	3·00	[2]—

[1] Treasury Supplement.

[2] Reimbursement of the costs of Statutory Sick Pay and Statutory Maternity Pay.

Note: The figures for years 1992-93 and 1993-94 are based on estimates.

Source: GAD.

Christmas Bonus

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 19 November, to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) *Official Report*, columns 367-68, on the subject of the Christmas bonus, what are the differences in calculation resulting in different figures in his answer and in a letter to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecoombe), dated 23 November.

Miss Widdecombe: The figures quoted in my reply of 19 November to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) at columns *367-68*, reflected the level of the Christmas bonus if it had been increased annually in line with prices since 1974. The figures given in my letter to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford reflected the level if the bonus had been increased annually in line with prices since 1972.

HEALTH

Column Ozone

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research work is currently undertaken by her Department on the effect of sustained decreases of total column ozone upon levels of non-melanoma skin cancers and eye cataracts.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 19 October at column *80.* Ultraviolet radiation (UV) monitoring undertaken by the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) has indicated no significant departures from the expected norms since measurements began in 1988. The Medical Research Council is currently conducting basic research into the mechanisms of UV related carcinogenesis. In addition, the NRPB has established an advisory group to examine the scientific literature on health hazards from UV. The Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) proposes to give advice on further research needs once the NRPB advisory group has reported.

St. George's Hospital, Tooting

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many registered general nurses have recently passed their examinations at St. George's hospital, Tooting; and how many have been offered employment as nurses at that hospital;

(2) what was the number of nursing vacancies at St. George's hospital, Tooting, on 16 November.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Dr. Enid Vincent, the chairman of Wandsworth health authority, for details.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the main measures increasing regulation in any area for which her Department has responsibility, which her Department has caused to be put into effect since 9 April;

(2) if she will list the main measures of deregulation, or simplification of regulation, which her Department has carried out, or caused to be carried out, since 9 April;

(3) which Minister in her Department is responsible for the oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters which fall within the responsibility of her Department.

Mr. Sackville: I have responsibility for the oversight of deregulation issues.

From April 1992, a new simplified application procedure for the change of ownership of a medicinal product licence has been in place. Although there have been no other significant deregulatory measures, in considering new proposals, the Department—where appropriate—reviews the regulatory burdens that might be placed on businesses to ensure that they are strictly proportionate in perceived risks.

There have been no measures increasing the regulatory burden on businesses since April.

Clinical Performance

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made of the variation in clinical performance in relation to a range of treatments among different hospitals, units and clinicians; and whether she will make available the evidence for publication.

Dr. Mawhinney: Each year the Department publishes a set of health service indicators which provide comparative information on a wide range of health service activities within each health authority in England. The indicator set contains data on a selected range of clinical treatments within each authority and this information is discussed with regional health authorities in the context of preparing and implementing the annual corporate contracts. The health service indicators are made available free to every health authority and a set is placed each year in the Library.

Community Health Councils

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to undertake a review of the role of community health councils.

Dr. Mawhinney: Community health councils have been given an important role in enabling the public interest to be represented in relation to local national health service services. How that role can best be fulfilled continues to be the subject of consideration at local, regional, and national level.

Medicines Control Agency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 30 October, *Official Report,* columns *943-44,* what has been the cost to the Exchequer of the director and chief executive of the Medicines Control Agency's visit to Washington, USA on 18 May.

Dr. Mawhinney: The administration of the Medicines Control Agency is a matter for its chief executive, Dr. Keith Jones. I have asked the chief executive to reply to the hon. Member.

Letter to Mr. Martin Redmond from Dr. K. Jones, dated 27 November 1992.

The Secretary of State for Health will have advised that your recent Parliamentary Question will be answered directly by the Chief Executive of the relevant agency. I give below the response for the Medicines Control Agency:

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The Medicines Control Agency is funded by fees paid by applicants for product and other licences and from current licence holders. There was, therefore, no cost to the exchequer from my visit to Washington in May.

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the contributions made in the public consultation exercise run by Yorkshire regional health authority concerning the proposed merger of Kirklees, Dewsbury and Calderdale health authorities into one new health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have no plans to do so. We shall however take all comments into account before reaching a decision on this proposal and when this is announced set out fully the reasons for the conclusions.

Youth Care Services

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment the Government have made of the quality of services provided to young people in the care of local authorities;

(2) what monitoring work is being undertaken on provision made under sections 20 to 26 of the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's report on the first year of the Children Act 1989 is due to be presented to Parliament early in 1993 and will refer to services under sections 20 to 26.

As part of our strategy for monitoring the Act, we are collecting information covering children looked after by local authorities under section 20.

The Department's research programme includes studies covering the implementation of the requirements of section 20 regarding provision of accommodation and section 24 on preparing children for leaving care and supporting them after they have left. The studies will identify policies and practices which are supportive to young people leaving care.

The social services inspectorate is currently planning inspections of services for children in need and children with disabilities, and on representations and complaints procedures.

Mentally Disordered Offenders

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the interdepartmental review of health and social services for mentally disordered offenders and others requiring similar services.

Mr. Yeo: The steering committee, chaired by Dr. John Reed, completed the review on schedule in July 1992. Earlier progress reports were made by my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) in his reply of 13 November 1991 at columns *583-84* to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) and in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 2 June 1992 at columns *453-54*.

We have already published nine consultation documents from the steering committee about the various issues considered in the review. The general direction proposed in these has been widely supported. The steering committee's final summary report, setting out the main conclusions it has reached, is published today and has been placed in the Library. The earlier consultative reports will be published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in four volumes next month. The Departments are also making widely available a digest of some of the issues and initiatives identified during visits to local services.

In parallel with the final summary report we are issuing for consultation the report of an official working group on services for offenders with learning disabilities or autism and a discussion paper on racial and cultural issues. These are also available in the Library.

In the course of the review, the Government have reaffirmed that mentally disordered offenders who need care and treatment should receive it from health and personal social services rather than in the criminal justice system. We have also endorsed a series of guiding principles which point in particular to services being provided, as far as is compatible with public safety, in more local and less institutional settings. As the final report makes clear, one of the keys to achieving this is joint working between the different agencies concerned at all levels.

Progress in many places has been stimulated both by the review itself and by the earlier Home Office circular 66/90 which gave advice on practical ways of diverting mentally disordered people from the criminal justice system and avoiding prosecution. We have identified mental illness as a key area in the White Paper "The Health of the Nation" (Cm 1986). This requires health authorities to include mentally disordered offenders in their strategic and purchasing plans. Regional directors of public health have now carried out initial assessments of needs and these will be developed in subsequent years. We are also spending £18 million this year on capital development of medium secure psychiatric units, against only £3 million in 1991-92.

We shall be considering carefully the recommendations set out in the final report, including their resource implications and other factors bearing on the possible pace of development. Much progress can be achieved by better use of existing services and resources and improved co-ordination between the responsible agencies. The protection afforded to health services for mentally disordered offenders, including those for patients with special needs, by NHS management executive letter (92)6 remains in force at least until March 1993. We are considering what steps should be taken to ensure an adequate level of services beyond that date.

To help in following up the review, and in maintaining the good co-operation between agencies which it has fostered, we are establishing a new advisory committee on mentally disordered offenders. This is being formed for three years with the following terms of reference:

> To advise the Department of Health and the Home Office on matters referred to it in connection with the provision and co-ordination of services for mentally disordered offenders and others requiring similar services, with particular reference to follow up action on the report of the joint departmental review of services; and to provide advice to the two departments on related issues which are referred to it.

The membership of the committee will be announced shortly.

We have already announced the establishment of two further advisory groups, also under Dr. Reed's chairmanship, to look at high security and related psychiatric provision and at the needs of people with psychopathic or personality disorder. These groups will be reporting in the early part of 1993.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and I believe that this review has made a major contribution to raising the service profile of mentally disordered offenders. We should like to renew our thanks to Dr. Reed and all those who have worked with him.

NHS Blood Services

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has reached a decision on the future management structure for the NHS blood services.

Mr. Sackville: Following a review we have decided to bring together responsibility for managing all parts of the national health service blood services in England into a single national blood authority (NBA). I shall lay an order in due course to establish the new authority. From 1 April

1993 it will replace the existing Central Blood Laboratories Authority and the National Directorate of the National Blood Transfusion Service; and subsequently will assume responsibility for managing the regional transfusion centres at the earliest opportunity.

The key objectives of the NBA will be:

to maintain and promote blood and blood product supply based on our outstanding system of voluntary unpaid donors;

to implement a cost-effective national strategy for ensuring an adequate supply of blood and blood products to meet national needs;

to ensure that high standards of safety and quality in the blood supply are maintained throughout the blood services;

to ensure that blood products meet a consistent standard of safety and quality;

to ensure the cost efficient operation of the Transfusion Centres and the Bio Products Laboratory both individually and together as parts of the national service.

Our blood supply is of high quality and among the safest in the world. We believe that the new management structure will enable the blood service to maintain and improve on those high standards and to enhance its operations so that the blood freely donated by our volunteer donors can be used most effectively in the interests of patients.

I am pleased to announce that Sir Colin Walker, deputy chairman Central Blood Laboratories Authority, has agreed to serve also as the chairman of the new national blood authority when it is set up. Further appointments will be announced later.

Coventry Ambulance Service

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer of 6 November, *Official Report*, column *451-52*, if she will now give figures for *(a)* total emergency cases, *(b)* the percentage where the response was within eight minutes and *(c)* the percentage where the response was within 20 minutes, for the ambulance service in Coventry for each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Sackville: Information by district in the west midlands is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir James Ackers, the chairman of West Midlands regional health authority, for details.

NHS Review

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column *503*, what is the name of the management consultants being used in the current review of her Department's requirement for information from the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: Touche Ross management consultants.

West Midlands Regional Health Authority

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library a copy of the KPMG Peat Marwick report on the proposal to close hospitals in the South Birmingham health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: Publication of the KPMG Peat Marwick report is a matter for West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she was informed of the proposed establishment of financial information packages from West Midlands regional health authority; and what advice her Department gave about the framework for the new company.

Dr. Mawhinney: This Department and West Midlands regional health authority jointly funded what was known as the financial information project during the 1980s. The Department was not involved in the arrangements in 1990 by the West Midlands regional health authority to evolve the project into FIP health or in the association of that company with a charitable body known as the health management trust other than to advise on the granting of licences of the crown copyright systems software.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will cut the payments made to financial information packages by West Midlands regional health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: The question of payments to Financial Information Project Systems Ltd. is currently under investigation.

Expenditure

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was per capita spending on health and personal social services in cash terms and at current prices for each year since 1979 for *(a)* all ages, *(b)* births, *(c)* zero to four years, *(d)* five to 15 years, *(e)* 16 to 64 years, *(f)* 65 to 74 years and *(g)* 75 years and over; and how much in each case was spent on (i) hospital and community health services, (ii) family practitioner services, (iii) personal social services and (iv) in total in England.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 11 November 1992:]* Estimates of spending per head by age group for the personal social services and for the family health services are not now produced every year. The latest available are shown in the table.

Estimates for the hospital and community health services are still produced annually, but as a result of changes in data sources, definitions and the methodology used, comparable figures for a series of years cannot be produced. The latest estimates are also shown in the table.

Spending per head
Hospital and Community Health Services 1990-91

	All ages	*Births*	*0 to 4*	*5 to 15*	*16 to 64*	*65 to 74*	*75 and over*
£'s Cash	310	1,440	220	110	185	590	1,255

Family Health Services 1989-90

	All ages	*Births*	*0 to 4*	*5 to 15*	*16 to 64*	*65 to 74*	*75 and over*
£'s Cash	105	120	80	60	95	170	240
1990-91 Prices	115	130	85	65	100	185	255

Personal Social Services 1989-90

	All ages	*Births*	*0 to 4*	*5 to 15*	*16 to 64*	*65 to 74*	*75 and over*
£'s Cash	85	35	115	115	30	110	475
1990-91 Prices	95	35	125	125	35	120	515

Health Services (Demand)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the most recently available estimates of the percentage changes in demand on the hospital and community health services due to demographic change for each year from 1972-73 to 1996-97.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 11 November 1992]:* The table estimates the change in the level of resources required each year, as a result of changes in the age structure of the population of England, to maintain hospital and community health services at constant levels per head. Figures prior to 1975-76 are not available. The figure for 1993-94, 0·5 per cent., compares with the estimated increase of at least 2·5 per cent. in hospital and community health activity which we expect the national health service to achieve as a result of the additional funding announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Estimated percentage change in demand on the hospital and community health services due to demographic changes

Year	*Increase over previous year Per cent.*
1975-76	0·1
1976-77	0·2
1977-78	0·3
1978-79	1·0
1979-80	1·3
1980-81	1·1
1981-82	0·4
1982-83	0·4
1983-84	0·5
1984-85	0·6
1985-86	1·3
1986-87	0·9
1987-88	1·4
1988-89	1·0
1989-90	0·9
[1]1990-91	0·7
[2]1991-92	0·6
[2]1992-93	0·7
[2]1993-94	0·5
[2]1994-95	0·5
[2]1995-96	0·9
[2]1996-97	0·7

[1] Estimated.

[2] Projected.

TRANSPORT

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which Minister in his Department is responsible for the oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters which fall within the responsibility of his Department.

Mr. Norris: I am.

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the main measures of deregulation, or simplification of regulation, which his Department has carried out, or caused to be carried out, since the last general election.

Mr. Norris: Since the general election, we have carried out a number of measures of deregulation, including the deregulation of motorway service areas; and European Community measures on liberalising international coach services, international road haulage and road passenger cabotage services.

In air transport, the Government have been enthusiastic supporters of the EC's third package of aviation measures, establishing a single market in aviation form 1 January 1993. From that date, airlines meeting safety, common financial fitness and EC nationality and effective control criteria will be entitled to an operating licence giving unrestricted access to most intra-Community routes; and there will be free setting of air fares, subject to safeguards against predatory and excessive pricing.

Agreement has also been reached in principle on a regulation liberalising shipping cabotage services throughout the European Community.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has recently announced proposals which would give local authorities greater discretion in setting speed limits on local roads. In particular, it is proposed that local authorities would no longer need the Secretary of State's consent before establishing a speed limit on a principal road.

We intend shortly to lay regulations before Parliament to allow right of access to the railway network to certain international services, in order to implement EC directive 91/440; and to introduce legislation at the earliest practicable opportunity to extend the benefits of deregulation to bus services in London.

Jubilee Line

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is now the expected timescale for the commencement of work on the extension of the Jubilee line?

Mr. Norris: I cannot speculate on the time scale in advance of the conclusion of a formal agreement on the terms on which the administrators of Olympia and York is to make its contribution.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by his Department; if he will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: My Department's property managers are advised to ensure that all plant and equipment is properly maintained and regularly serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's specification, legal requirements and professional advice on best practice. This includes air conditioning and refrigeration equipment.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if he will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of CFCs and HCFCs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Plant and equipment in my Department are managed locally. The Department is appointing a network of professional advisers to help property managers check plant and equipment and to draw up forward maintenance programmes. This will include measures to replace ozone-depleting substances as soon as possible, having regard to legal requirements and advice on best practice. Property managers will be encouraged to set and monitor targets locally, taking account of the actual equipment and substances in use, the alternatives available and the opportunities for recycling.

Women Passengers

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures have been taken within the last five years to improve the safety of women using public transport in London.

Mr. Norris: Safety for all their customers is the top priority of British Rail and London Transport. Over the last five years they have introduced a number of measures to make services safer and more secure. On BR and London Underground these include the provision of closed circuit television and improved lighting at stations, in subways and at station car parks, mirrors to see around corners and helppoints on underground platforms. London Buses Ltd. has introduced two-way radios and assault klaxons and it is in the process of installing video cameras. BR and London Underground Ltd. work in close liaison with the British Transport police, and London Buses Ltd. with the Metropolitan police, whose officers make regular patrols of premises and vehicles. In conjunction with the Suzy Lamplugh trust, an organisation dedicated to reducing risks to the personal safety of women, transport operators and the British Transport police, my Department has published a leaflet entitled "Travel Safely by Public Transport".

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for the future of British Rail's strategy entitled "Organising for Quality" following privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: "Organising for Quality" has brought a more commercial approach to the organisation and management of the railway but within the constraints of a nationalised industry. The Government's proposals in "New Opportunities for the Railways" (Cm 2012) will take this process further by introducing more competition, greater efficiency and a wider choice of services more closely tailored to what customers want.

Freight Transport

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what specific targets have been established by his Department for the development of combined freight transport schemes in the United Kingdom up until the year 2000.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to my answer on 23 November, at column *562*. The Department does not set such targets. The development of combined freight transport is a commercial matter for individual operators.

NATIONAL FINANCE

VAT

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for South Hams of early November, about the VAT surcharge levied on Western Approaches Yachts; and what instructions his officials have with regard to penalties for small businesses.

Sir John Cope: Customs has been asked to look into the points my hon. Friend raised in his letter of 10 November and a reply will be sent as soon as its inquiries are completed.

Customs applies the law on VAT penalties, subject in appropriate cases to appeal to VAT tribunals or the courts, and with due regard to the reports of the Public Accounts Committee.

EC Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Lamont: The Economic and Finance Council of the European Community met in Brussels under my chairmanship on 23 November. The Paymaster General represented the United Kingdom.

A national programme for economic convergence submitted by Belgium was discussed. The Council commended Belgium's record of price and monetary stability but concluded that fiscal consolidation was the key requirement in the conduct of Belgium's economic policy. The Council therefore welcomed the multi-annual measures which the Belgian Government have set in place and their new commitment to continue to reduce their debt ratio after 1996.

The Council held a useful discussion about the future financing of the Community. Along with the United Kingdom, many member states continued to argue that the Commission's compromise proposals still involved unacceptable increases in expenditure. We also made it clear that the United Kingdom would not accept any adverse change to the abatement.

Sir Leon Brittan gave the Council a short outline of the Commission's proposals for changes in the EC legislative framework for banking supervision in the light of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International case.

Over lunch, the Council discussed the economic situation in the Community. I announced that there would be a full discussion of economic issues at the European Council and that consideration should be given to the measures which member states can take, both individually and collectively, to hasten economic recovery.

The Council also reached a political agreement on the investment services directive, the remaining financial services measure from the single market programme. All the Government's negotiating objectives were met concerning the outstanding issues which were discussed. The directive will offer worthwhile opportunities for the British financial services sector.

The report of the high-level group on fraud, set up at the United Kingdom's initiative, was also adopted and welcomed as containing useful proposals which would improve the effectiveness of measures to counter fraud in the Community.

Subject to reserves from Denmark and Germany, the Council also agreed to increase travellers' allowances so that travellers arriving from outside the Community will be able to bring in goods to a value of 175 ecu without incurring further tax; and that the amount for goods that tax-free shops can sell VAT free to travellers within the EC is restricted to the value of 90 ecu. Again, this was the welcome result of a United Kingdom initiative.

The excise simplification directive was also agreed subject to a German scrutiny reserve and final modifications to the text in the jurist/linguists group. Officials were urged to resolve the remaining issues for agreement in the VAT simplification directive. It was agreed that the 7th VAT directive should be discussed at the next meeting of ECOFIN on 14 December. Meanwhile the United Kingdom made it clear that we could not agree to the current proposals for VAT on works of art at import.

The taxation of road transport was also discussed as part of a package of proposals to liberalise road transport which will also be discussed at the Transport Council on 7 December. It was agreed that ECOFIN should return to this issue on 14 December.

Finally, the Council agreed, without further discussion, balance of payments loans to the Baltic states and Council conclusions on the Ruding report on corporate taxation. The latter emphasised importance of subsidiarity in this area and also identified a number of further criteria which need to be considered before any action is proposed.

These conclusions are a valuable step forward and establish an acceptable framework for future consideration of corporate tax issues in the Community.

Windsor Castle

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimate of *(a)* the annual cost of insuring Windsor castle against fire, *(b)* the annual cost of insuring the contents of Windsor castle against fire damage, *(c)* the cost of insuring all Government-owned buildings against fire damage, *(d)* the cost of insuring the contents of all Government-owned buildings against fire damage and *(e)* what was the cost of (i) repairing such buildings and (ii) repairing and replacing the contents of such buildings in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lamont: Estimates of the insurance costs are not available. There is no central record of losses but the value of losses due to fire reported by Departments to the Treasury during a review of Government insurance arrangements in 1991 was:

£ million

Year	Value
1985-86	14·4
1986-87	3·4
1987-88	181·3
1988-89	0·8
1989-90	4·7

The 1987-88 figure includes a sum of £180·1 million relating to a single major fire at a Ministry of Defence depot. The figures do not include losses in respect of incidents costing less than £100,000 at Ministry of Defence establishments.

Tropical Timber

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what revenue the Government derived from VAT on imported tropical timber in 1991.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* Not all tropical timbers are separately identified in the Customs tariff which is the basis of available statistics.

Calculations based on the value of imports of identifiable tropical timber recorded during 1991 show that the amount of VAT payable was approximately £25 million.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has for proceeds from the national lottery to be made available to community sports programmes.

Mr. Brooke: As the White Paper "A National Lottery: Raising Money for Good Causes" stated, it is intended that the proceeds of the national lottery will benefit a number of areas, including sport. Responsibilities and arrangements for the distribution of national lottery proceeds will be set out in the Bill which I hope to introduce soon.

Concessionary Television Licences

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will estimate how much it would cost to extend the television licensing concessionary scheme to make all housing schemes reserved for the exclusive use of retired tenants eligible for the concessionary licence rate.

Mr. Brooke: The cost of extending the concessaionry television licence scheme to all housing schemes provided specifically for retired tenants is estimated to be around £25 million in lost licence fee revenue.

Hampton Court

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the total cost to public funds arising from the restoration of Hampton Court; and what percentage this represented in terms of the total cost of restoration.

Mr. Brooke: I have asked the chief executive of the Historic Royal Palaces agency, Mr. David Beeton, to reply to the hon. Member and I shall place a copy of his reply in the Library.

Letter to Mr. Tony Banks from Mr. David Beeton, dated 26 November 1992:

The Secretary of State for National Heritage has asked me to reply to your Written Parliamentary Question asking the total cost to public funds arising from the restoration of Hampton Court Palace; and what percentage this represented in terms of the total cost of restoration.

The total cost of rebuilding the damaged part of Hampton Court Palace following the fire in 1986 was £10·4 million. A further £1·1 million was spent on redecorating and representing the restored interior. The latter sum was a commercial investment with a forecast return in excess of 8 per cent. per annum. In the four months since the State Apartments re-opened, that investment has yielded a return substantially in excess of 8 per cent.

The total cost of both elements was met from public funds.

Windsor Castle

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his estimate of the cost to Government funds arising from his undertaking to restore fully Windsor castle following the recent fire.

Mr. Brooke: An estimate will not be available until the damaged areas have been surveyed and plans for restoration have been prepared.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when fire safety precautions were last inspected at Windsor castle by authorities reporting to his office.

Mr. Brooke: The fire officer of PSA Building Management completed a report for the Department of the Environment on 7 January 1991 on those parts of Windsor castle not then subject to rewiring.

York Minster

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the total cost to public funds arising from the restoration of York Minster following the fire; and what proportion this represented in terms of the total cost of restoration.

Mr. Brooke: The total cost of the restoration work to York Minster was £2·25 million. This was met in full by insurance, so there was no need for public expenditure.

ENVIRONMENT

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list the contracts which since 1990 have been awarded to accountancy firms criticised by the Department of Trade and Industry inspectors.

Mr. Howard: The three contracts let by my Department to the accountancy arms of firms criticised by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors in reports published since the beginning of 1990 were awarded to Coopers and Lybrand or its successor Coopers Lybrand Deloitte. The work involved was as follows:

External audit of the Housing Corporation
Advice on privatisation of the PSA
External audit of the National Rivers Authority

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the implications for plutonium and spent fuel shipments of the environmental protection imperatives included in the "Agenda 21" document agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Maclean: Plutonium and spent fuel shipments are made only subject to stringent and internationally agreed standards. Such practice is wholly in accordance with the "Agenda 21" document agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the main measures of deregulation, or simplification of regulation, which his Department has carried out, or caused to be carried out, since 9 April;

(2) if he will list the main measures increasing regulation in any area for which his Department has responsibility, which his Department has caused to be put into effect since 9 April.

Mr. Redwood: Following a major review, new building regulations came into force on 1 June which completed the change from rigid mandatory rules to broad functional requirements. This, together with the revision of the associated technical guidance, allows greater freedom and a more flexible approach for designers and building control authorities. We have also issued, jointly with the Home Office, a new guide for fire safety and building regulations as part of a deregulation initiative to simplify procedures for building work to which the separate systems of building control and fire regulations apply.

A number of planning regulations have been introduced since the last general election to implement the Planning and Compensation Act 1991; they have replaced or updated previous controls or were broadly neutral in the mix of new controls and deregulation. In addition, two new regulations have been introduced—The Town and Planning (Demolition of Buildings) Direction 1992 and the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Regulations 1992—and a new deregulation measure—the Town and Planning (Simplified Planning Zones) Regulations 1992.

New statutory instruments are being made mainly in the course of implementing the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and in particular establishing the new council tax system. It is of course hoped that the new system will be simpler for authorities and for the public than the community charge system.

The Local Authorities (Capital Finance) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 1992 give temporary permission for local authorities to spend the whole of the capital receipts which they obtain between 13 November 1992 and 31 December 1993, subject to a few exceptions.

New licensing regulations governing the release of barn owls into the wild have been laid and will come into effect on 1 January 1993.

In addition, the Government have announced a change of approach with a new general presumption in favour of the use of economic instruments rather than the traditional regulation to deliver environmental goals.

Diesel Emissions

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been undertaken by his Department upon the effect of diesel emissions on the soiling of building exteriors within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has commissioned research at Queen's university, Belfast and Middlesex university on the sources and mechanisms of soiling of building exteriors. Diesel smoke is recognised as a major contributory factor.

HCFCs and CFCs

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the latest information he has on the phasing out of the use of chlorofluorocarbons; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proposals Her Majesty's Government have to speed up the phasing out of hydrochlorofluorocarbons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The fourth meeting of parties to the Montreal protocol agreed on 25 November in Copenhagen to phase out CFCs by 1 January 1996, with an interim cut of 75 per cent. by 1 January 1994. It also agreed to freeze HCFC consumption from 1 January 1995 at a level of 3·1 per cent. of 11989 CFC consumption plus HCFC consumption in that year. This freeze will be followed by a 35 per cent. cut of that level by 1 January 2004; a 65 per cent. cut by 2010; a 90 per cent. cut by 2015; a 99·5 per cent. cut by 1 January 2020; and phase-out by 2030. A legal framework for control of applications of HCFCs was also agreed. The meeting also agreed to phase out carbon tetrachloride by 1 January 1996 with a 50 per cent. cut by 1 January 1995; methyl chloroform by 1 January 1996 with a 50 per cent. cut by 1 January 1994; and halons by 1 January 1994. Methyl bromide will be frozen at 1991 levels by 1 January 1995.

This agreement is good news for the ozone layer and, indeed, good news for the environment more generally. Industry has been given a clear signal. On CFCs and halons, companies which make or use refrigerators, solvents, air-conditioning and fire-fighting equipment must move fast, as the new controls will have a major impact in only 13 months time. I intend to take steps to ensure that the industry is aware of what needs to be done.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what uses of CFCs will be granted exemption and continued use permitted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Under the Montreal protocol as revised in Copenhagen this week, any essential use exemption for CFCs can be granted only on the basis of agreement by the parties to the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer, at its meeting in 1994.

Peat

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration has been given to inviting non-governmental organisations that have knowledge of the issues involved to be represented on his Department's working group on peat extraction and related matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary announced on 7 July 1992 in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), *Official Report*, column *158*, the working group includes representatives drawn from the statutory nature and countryside conservation bodies in Great Britain, mineral planning authorities, the peat industry and Government Departments; and it has at its disposal a comprehensive range of expertise. I recognise the knowledge of some of the non-governmental organisations on peat matters. They have been invited to submit views to the group and will be further consulted as the work progresses.

Water Quality

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of water quality samples in each of the EC member states passed *(a)* EC and *(b)* World Health Organisation standards for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: A total of 98·6 per cent. of tests carried out in the United Kingdom in 1991 complied with legal standards. These standards take account of WHO guidelines and the requirements of the EC drinking water directive. We do not hold information on compliance by other EC member states.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish and place in the Library in hard copy and in machine-readable form, as soon as possible after issuing his provisional capping criteria for 1993-94, a table showing for each authority its 1992-93 budget with and without adjustments for local authority functions the maximum possible 1993-94 budget permitted by his provisional capping criteria and the percentage changes between both versions of the 1992-93 budget and the maximum 1993-94 budget.

Mr. Howard: I shall shortly be placing in the Library in hard copy and machine-readable form a table showing each authority:

(a) its 1992-93 budget on the basis of the latest information available to me;
(b) the notional amount (ie the base from which to measure the budget increase for capping purposes) which I have proposed for it;

(c) an illustrative exemplification, on the basis of my proposals for notional amounts and the exemplifications of the proposed standard spending assessments (SSAs) which I have published in my consultation paper on the Settlement, showing the maximum 1993-94 budget which would not be excessive or represent an excessive increase under my provisional capping criteria; and

(d) comparisons between this maximum and its 1992-93 budget and proposed notional amount respectively.

It is not possible to calculate the maximum possible 1993-94 budgets permitted by my provisional criteria until final notional amounts have been specified and final standard spending assessments have been calculated, which will necessarily be after the notional amounts and the local government finance reports have been made and approved by the House.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish and place in the Library in hard copy and in machine-readable form, as soon as possible after issuing his proposals for transitional relief for 1993-94 council tax payers, a table showing for each authority the transitional relief scheme council tax liability for a property in band D with no discounts to be used to calculate the entitlement to transitional relief.

Mr. Howard: Scheme council taxes will be calculated by each billing authority depending on authorities' actual budget requirements. At this stage, no figures are therefore held centrally.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the draft valuation lists sent to billing authorities in England on 27 November.

Mr. Redwood: The draft valuation lists sent to billing authorities in England show the bandings of the 20,025,366 dwellings in England. The number of dwellings in each council tax band is given in the table. Information about the number of dwellings in each billing authority area and their distribution between bands has been placed in the Library.

Local taxpayers will be able to inspect draft lists at the principal office of billing authorities from next week. The lists will also be available for inspection at local offices of the Valuation Office agency.

The bandings are based on the capital value of dwellings had they been sold on 1 April 1991. The Valuation Office agency was responsible for the supervision of the valuation exercise and was assisted by private sector valuers. The valuation exercise was largely complete by July 1992, since when addresses have been validated by local authorities.

Draft council tax valuation lists sent to billing authorities on 27 November

	Band A	*Band B*	*Band C*	*Band D*	*Band E*	*Band F*	*Band G*	*Band H*	*Total*
North	749,060	188,646	181,822	90,794	47,485	23,517	14,238	1,528	1,297,090
North West	1,184,400	490,086	456,529	231,590	129,822	68,029	51,143	5,221	2,616,820
Yorkshire and Humberside	972,765	397,069	333,972	159,199	98,617	52,074	33,686	3,022	2,050,404
West Midlands	707,881	529,040	407,514	212,792	129,358	72,861	48,347	5,457	2,113,250
East Midlands	659,261	377,404	305,742	158,200	86,676	44,739	31,247	3,056	1,666,325
East Anglia	199,948	246,103	203,179	111,613	62,410	32,584	20,915	2,434	879,186
South West	330,495	491,891	476,080	309,839	205,519	112,592	75,118	7,778	2,009,312
South East	355,771	722,972	1,221,178	891,405	581,694	343,170	276,697	38,870	4,431,757
London	85,794	384,389	791,263	746,103	471,029	233,020	196,288	53,336	2,961,222
England	5,245,375	3,827,600	4,377,279	2,911,535	1,812,610	982,586	747,679	120,702	20,025,366

Source: Valuation Office agency.

Environmental Education

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the funding provided by Government Departments for the support of information services for environmental education.

Mr. Maclean: My Department supports information services for environmental education by a variety of means: directly by the Department; through non-departmental public bodies with environmental responsibilities; and by supporting voluntary organisations through grant aid. Specific funding for information services is not separately identified.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the Ordnance Survey corporate plan for 1993 to 1997.

Mr. Howard: I have approved the Ordnance Survey corporate plan for 1993-97 and have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of both Houses.

Departmental Relocation

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make available to the trade union side of the Department of Environment (Central) Whitley council a copy of the "Survey of Staff Travel, Times and Costs" relating to the proposed move to docklands, which has been compiled by his Department.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* As my right hon. and learned Friend announced on 12 November at column *958*, the Department of the Environment will remain in Marsham street for at least the next three years. The Department's consultants have yet to submit their final report on staff travel. When it is available, the results will be discussed with the trade union side.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pesticides

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those companies which are licensed to manufacture or sell 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: Under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 (COPR), approval is given for the sale, supply, storage, advertisement and use of formulated pesticide products. Approval is not required for manufacture.

The following companies hold approval under COPR in respect of products containing 2,4-D:

Agrichem Ltd.
A. H. Marks and Co. Ltd.
Anteco Ltd.
Asda Stores Ltd.
Atlas Interlates Ltd.
AZKO Chemicals Ltd.
B and Q plc
BASF plc
Battle Hayward and Bower Ltd.
BP Chemicals Ltd.
BP Oil Ltd.
Burts and Harvey
Certified Laboratories Ltd.
Chemie Linz UK Ltd.
Chemsearch
Chipman Ltd.
Doff Portland Ltd.
Dow Chemical Co. Ltd.
DowElanco Ltd.
Farm Protection Ltd.
Farmers Crop Chemicals Ltd.
Fisons plc
Fisons plc Horticulture Division
Focus DIY Ltd.
Gem Gardening (Division of Joseph Metcalf)
H. and T. Proctor (Division of Willett and Son Bristol Ltd.)
Humber Fertilisers plc
Imperial Chemical Industries plc
J. Arthur Bowers Garden Care Products
J. D. Campbell and Sons Ltd.
Joseph Metcalf Ltd.
May and Baker Garden Care
Mirfield Sales Services Ltd.
Murphy Home and Garden Products
Nomix Chipman Ltd.
Nottcutts Garden Centres Ltd.
Pan Britannica Industries plc
Rentokil Ltd.
Rhone Poulenc Agriculture Ltd.
Rhone Poulenc Environmental Products
Richardsons Fertilisers Ltd.
Rigby Taylor Ltd.
Rite Feed Ltd.
Shell Chemicals UK Ltd.
Sinclair Horticulture and Leisure plc
Smyth Morris Chemicals
Spraydex Ltd.
Steetley Chemicals Ltd.
Synchemicals Ltd.
T Parker and Sons (Turf Management) Ltd.
Tesco Stores Ltd.
The Boots Company plc
Thomas Elliot Ltd.
TriTrade Ltd.
Universal Crop Protection Ltd.
Vitagrow (Fertilisers) Ltd.
Vitax Ltd.
Wilkinson Home and Garden Stores

There are a large number of distributors and retailers who may sell agricultural pesticides if the sale is carried out by a person holding a certificate of competence recognised by Ministers. These are not listed, but may sell pesticide products containing 2,4-D to the end user.

All pesticide products containing 2,4,5-T are in the process of being revoked. No such product may be used after 28 February 1993.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will specify the restrictions governing the sale and distribution of the pesticides 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: The sale and distribution of pesticide products containing 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D are subject to the general conditions which must be met when pesticides are advertised, sold, supplied, stored and used. These are consents made under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986. The consents have been published in "Pesticides 1992" which is held in the House Library.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which Minister in his Department is responsible for oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters which fall within the responsibility of his Department.

Mr. Curry: The Parliamentary Secretary, the Earl Howe.

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the main measures of deregulation, or simplification of regulation, which his Department has carried out, or caused to be carried out, since 9 April.

Mr. Curry: The main measures of deregulation which my Department has carried out since the last general election are as follows:

Sheep Scab (Revocation) Order.
Restricting certification requirements for imports of medicated feedingstuffs only to those containing prescription only medicines.
Exemption for pet shopowners from the need to register their premises for the sale of medicated feed in retail pack sizes of 5 kg. or less.
Publication of Medicines Act Veterinary Information Services (MAVIS) newsletter.

Cattle (Transport)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 23 November, *Official Report,* column *528-29,* regarding the transport of cattle, what informal requests have been made by the Dutch authorities for the sealing of lorries carrying British cattle to Holland.

Mr. Soames: An informal approach has been made by the Dutch authorities for the sealing of vehicles transporting calves from Great Britain to Holland. No further consideration will be given to the request until it has been confirmed in writing.

CAP Pound

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the common agricultural policy pound to be devalued in line with the open market traded pound; and what effect he expects the transition to have on the price of butter measured from current levels.

Mr. Curry: New agrimonetary arrangements compatible with the single market are due to be put in place on 1 January 1993. Under the new system, the green exchange rates used to convert CAP support prices into sterling will be kept in line with market exchange rates. If the present exchange rate for sterling continues until the end of the year, a further green pound devaluation will be necessary, in addition to the 7 per cent. devaluation agreed at the Agriculture Council and the automatic devaluation of 2 per cent. resulting from the realignment within the exchange rate mechanism of 22 November. While the support price for butter will rise in line with these devaluations, the effect on the retail price for butter is likely to be much smaller. This is because retail prices will ultimately be determined by supply and demand conditions in the market and these will depend on the use of intervention, the relatively high level of commercial stocks and the fact that packaging and handling costs will not be directly affected by the devaluations.

Meat Trade

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what new restrictions on trading cattle, calves or beef from the United Kingdom have been introduced by other European countries during 1992.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 23 November 1992]*: During 1992 Poland and Czechoslovakia have notified new conditions covering a wide range of animal and public health guarantees for the importation of meat and meat products, including beef from Great Britain. In both cases, the conditions exceed those recommended by the Office Internationale des Epizooties and as such are restricting trade. Officials are currently negotiating with the veterinary authorities concerned to agree alternative conditions which will enable trade to resume.

DEFENCE

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the main measures of deregulation, or simplification of regulation, which his Department has carried out, or caused to be carried out, since 9 April.

Mr. Aitken: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State does not generally have responsibility for regulations which impact on the business community. However, a number of procedures within the Department have been revised to reduce the administrative burden on companies. In addition, we have recently undertaken, in consultation with the defence industry, an extensive review of our contracts procedures and a number of measures will be implemented which will have the same effect.

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Minister in his Department is responsible for the oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters which fall within the responsibility of his Department.

Mr. Aitken: I am.

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the main measures increasing regulation in any area for which his Department has responsibility, which his Department has caused to be put into effect since 9 April.

Mr. Aitken: No such measures have been put into effect.

Allivane International

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he possesses in regard to the sale of advanced 155 mm shells by Allivane International to the Yugoslavian Federal Directorate of Supply and Procurements in 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Aitken: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on individual export licence applications.

National Parks

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all land in national parks where his Ministry has extended or significantly intensified military activity in each of the last five years; in which cases he has consulted with the local planning authority, Countryside Commission and national park authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will write to the hon. Member.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all land in national parks surplus to defence requirements which has been released in each of the last five years; in each case if he will indicate what improvements there have been to public access; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will write to the hon. Member.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to ameliorate the effects of military activity in national parks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence attaches great importance to its declaration of commitment to the national parks and endeavours to promote the objectives of the park authorities wherever these are compatible with the needs of national defence.

Land and Buildings

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money was spent on purchasing land and buildings by his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The amount spent by the Ministry of Defence on the purchase of land and buildings in each of the last five years was:

FY	*£m*
1991-92	21·201
1990-91	7·555
1989-90	29·266
1988-89	6·069
1987-88	6·032

Brecon Beacons National Park

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what agreement he has negotiated, or is currently negotiating, with the Cnewr estate in the Brecon

Beacons national park for the use of the land; whether the national park authority was consulted about these negotiations concerning that land; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has for the use of the Cnewr estate in the Brecon Beacons national park; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Army has been using the Cnewr estate for adventurous training on an informal basis since 1976. The local defence land agent was approached by the trustees of the estate on 31 July 1992 with a view to putting arrangements on a more formal basis. These discussions are still at an early stage. The national park officer was informed on 22 September, when it was proposed that a meeting should take place between MOD, the national park and the estate.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for allowing public access to the Cnewr estate in the Brecon Beacons national park; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Cnewr estate is privately owned and public access is not, therefore, a matter for the Ministry of Defence.

Ministry Land (Access)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the locations in each of the last five years where his Ministry has improved public access to his Ministry's land, giving the location, timing and nature of the improvement in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will write to the hon. Member.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what liaison he has with *(a)* the Countryside Commission and *(b)* the Ramblers Association at a national, regional and local level concerning improving the right of access to land owned and leased by his Ministry.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence encourages public access to its land whenever possible. There is a well-established system of consultation with local parties interested in the countryside. We also have national level liaison with the Countryside Commission on a wide range of issues.

Land Sales

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list on a county basis in England, Scotland and Wales the land that his Department has sold, giving the name of the site, the number of hectares, to whom the land was sold and for how much, in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This information is not maintained in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Landscape Preservation and Access

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes he proposes to his policy on landscape preservation and access as outlined in chapter 19 of his Ministry's document entitled "Environment Manual"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The policy on landscape preservation and acciss is kept under review. Chapter 19 of the MOD "Environment Manual" is changed as necessary.

Ministry Land

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the land that his Department has bought, giving the name in each county of England, Scotland and Wales of the site, the number of hectares, and for how much the land was bought, in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the future requirements of his Ministry of land required for military training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We continually assess our requirement for training land to ensure that we retain only that which is essential to meet our operational and training requirements.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many copies of his leaflet "Walks on Ministry of Defence Lands" have been published; at what cost; how they have been distributed to the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since its launch on 21 May 1992, just over 155,000 copies of the leaflet "Walks on Ministry of Defence Lands" have been published at a total cost of £28,500, or 18p each.

Copies have been distributed to tourist information centres throughout the United Kingdom, public libraries, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Youth Hostels Association, national parks, tourist information offices, the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, the National Council of YMCAs, the National Trust, the Royal Society for Nature Conservation, the Countryside Council, the Countryside Council for Wales, English Nature and the Ramblers Association. A further 48,000 copies of the leaflet were distributed with the August edition of the magazine "Country Walking". Copies were also distributed by the "Defence Into the 90s" exhibition tour and the Ministry of Defence stand "Defending the Environment" at the Royal show in Stoneleigh.

In addition, 8,000 leaflets have been despatched in response to specific requests. Finally, copies of the leaflet have been placed in the Library of the House.

Defence Estimates

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about progress he has made concerning his Department's contribution to the citizens charter following the publication of the Statement on Defence Estimates 1992.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As was explained in the Statement on the Defence Estimates (Cm 1981, paragraphs 336 to 337), the Ministry of Defence does not provide any service direct to the public. The Department's principal response to the citizens charter is therefore the continued provision of a high standard of defence capability giving value for money to the tax payer. The performance and quality disciplines inherent in the new management strategy and in the formation of next steps agencies are however valuable tools through which the Department is seeking to improve the standard of the service it provides.

For examples of where the work of the Department is relevant to the citizens charter I refer the hon. Gentleman to the White Paper "Citizen's Charter First Report 1992" (Cm 2101), published on Wednesday 25 November 1992.

Reactor Cores

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current locations of the reactor cores from (i) HMS Sovereign, (ii) HMS Swiftsure and (iii) HMS Revenge.

Mr. Aitken: The reactor cores of HMS Sovereign and HMS Revenge remain contained on board the submarines. The core removed from HMS Swiftsure is stored ashore in containers authorised for this purpose.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the last reactor core was moved to Sellafield; and from where it was moved.

Mr. Aitken: The last nuclear reactor core moved to Sellafield was transferred from Rosyth. As the core was unirradiated, individual module transport containers, fully licensed by the Department of Transport, were able to be used for this transfer, which took place between July and September 1992.

Forces in Germany

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what respects the legal basis for stationing British forces in Germany has changed since German unification.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Ordnance Board

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the responsibilities of the Ordnance Board with regard to nuclear weapons; and what consideration he has given to changes in these responsibilities.

Mr. Aitken: The role of the Ordnance Board in respect of nuclear weapons is described in the MOD's chief scientific adviser's report on the safety of United Kingdom nuclear weapons, a copy of which is available in the Library. The hon. Member will be aware that the Ministry of Defence has accepted all of the recommendations in this report and is proceeding with their implementation.

Trident Safety Committee

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the role and function of the Trident safety committee; when it was established; how many personnel are assigned to it; and what is its annual budget.

Mr. Aitken: The Trident safety committee is an internal committee which supports the director general strategic weapon systems in discharging his specific responsibilities in relation to the safety of the Trident II strategic weapon system. It was established in its present form in 1988. The committee has two full-time staff and draws on about 15 others. The total annual staff costs associated with the committee's work are in the order of £400,000.

Polaris

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies his Department has commissioned in the United States of America in the last five years on the disposal of Polaris missiles and their components.

Mr. Aitken: As part of normal business under the Polaris sales agreement, my Department obtains advice and guidance from the United States authorities on all aspects of the disposal of Polaris missiles and their components.

Rosyth Dry Dock

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when RD46 dry dock at Rosyth is expected to become operational.

Mr. Aitken: RD46 became operational on 24 November 1992.

Defence Contractors

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many former officials of his Department have taken up gainful employment with defence contractors during the past three years.

Mr. Aitken: A total of 285 serving or former civil servants have applied, under the Government's business appointment rules, to take up paid employment with defence contractors since January 1990. In the same period 268 members of the armed forces have similarly applied under the rules. Applicants are not required to advise whether, in the event, employment was taken up.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what record is kept of former members of the armed services taking up gainful employment with companies supplying his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Records are maintained of all applications received from members of the armed forces and civil servants wishing to take up paid employment outside Crown service under the Government's business appointment rules. The rules do not require applicants to advise whether, in the event, employment was taken up.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Video Duplication

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures the Government are taking to stop the infringement of copyright by illegal video duplication.

Mr. Leigh: The Copyright, Designs and Patents Act (1988) provides for significant criminal penalties for those who make or sell unauthorised copies of audiovisual works, and makes it clear that this is also a civil offence. It is for the police themselves to determine the priority they give to the investigation of particular criminal offences. It is open to copyright owners to take civil action to enforce their rights. The Patent Office is active in the creation of awareness of the existence of rights subsisting in these works by widespread dissemination of promotional literature and the marketing of an audiovisual aid.

Intellectual Property Contracts

Mr. Miller: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will bring forward proposals for legislation to restrict the powers of United Kingdom companies to enter into intellectual property contracts with offshore companies and to increase the level of supervision of such contracts.

Mr. Leigh: I have no plans to bring forward proposals for legislation to restrict the powers of United Kingdom companies to enter into contracts concerning intellectual property, or to supervise such contracts.

Mr. Miller: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what monitoring his Department carries out of intellectual property contracts with offshore companies entered into by United Kingdom companies; what estimate he has made of the effect of such contracts on the conduct of pension funds and life assurance funds; what provisions exist as to the role of auditors in such cases; if he will list companies known to have been involved; and if he will make a statement on the role of supervisory bodies in these circumstances.

Mr. Leigh: My Department does not monitor contracts concerning intellectual property entered into by United Kingdom companies or their effects on pension and life assurance funds. Auditors' activities are governed by company law.

Pit Closures

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what terms of reference were given to J. T. Boyd Company for its present consultancy work; when work commenced; when he expects it will be completed; at what estimated cost; if he will place a copy of the completed report in the Library; and if the consultancy work was put out to tender.

Mr. Eggar: Regarding the terms of reference, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 20 November at column *433*. Boyds commenced work on 28 October 1992 and is expected to submit its final report early in the new year. The completed report will be published and a copy will be placed in the Library. On the remaining points, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the replies I gave to the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings) on 24 November at column *611*.

Post Bus Services

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many post bus services have existed, and what route mileage they have covered, in each year since 1989.

Mr. Leigh: The number of post bus services and their route mileage in each year since 1989 are as follows:

As at	*Routes*	*Miles (millions)*
April 1989	170	3·40
April 1990	172	3·45
April 1991	173	3·50
April 1992	179	3·75

Pension Funds

Mr. Sims: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many instances of alleged irregularities in the administration of company pension funds have been drawn to the attention of his Department in the last 12 months; what investigations in respect of these allegations are in progress; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: There have been four instances in the past 12 months where complaints have included such allegations, but I cannot provide any further detail for reasons of confidentiality. I should make it clear, however, that my Department's powers under the Companies Act are confined to the investigation of companies themselves—they do not extend to examining the affairs of any pension funds administered by trustees on behalf of employees, which is a matter for other regulatory and investigatory bodies with whom my Department liaises where appropriate.

Funeral Costs

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received requesting an investigation by the Office of Fair Trading into coffin prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: I have received no such representations.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he has taken over representations received from the National Death Centre asking him to make changes in the arrangements for consumer protection in the field of funeral expenses; and what plans he has to meet the National Association of Funeral Directors to discuss the matter.

Mr. Leigh: I have received one such representation and I am considering it. I have no current plans to meet the National Association of Funeral Directors.

Bankruptcies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the number of companies which have gone bankrupt in each local authority in England and Wales in each year since 1987.

Mr. Neil Hampton: There are two types of company insolvencies: compulsory liquidations and creditors' voluntary liquidations. No geographical information on creditors' voluntary liquidations is available. For compulsory liquidations the only geographical information available is by the court in which the order was made. This is not a good basis for analysing company location, since many cases in England and Wales are dealt with in London regardless of the company's location, and work may be moved between courts according to differing workloads.

Coal Consumption

Mr. Batiste: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the levels of the United Kingdom coal consumption for each month of the last 12 months.

Mr. Eggar: The total monthly consumption of coal in the United Kingdom in each of the last 12 months was as follows:

	Coal consumption (thousand tonnes)
1991	
October	8,143
November	9,073
December	11,302
1992	
January	9,035
February	9,384
March	10,323
April	7,985
May	6,963
June	8,782
July	7,071
August	6,411
September	8,432

Coal Stores

Mr. Batiste: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total maximum storage capacity for coal *(a)* at British Coal sites and *(b)* in total for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: Questions about the storage capacity for coal at British Coal sites are a matter for the corporation. Figures are not held centrally for the total storage capacity for coal in the United Kingdom.

Companies House and Radiocommunications Agency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 9 November, *Official Report*, columns 603-5, what has been the cost to the Exchequer during the last 12 months of the visit by the chief executives of Companies House to the United States and Canada.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The chief executive's costs were just under £4,100. These were met from Companies House running costs, which are funded by fees and charges to customers.

Coal Products Ltd.

Sir Paul Beresford: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the current financing arrangements of Coal Products Ltd. as a wholly owned subsidiary of British Coal.

Mr. Eggar: Following a financial restructuring of Coal Products Ltd. (CPL) involving a write-off of £120 million of loans and cancellation of £22·5 million of preference share capital, the then Secretary of State for Energy said in a parliamentary answer on 17 March 1988 at column *641* that it was intended that no further financial assistance should be given to the company by the Government or via British Coal, whether in the form of loans or guarantees. This year, however, the banks who had been financing CPL's operations indicated that they were no longer willing to extend their loans to the company without guarantees or letters of comfort being given by the Government or British Coal. In this situation, and given the difficult circumstances that the coal industry was facing, it was decided in August that British Coal should be authorised to finance repayment of the outstanding commercial loans.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the employment impact of his Department's schemes of regional financial assistance since 1984 in *(a)* each region and *(b)* each travel-to-work area.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 18 November 1992]:* Of the regional financial assistance schemes run by my Department only regional selective assistance, available in the assisted areas of England, is conditional on employment being either created or safeguarded. From April 1984 to end October 1992 the following employment by region was either created or safeguarded.

	Created	*Safeguarded*	*Total*
East Midlands	3,753	419	4,172
North East	30,467	8,319	38,786
North West	30,566	13,215	43,781
South West	7,664	1,393	9,057
West Midlands	39,249	13,189	52,438
Yorkshire and Humberside	18,232	6,190	24,422
England	129,931	42,725	172,656

The revised regional development grants scheme which was introduced in development areas in November 1984 and was closed to new applications in March 1988, also had a jobs link. No grant was paid to undertakings employing more than 200 people unless their projects created employment. Up to the end of October 1992 these projects created the following jobs.

	Jobs
East Midlands	8,240
North East	51,823
North West	41,223
South West	5,896
Yorkshire and Humberside	15,042
England	122,224

Information by travel-to-work area is available only at disproportionate cost.

My Department also provides assistance under the regional enterprise grants scheme. Projects supported by this scheme have created employment; however, as grant was not directly linked to job creation, employment data were not collected.

Assisted Area Status

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list *(a)* the area, *(b)* the amount of grant aid and *(c)* the purpose to which additional funding was put for all additional resources throughout the country granted under the assisted area programme.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 20 November 1992]:* Information about applications for regional grants, that is regional selective assistance (RSA) and regional enterprise grants (REG) and the purposes to which they are put, are matters of commercial confidentiality between applicants and the Department concerned. Some RSA grant details where offers are of £75,000 or more are, however, published quarterly in the *Employment Gazette*. In any event, information in the form requested is not readily available and could be collated only at disproportionate cost.

Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many loans have been made under the small firms loan guarantee scheme in each of the last five years in each region; and what was the actual amount given in each region.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 23 November 1992]:* Information on the scheme is held by financial year. The number of loans, by region, in the last five years has been:

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
North East	76	179	209	208	164
North West	156	275	380	395	271
Yorkshire and Humberside	107	211	250	253	171
West Midlands	95	187	249	230	193
East Midlands	75	144	171	206	301
London and the South East	377	715	1201	1354	1073
South West	151	213	360	395	477
Scotland	81	127	152	141	131
Wales	75	182	208	184	154
Northern Ireland	29	33	24	27	14
Total	1222	2266	3204	3393	2949

The amount lent under the scheme, by region, in the last five years has been:

£ million

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
North East	2·4	4·46	5·19	4·64	3·61
North West	5·62	6·76	10·13	8·66	5·43
Yorkshire and Humberside	4·24	5·25	7·47	5·13	3·36
West Midlands	3·08	4·95	6·32	5·93	4·76
East Midlands	2·84	3·85	4·85	5·53	7·17
London and the South East	15·08	22·01	41·62	36·97	27·63
South West	5·39	5·62	9·89	9·13	9·92
Scotland	3·24	4·14	7·67	4·44	4·29
Wales	2·86	5·45	5·34	3·47	3·41
Northern Ireland	0·77	1·12	0·92	1·21	0·58
TOTAL	45·52	63·61	99·40	85·11	70·16

Post Office

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to allow the Post Office or any of its subsidiaries to raise loan capital in the market using the methods outlined in the Chancellor's autumn statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* There was no proposal in the autumn statement to change the rules governing nationalised industries' access to loan capital in the market.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade in what form the Post Office and its subsidiaries are required to hold their financial reserves; when that requirement was made; and what proposals he has to review the requirement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* Under the provisions of the Post Office Act 1969 and the British Telecommunications Act 1981, the liquid funds of the Post Office not required to finance its day-to-day activities are invested within the public sector according to Her Majesty's Treasury guidelines. These guidelines were most recently revised on 27 July 1991 and currently provide for nationalised industries' surplus funds to be invested in the public sector by deposits with the following bodies:

The National Loans Fund
Gilt Edged Securities
Local Authorities
Nationalised Industries and their subsidiary companies
Other public corporations and public authorities

There are no current plans to review this requirement.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what factors he took into account in setting the external financing limit for the Post Office in 1993-94 and subsequent years.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* The external financing limit takes into account a wide range of factors including the interests of the Post Office, its customers and the taxpayer.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the external financing limit planned, and that achieved, for the Post Office each year since 1984.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* The planned and achieved external financing limits for the Post Office in each year since 1984 are as follows:

	Planned £ million	*Achieved £ million*
1983-84	51	61·5
1984-85	60	99·5
1985-86	70	74·7

	Planned £ million	*Achieved £ million*
1986-87	93	93·1
1987-88	57	80·0
1988-89	97	102·0
1989-90	91	101·9
1990-91	nil	nil
1991-92	65	74·0

Parcelforce

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on those activities of Parcelforce which he regards as part of the universal service obligation and those activities outside it.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* The definition of the universal service obligation for parcels forms part of our examination of the method and timing of sale of Parcelforce. As the President of the Board of Trade said in his statement to the House on 15 July—the provision of a universal service at a uniform and affordable tariff is not negotiable.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the representations he has received on the sale of Parcelforce.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I provided on 18 November at column *226*, in respect of representations received on the Post Office. Most of the discussions that have already been held with the bodies listed therein have also covered the privatisation of Parcelforce. Additionally, our advisers have been contacting other players in the industry, on a confidential basis, for their views.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the year-end size of loans outstanding from the Post Office group to Parcelforce in each of the last five complete financial years.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* Details of loans from the Post Office to Parcelforce are publicly available for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92. These loans were £44 million and £147 million at year end 1990-91 and 1991-92 respectively, as disclosed in the Post Office report and accounts for 1991-92. In previous years the accounts of Parcelforce and the Royal Mail were presented together; figures for year end loans to Parcelforce alone are therefore not available for those years.

Technology Transfer

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidance he offers to companies receiving state aids about technology transfer to enterprises based in other countries; how such guidance distinguishes between direct sale and participation in joint ventures; and how it distinguishes between other countries of the EC and elsewhere.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* Organisations which receive financial assistance from the Department of Trade and Industry for research and development, and for technology transfer, are encouraged to exploit the results in the United Kingdom or the remainder of the European Community. This is achieved by means of a clause in grant letters which restricts exploitation to the European Community for a period of five years after completion of the project. By this means the interests of the United Kingdom and European Community industry sectors which—normally contribute their own resources to the work—are promoted, competitive advantage is gained through technical innovation and the build-up of knowhow, and value for taxpayers' money is maximised. Exceptions are permitted. Whilst no distinction is drawn between direct sale of the results or participation in joint ventures, each case is considered on its merits with a view to maximising net benefits to the United Kingdom and European Community sectors involved. The views of any United Kingdom collaborators are also taken into account in forming a judgment.

EC Package Travel Directive

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to introduce legislation to implement the EC package travel directive.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 24 November 1992]:* Regulations implementing the EC directive on package travel, package holidays and package tours (90/314/EEC) were laid before Parliament on 23 November. They will be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure.

Support Programmes

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the expenditure, number of formal applications and number of applicants funded in 1991-92 under the support for programmes under research scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* During 1991-92 expenditure on the support for products under research (SPUR) scheme was £318,000. There were 288 applications under the scheme and 148 grants, worth £12·4 million, were offered.

Consultancies

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if, for the enterprise initiative consultancy scheme, he will state outturn figures for 1991-92 for *(a)* expenditure and *(b)* number of consultancies in total, and sub-divided for (i) assisted areas, (ii) urban programme areas and (iii) elsewhere.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* Total DTI expenditure on the enterprise initiative consultancy scheme in 1991-92 was £64,400,000. A total of 14,387 cases were completed, 51·2 per cent. of which were in assisted areas and urban programme areas. A further breakdown of expenditure is not available.

Research and Technology Awards

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the expenditure, number of applications for the first stage competition and number of successful applicants funded in 1991-92 under the small firms merit awards for research and technology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 25 November 1992]:* During 1991-92 expenditure on the small firms merit award for research and technology (SMART) scheme was £11·99 million. There were 1,422 entries for the SMART stage 1 competition resulting in 180 grants worth £7·73 million, being offered.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on expenditure by his Department on *(a)* advanced technology programmes and *(b)* general industrial collaborative projects in 1991-92.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* Expenditure by the Department of Trade and Industry for 1991-92 for advanced technology programmes and general industrial collaborative projects was £20,233,787 and £19,622,702 respectively. These figures represent total expenditure under each scheme for that financial year.

Teaching Company Scheme

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his Department's role in the teaching company scheme; and if he will set out the expenditure on the programme for the current year.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* My Department is a major source of funding for the teaching company scheme and has £5·6 million available for the scheme in this financial year. The other sponsors are the Science and Engineering Research Council (SERC), Department of Economic Development Northern Ireland (DED/NI), MAFF, the Economic and Social Research Council (ERSC) and the Department of the Environment (DOE). Total public funding for the teaching company scheme in 1992-93 is budgeted at approximately £14 million. My Department, in collaboration with the other sponsors, decides strategic policy for the scheme and monitors its operation and administration by the teaching company directorate. In addition, my Department is involved in the process of appraising individual teaching company programme proposals prior to approval for grant funding via SERC.

Post Office

Dr. Marek: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the level of investment by the Post Office authorised for 1993-94 underlying the external financing limit announced in the autumn statement; and what investment total was originally requested by the Post Office.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* Discussions between the Post Office and the Department of Trade and Industry about the Post Office's capital investment programme are a matter of commercial confidentiality. The capital investment limit for the Post Office for 1993-94 has now been set at £321 million.

Telephone Selling

Dr. Marek: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made towards the establishment of a register to combat the problem of unsolicited telephone selling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 26 November 1992]:* The telecommunication services licence and the self-provision licence, both issued under the terms of the Telecommunications Act 1984, provide for the establishment of a register on which people who do not wish to receive unsolicited telephone sales calls can place their numbers. Once this register is in place, anyone who makes such a call to a number on the list will be in breach of the licence and, ultimately, the Director General of Telecommunications can remove the right to operate under the licences from persistent offenders, making them unable to use their telephone systems. Oftel is discussing the arrangements for the register with interested parties. These discussions have proved more difficult than at first expected. Oftel will, however, announce its conclusions as soon as it is able to do so.

SCOTLAND

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the main measures of deregulation, or simplification of regulation, which his Department has carried out, or caused to be carried out, since the last general election.

Mr. Lang: Since the last general election, deregulation measures have been implemented under the following:

"The Building (Self-Certification of Structural Design) (Scotland) Regulations 1992"

"The Control of Pollution (Licensing of Waste Disposal) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1992"

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the main measures increasing regulation in any area for which his Department has responsibility, which his Department has caused to be put into effect since the last general election.

Mr. Lang: Since the last general election, the following measures have been introduced:

"Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 1992".

"The Salmon (Definition of Methods of Net Fishing and Construction of Nets) (Scotland) Regulations 1992".

"Inshore Fishing (Prohibition of Fishing for Cockles) (Scotland) Order 1992".

"The Road Works (Qualifications of Supervisors and Operatives) (Scotland) Regulations 1992".

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which Minister in his Department is responsible for the oversight of deregulation of regulatory matters which fall within the responsibility of his Department.

Mr. Stewart: I have responsibility for the oversight of deregulation of those regulatory matters, falling within the responsibility of the Scottish Office, which impact on businesses.

Telephone Metering

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he intends to issue to the police about the practice of telephone metering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have been reviewing the arrangements currently in place whereby the police obtain information from the telecommunications operators about use of the network. This information concerns the destination, timing and duration of calls, but does not involve listening to conversations. I am satisfied that the statutory requirements are being met and that there is no need for legislative change. Nevertheless, there are sensitivities involved in providing access to this information, disclosure of which is generally an offence except when made to help prevent or detect crime or for the purposes of criminal proceedings. I have, therefore, approved the issue of operating guidelines to police forces in Scotland. A circular issued today covers such issues as the seriousness of the offence to justify the approach for information; the level of police rank required to authorise an application; and the safeguarding of the information obtained. The circular also requires chief constables to make an annual return to my Department on the number of occasions on which such information is sought; and to confirm that the guidance was adhered to in every case.

A copy of the circular has been placed in the Library of the House.

EC Funding

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the resources attracted to Scotland from each European Community fund *(a)* in the past five financial years and *(b)* projected for the next three financial years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The European Commission allocates moneys on a calendar year basis. The Community budget beyond 1993 is likely to decided at the Edinburgh summit. It is not therefore possible to forecast what funds may be available for Scotland beyond 1993. The table sets out the information available on awards to Scotland under the main funds since 1988. There are other smaller EC funds which are of benefit to Scotland but figures for these are not held by the Scottish Office.

£ million

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
ESF[1]	[2]—	[1]—	15·2	16·1	17·1	17·6
ERDF	95	68	84	133·8	82·5	78·7
EAGGF (Guidance)	18·2	15·9	18·5	21·9	[3]—	[3]—
EAGGF[4] (Guarantee)	48·3	50·9	70·6	93·9	[3]—	[3]—

[1] Figures for objectives 2 and 5b only. Figures for objectives 3 and 4 could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

[2] Not available—ESF figures not held on a regional basis before 1990.

[3] Information not yet available.

[4] Relates to schemes operated by the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department. Further schemes operated on a United Kingdom basis by the Intervention Board executive agency have an unidentified Scottish share.

Local Government Finance

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, in descending order, *(a)* the aggregate external finance and *(b)* Government-supported expenditure for each local authority area by (i) region, (ii) district and (iii) on a per capita basis for each of the past five financial years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested, from 1990-91, the year in which aggregate external finance (AEF) was introduced, to 1992-93 is given in tables 1 to 3 in descending order of AEF per community charge payer.

Table 1—1990-91

	(1) *Total AEF (£ million)*	*(2)* *Total AEF per community charge payer (£)*	*(3)* *Total GSE (£ million)*	*(4)* *Total GSE per community charge payer (£)*
Highland	169·945	1,153·43	202·229	1,372·55
Borders	72·411	934·35	89·092	1,149·59
Strathclyde	1,573·105	907·18	1,884·127	1,086·55
Dumfries and Galloway	99·765	898·05	123·62	1,112·79
Tayside	251·285	868·28	308·819	1,067·08
Grampian	321·217	865·19	393·21	1,059·10
Central	162·240	798·48	202·673	997·48
Fife	211·341	795·15	263·369	990·91
Lothian	424·342	721·92	539·766	918·28
Glasgow City	132·331	241·38	148·908	271·62
Clydebank	6·837	193·20	8·863	250·45
Argyll and Bute	7·386	157·42	9·664	205·97
Sutherland	1·577	156·56	2·004	198·95
Dundee City	19·571	151·41	26·109	202·00
Ross and Cromarty	5·101	148·98	6·415	187·36
Aberdeen City	23·628	147·50	32·836	204·99
Stirling	8·865	147·08	12·403	205·77
Monklands	11·038	144·98	15·080	198·08
Inverclyde	10·065	144·96	13·901	200·21
Edinburgh City	48·336	136·82	68·318	193·39
Skye and Lochalsh	1·160	136·72	1·508	177·74
Cunninghame	13·879	136·42	18·836	185·14
Motherwell	14·422	135·83	20·523	193·29

	(1) Total AEF (£ million)	(2) Total AEF per community charge payer (£)	(3) Total GSE (£ million)	(4) Total GSE per community charge payer (£)
Lochaber	1·894	135·75	2·432	174·31
Strathkelvin	8·015	129·65	11·896	192·43
Renfrew	19·221	126·16	28·055	184·14
Dumbarton	7·115	124·56	10·455	183·04
Hamilton	9·402	120·16	14·004	178·97
Perth and Kinross	10·694	117·77	16·297	179·47
Clackmannan	4·105	115·87	6·284	177·38
Clydesdale	4·834	115·59	7·444	177·99
Cumnock and Doon Valley	3·770	115·50	5·726	175·43
Kyle and Carrick	10·004	115·27	15·292	176·20
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	6·930	113·57	10·291	168·65
Midlothian	6·852	113·43	10·400	172·17
Falkirk	12·063	112·23	18·614	173·18
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	4·892	109·88	7·711	173·19
Banff and Buchan	6·545	107·64	10·258	168·70
East Lothian	7·095	107·03	11·186	168·75
Bearsden and Milngavie	3·093	106·54	4·954	170·65
Caithness	2·037	104·29	2·841	145·45
Dunfermline	10·103	104·00	15·951	164·20
Inverness	4·630	102·82	6·553	145·53
Roxburgh	2·750	102·79	3·982	148·84
Moray	6·399	102·27	10·278	164·27
West Lothian	10·994	101·95	17·607	163·28
Angus	6·977	100·61	11·247	162·18
North East Fife	5·374	100·52	8·683	162·41
Kincardine and Deeside	3·495	98·42	5·717	160·99
Nairn	0·749	98·20	1·071	140·41
Kirkcaldy	11·065	96·07	18·114	157·27
Gordon	4·999	95·77	8·295	158·92
Wigtown	2·153	94·81	3·176	139·86
Ettrick and Lauderdale	2·308	91·69	3·468	137·78
Badenoch and Strathspey	0·766	91·18	1·122	133·56
Tweeddale	1·017	89·64	1·545	136·19
Nithsdale	3·810	89·25	5·773	135·24
East Kilbride	5·392	88·20	9·231	151·00
Berwickshire	1·243	87·35	1·887	132·61
Eastwood	3·599	82·67	6·379	146·53
Annandale and Eskdale	2·246	80·85	3·503	126·10
Stewartry	1·304	72·79	2·137	119·28

Table 2—1991-92

	(1) Total AEF (£ million)	(2) Total AEF per community charge payer (£)	(3) Total GSE (£ million)	(4) Total GSE per community charge payer (£)
Highland	200·862	1,359·95	221·781	1,501·58
Borders	88·105	1,130·89	99·428	1,276·23
Dumfries and Galloway	124·439	1,120·01	140·256	1,262·38
Strathclyde	1,862·317	1,094·30	2,067·966	1,215·14
Tayside	310·674	1,091·49	346·334	1,216·77
Fife	267·963	1,051·26	299·541	1,175·15
Grampian	383·563	1,051·15	429·941	1,178·24
Central	202·335	1,017·65	227·567	1,144·55
Lothian	534·999	951·61	607·218	1,080·07
Glasgow City	149·055	280·22	162·355	305·19
Argyll and Bute	11·75	249·45	13·431	285·13
Skye and Lochalsh	1·967	232·26	2·063	243·55
Clydebank	7·812	225·25	9·208	265·52
Dundee City	26·818	215·15	30·986	248·59
Edinburgh City	68·401	204·96	81·436	244·02
Monklands	14·993	198·41	17·578	232·61
Ross and Cromarty	6·8	197·87	7·575	220·41
Aberdeen City	30·409	195·85	37·011	238·38
Stirling	11·32	194·18	13·669	234·47
Lochaber	2·659	191·08	2·954	212·30
Inverclyde	12·713	187·81	15·301	226·05
Motherwell	18·902	180·17	23·409	223·13
Sutherland	1·793	178·75	2·014	200·79
Renfrew	26·059	177·67	32·747	223·27

	(1) Total AEF (£ million)	(2) Total AEF per community charge payer (£)	(3) Total GSE (£ million)	(4) Total GSE per community charge payer (£)
Clackmannan	6·062	174·22	7·545	216·85
Strathkelvin	10·519	173·08	13·345	219·59
Cunninghame	17·453	172·59	21·514	212·76
Clydesdale	6·889	166·04	8·804	212·19
East Lothian	10·493	164·71	13·510	212·08
Hamilton	12·666	163·97	16·010	207·25
Perth and Kinross	14·439	158·91	18·625	204·98
Dumbarton	8·988	158·33	11·497	202·54
Cumnock and Doon Valley	5·097	156·09	6·575	201·33
North East Fife	7·869	156·07	10·111	200·53
Falkirk	16·299	154·15	21·074	199·31
Kyle and Carrick	13·132	153·73	16·960	198·55
Dunfermline	14·322	153·20	18·308	194·56
Caithness	2·903	150·78	3·362	174·64
Bearsden and Milngavie	4·352	150·45	5·757	199·03
West Lothian	15·771	149·27	20·702	195·94
Midlothian	8·755	148·09	11·440	193·52
Banff and Buchan	8·917	147·25	11·738	193·83
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	8·883	146·38	11·572	190·69
Roxburgh	3·908	146·21	4·608	172·41
Gordon	7·587	145·74	10·021	192·49
Badenoch and Strathspey	1·214	145·69	1·383	165·99
Moray	8·9	144·98	11·726	191·01
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	6·437	144·61	8·637	194·04
Angus	9·99	144·53	13·177	190·64
Wigtown	3·321	142·45	3·790	167·09
Kirkcaldy	15·516	140·57	20·317	184·06
Ettrick and Lauderdale	3·535	138·98	4·208	165·45
Inverness	6·314	138·32	7·373	161·52
Tweeddale	1·563	136·81	1·848	161·72
Kincardine and Deeside	4·811	135·03	6·507	182·64
Berwickshire	1·911	133·46	2·273	158·74
Nairn	1·016	132·26	1·206	156·98
Nithsdale	5·559	130·66	6·716	157·85
Eastwood	5·539	128·94	7·630	177·62
East Kilbride	7·349	121·01	10·397	171·20
Annandale and Eskdale	3·352	120·29	4·106	147·36
Stewartry	2·149	119·32	2·646	146·94

Table 3—1992-93

	(1) Total AEF (£ million)	(2) Total AEF per community charge payer (£)	(3) Total GSE (£ million)	(4) Total GSE per community charge payer (£)
Highland	210·723	1,430·09	232·604	1,578·59
Borders	93·832	1,209·91	105·212	1,356·65
Dumfries and Galloway	132·251	1,195·18	148·367	1,340·82
Tayside	333·489	1,175·50	372·312	1,312·35
Strathclyde	1,961·399	1,156·95	2,186·296	1,289·61
Grampian	409·162	1,106·66	460·327	1,245·05
Fife	282·804	1,106·65	318·296	1,245·54
Central	214·672	1,073·34	242·042	1,210·19
Lothian	577·102	1,033·32	652·833	1,168·92
Glasgow City	155·696	298·96	169·774	325·99
Argyll and Bute	12·774	266·57	14·850	309·89
Skye and Lochalsh	2·049	242·17	2·338	276·33
Clydebank	8·219	241·71	9·481	278·83
Dundee City	29·342	239·04	33·191	270·40
Edinburgh City	75·134	226·61	87·909	265·14
Monklands	16·771	221·40	19·400	256·11
Stirling	12·412	212·13	14·931	255·19
Ross and Cromarty	7·241	209·77	8·646	250·47
Inverclyde	13·880	209·47	16·410	247·65
Aberdeen City	32·271	206·99	39·178	251·29
Motherwell	21·102	200·19	25·240	239·45
Renfrew	28·301	192·72	34·896	237·63
Lochaber	2·667	191·72	3·225	231·83
Cunninghame	19·463	191·46	23·724	233·37

	(1) *Total AEF* *(£ million)*	*(2)* *Total AEF* *per community charge payer* *(£)*	*(3)* *Total GSE* *(£ million)*	*(4)* *Total GSE* *per community charge payer* *(£)*
Sutherland	1·911	190·64	2·325	231·94
Clackmannan	6·664	189·06	8·122	230·42
East Lothian	11·529	182·27	14·473	228·81
Dumbarton	10·193	179·51	12·649	222·76
Hamilton	13·811	177·35	17·074	219·25
Clydesdale	7·488	177·25	9·501	224·90
Strathkelvin	10·853	174·92	13·847	223·18
North East Fife	8·626	170·90	11·056	219·04
West Lothian	18·044	170·87	22·909	216·94
Midlothian	9·831	169·27	12·527	215·69
Kyle and Carrick	14·350	167·96	18·270	213·84
Cumnock and Doon Valley	5·497	167·79	6·969	212·72
Falkirk	17·758	167·14	22·526	212·02
Dunfermline	15·626	165·21	19·745	208·76
Perth and Kinross	15·166	164·80	19·535	212·28
Moray	10·125	164·12	13·015	210·97
Bearsden and Milngavie	4·650	159·59	6·182	212·16
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	9·645	158·86	12·238	201·56
Caithness	3·024	158·25	3·804	199·07
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	7·077	157·71	9·347	208·30
Kirkcaldy	17·174	155·43	22·084	199·87
Angus	10·711	155·40	13·943	202·29
Banff and Buchan	9·530	154·41	12·513	202·74
Gordon	8·157	152·50	10·886	203·52
Wigtown	3·414	151·50	4·279	189·88
Roxburgh	3·922	147·00	4·992	187·11
Nithsdale	6·196	146·48	7·960	188·18
Ettrick and Lauderdale	3·622	143·68	4·680	185·66
Inverness	6·485	143·16	8·179	180·55
Tweeddale	1·604	141·55	2·061	181·87
Kincardine and Deeside	5·220	141·39	7·116	192·75
Badenoch and Strathspey	1·174	140·80	1·510	181·10
Berwickshire	2·007	140·03	2·596	181·12
Nairn	1·056	137·37	1·370	178·22
Eastwood	5·780	133·70	8·064	186·54
East Kilbride	8·072	131·11	11·347	184·31
Annandale and Eskdale	3·440	123·09	4·632	165·75
Stewartry	2·161	120·90	2·932	164·04

Notes:

1. AEF figures consist of revenue support grant, non-domestic rate income and specific grants (except urban programme specific grant, figures for which are not readily available). Community charge grant is also included for 1991-92.
2. Government support expenditure (GSE) consists of grant aided expenditure and loan and leasing charges.
3. The per capita figures have been calculated using the number of community charge payers on which AEF was originally distributed for each of the years.
4. The GSE per capita figures are in broadly the same descending order as those for AEF but not in every case. This is because some expenditure which is supported by AEF is not included within GSE (eg. urban programme expenditure).

Waste Heat

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies have been carried out into the development of utilising waste heat from whisky distilleries as a source of energy for the production of glasshouse crops in Scotland; what plans he has to promote such schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: A study to examine the potential for the economic recovery and use of waste heat arising from distillery processes, was undertaken at the Glengarrioch distillery in 1985. The study was supported under the Energy Efficiency Office's former energy efficiency demonstration scheme.

The Energy Efficiency Office promotes and commissions a wide range of such studies, exemplifying the energy savings available over a wide range of industrial and commercial techniques and technologies. A programme of seminars, run by the energy technology support unit and the building research and energy conservation support unit on behalf of the Energy Efficiency Office, also promotes these techniques and technologies direct to both industry and commerce.

Training

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much funding has been allocated to Scotland for training purposes in *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94.

Mr. Stewart: Government funding in Scotland for training purposes forms part of the budgets of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Details of 1992-93 provision are published in the supply estimates. Planned training provision for Scotland in 1993-94 will be included in the respective budgets for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, details of which will be announced later.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many places have been allocated to Scotland *(a)* in 1992-93 for (i) employment action and (ii) employment training and *(b)* in 1993-94 for training for work.

Mr. Stewart: In 1992-93, the employment service contracted for the provision of up to 3,600 places on the employment action programme in Scotland. Information about employment training places for 1992-93 is not available in the form requested. Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise contract with local enterprise companies in terms of trainee weeks rather than training places; and there is no standard basis for converting volumes of trainee weeks into training places because the time spent by individuals in training varies. Figures for training for work for 1993-94 in Scotland will not be known until nearer the start of the contracting year.

Special Needs Education

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to improve the provision of special needs education in the *(a)* primary, *(b)* secondary and *(c)* tertiary sectors of education; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Provision for special educational needs in primary and secondary education is the responsibility of education authorities under the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. Every child or young person with special educational needs who attends school must be offered an adequate and efficient education suitable for his or her individual requirements. Funding for this is contained in the annual aggregate external finance settlement.

The Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992 gives the Secretary of State a new duty from 1 April 1993 to secure the adequate and efficient provision of further education in Scotland, and in doing so to have regard to the requirements of those over school age with learning difficulties. Boards of management of further education colleges will be given guidance on ways in which they can continue to widen opportunities for students with learning difficulties.

The Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, established under the 1992 Act, is required by the Secretary of State to consider how access to higher education for students with particular needs, including those with special educational needs, can be facilitated.

Scotcare Rehabilitation Unit

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all grants and other moneys given by his office to the Scotcare brain injury rehabilitation unit in Uddingston since its inception.

Mr. Stewart: No grants or other moneys have been given directly by the Scottish Office to the Scotcare brain injury rehabilitation unit.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients were referred from each health board to the Scotcare, brain injury rehabilitation unit in Uddingston since its inception; and what was the total cost to each health board.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested on patients referred to Scotcare brain injury rehabilitation unit since it became a national service in June 1991 is as follows:

Health Board	*Number of referrals*	*Total cost to Health Board*
Greater Glasgow	35	235,691
Lanarkshire	17	84,310
Argyll and Clyde	9	33,188
Grampian	6	78,144
Highland	5	13,896
Dumfries and Galloway	4	15,016
Fife	3	37,260
Lothian	1	820
Forth Valley	6	27,780
Tayside	4	69,360

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the Government-funded organisations expected to take part in support of Scottish Nuclear's proposals to build a dry store for nuclear waste at Torness at the public inquiry beginning on 1 December.

Mr. Stewart: Officials from Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate, Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate and the Scottish Office Environment Department have been invited to give evidence at the inquiry into SNL's proposed spent fuel storage facility.

Homelessness

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the number of households regarded as homeless in Scotland during each of the last 10 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The figures for households applying to housing authorities under the homeless legislation who were assessed by authorities as either homeless or potentially homeless can be found in table 1 of the Scottish Office statistical bulletin "Operation of the Homeless Persons Legislation, Scotland 1980-81-1991-92", which was published on 26 November. Copies of the bulletin have been placed in the Library.

Higher Education

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has in place to promote the development of creche facilities in further and higher educational institutions in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Provision of creche facilities in further education institutions is currently the responsibility of education authorities, and in higher education institutions of the institutions themselves.

From 1 April 1993 the boards of management of further education colleges will assume similar powers to provide facilities as presently enjoyed by their higher education counterparts.

Housing

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on dampness and condensation in public sector housing in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is for local authorities, Scottish Homes, and the new town development corporations to deal with dampness and condensation in their housing from the substantial resources at their disposal. Over £927 million has been made available for gross public capital investment in Scottish housing in 1992-93.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the meeting between his Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for housing and the hon. Member for Paisley, South in relation to the development of the rivers area of Foxbar in Paisley.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I had a useful meeting with the hon. Member and representatives of Renfrew district council, Strathclyde regional council and the local community on 10 September about the Foxbar rivers area of Paisley.

Following the meeting, officials in the Scottish Office have put Renfrew district council in touch with the Forgewood initiative, as an example of a successful non-Scottish Office led urban regeneration initiative which would be of interest to those involved in the Foxbar rivers proposals. Officials in the Scottish Office await an invitation to a special meeting of the Foxbar rivers steering group, following the suggestion, at the meeting, that the Scottish Office could offer advice on the partnership approach to urban regeneration.

I am pleased that Renfrew district council is one of the authorities to benefit from the additional resources I announced on 23 November and has received a housing revenue account supplementary allocation of £0·700 million. This brings the resources available to Renfrew for investment in its own stock in 1992-93 to £19·139 million and will enable the council to make progress in Foxbar this year provided it attaches sufficient priority to this.

Applications for the urban programme resources available in 1993-94 will be received from Strathclyde region and Renfrew district councils by the end of this month. The representations the hon. Gentleman has made will be taken into account in considering applications from the Foxbar rivers area.

I shall also take full account of the council's proposals for expenditure in Foxbar together with the relative housing needs of Renfrew, when making decisions about provisional allocations for 1993-94.

I have written to the hon. Member about Scottish Homes' proposals for the regeneration of the Foxbar rivers area. Scottish Homes is committed to the regeneration of the Foxbar rivers area. It has been designated as an approved area for investment by Scottish Homes in the context of the recently signed strategic agreement between Scottish Homes and Renfrew district council. Scottish Homes will therefore be considering suitable projects from both housing associations and private developers which could involve up to £4·5 million being invested in the area over the next three to four years.

Health Boards

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he applies when appointing the chairpersons and members of health boards in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend appoints health board members for the personal qualities they have and their ability to make an effective contribution, individually and collectively, to the board's work, and selects chairpersons for the leadership they can provide to the board.

Horticulture

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the state of the horticultural industry in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: The Scottish raspberry sector stands to benefit substantially from an EC measure to support groups of growers producing raspberries for processing. Under this scheme, adopted in summer 1992, raspberry producer groups will be eligible for EC and United Kingdom funding to support a development programme intended to improve their competitive position. Eligible measures include replanting with new varieties and harvest mechanisation.

The ornamental sector of the industry—hardy nursery stock and bedding plant groups—is currently enjoying buoyant conditions. This was demonstrated recently when the increasingly successful and prestigious Scotgrow exhibition was again staged by this confident sector of the industry.

Ernst and Young

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the contracts, and value thereof, awarded by his Department and its agencies to Ernst and Young in each of the past five years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 13 November 1992]:* The contracts in the last five years undertaken by Ernst and Young, on behalf of my Department and its agencies, are listed. Details of the value of these contracts cannot be given as that information is commercially confidential.

USE OF ERNST YOUNG (CONSULTANTS) (AND PREVIOUSLY A. YOUNG SINCE 1987)

Financial year and Project

1987-88
Search for suitable candidates for appointment to the Highlands and Islands Development Baord.

1988-89
.Study of input of "Customer Views" to the NHS in Scotland.

1989-89
Recruitment of Chief Executive, Scottish Homes.

1988-89
Recruitment of Director of Technical Services, Scottish Homes.

1988-89
Recruitment of Director of Corporate Services, Scottish Homes.

1988-89
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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Speaker and deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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